



# Emerging Powers and Leadership Norms

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## Abstract

Leadership is a notoriously ambiguous term in international politics, one with meanings that range from disguised hegemony or domination on the one hand to purely consensual coalition-building and the provision of focal points for collective action on the other. The term usually has positive normative content (leadership is viewed as necessary for global governance to succeed), but the form that leadership takes—the mix of instruments that are deployed, whether a single leader is necessary or collective leadership is possible—varies over time and across regions. As global leadership by the USA is called into question, the leadership norms advanced by emerging powers represent different formulas that may ultimately be transferred to the global level. Brazil in South America, Germany in Europe, India in South Asia, and China in East Asia demonstrate specific types of leadership that may coincide or clash as their roles in global governance grow in importance.

**Keywords** Leadership · Leaders · Norms · Regional · Emerging powers

Leadership has often been an aspiration of rising powers in world politics: the term has positive connotations of prominence and the provision of systemic benefits, connotations that also play well to domestic political audiences. The definition of leadership, however, whether applied to international politics or domestic organizations, remains “vague or contested.” (Ahlquist and Levi 2011, 3) After an examination of the meanings attached to leadership in existing research, the mix of strategies characteristic of contemporary international leadership will be outlined. Those strategies have shaped and been shaped by norms of leadership, norms that help to identify a leader to its followers and to other, extra-regional powers. The spectrum of leadership alternatives in contemporary world politics varies from the multilateral choices of Germany to the more coercive instruments deployed by Russia. Three

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countries—China, India, and Brazil—that have sought to use regional leadership as an asset in pursuing their global aims illustrate the evolution of regional leadership and the norms that shape the identities of leaders and followers.

Regional strategies may become part of an established policy repertoire that will be replicated in global settings, as national capabilities increase. Regional strategies and the norms that have defined the roles of prospective leaders may therefore offer a preview of the approach that these powers will take to their global roles in an emerging polycentric world. Global leadership and its normative bases are more complex and demanding than their regional counterparts, however. Emerging powers may choose instead to exercise leadership selectively, in particular issue areas, such as peacekeeping in zones of conflict. Given their capabilities and their regional roles, other domains, such as nuclear proliferation and international finance, may present fewer opportunities for leadership. Domestic political considerations will loom large: the benefits derived from a global leadership role with domestic audiences must be weighed against the resources required and domestic demands that compete for those resources. Finally, global leadership requires mobilizing norms that can be accepted by a larger and more heterogeneous set of prospective followers. Many of those societies have embraced the liberal norms promoted by incumbent powers; modifying or rejecting those norms may reduce the global leadership prospects of emerging powers.

## 1 Theorizing Leadership Norms

Interest in leaders and leadership has expanded recently in the study of domestic politics and foreign policy. Variation in the quality of leadership in domestic organizations has been approached from both formal, game-theoretic and empirical perspectives.<sup>1</sup> Leadership in a domestic context refers to individuals “directing and coordinating followers in a wide array of formal and typically hierarchical organizations” (Ahlquist and Levi 2011, 2). International leadership does not occur in such a highly institutionalized setting. Nevertheless, certain characteristics of leadership are shared across domestic and international domains. Leadership is necessarily relational: “followers grant authority and legitimacy” to leaders. In this respect, leadership is constrained by the possible exercise of exit on the part of followers. Another parallel with domestic leadership lies in the importance of information as a source of a leader’s influence over followers. Related to the leader’s role as a provider of information is the leader as a source of norms that are communicated to followers. Norms instill a shared understanding of the roles of leader and follower, whether inside a domestic organization or in a global or regional setting. If a norm is a “standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity,” both leaders and followers will be guided by norms that set limits on their behavior based on shared expectations (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). A final similarity between leaders and followers, whether embedded in an organization or operating internationally,

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<sup>1</sup> This research is summarized in Ahlquist and Levi (2011).

is variation in the role of coercion. In both domestic and international contexts, some treat leadership as an alternative to coercion or the threat or use of force, relying instead on emulation or persuasion as a means of attracting followers and ensuring that their behavior aligns with that of the leader. Others, however, point out that variation in the use of coercion by leaders is an important—and often unanswered—question in the theoretical literature (Ahlquist and Levi 2011, 19).

The question of coercion's role in awarding a leadership role is necessarily more prominent in international politics. The use of the adjective "hegemonic" in hegemonic stability theory implied both a potential ideological and a coercive role for the hegemon (assumed to be a single, international leader). More recently, a revival of interest in hierarchy as an organizing principle in international politics has also directed attention to the respective roles of dominant and subordinate powers (Lake 2011; Cooley 2005). These debates have also pointed to the historical role of hierarchy in East Asia, through a re-examination of the Sinocentric regional order that existed before the intrusion of European imperialism in the nineteenth century (Kang 2010). Hierarchy, unlike leadership, however, implies divisible sovereignty: One state has authority over certain domains of policy, domestic or foreign, of another state. Hierarchy is often portrayed as a contractual relationship, in which the dominant state exercises authority over subordinate states by providing political orders that benefit those states, disciplines those states when required, and also commits not to abuse its authority (Lake 2011, 93).

Leadership implies a much weaker form of asymmetry between states. Sovereignty is not typically divided, and the relationship between leaders and followers has a more informal basis in which norms play a larger role. Although power differentials typically award the prospective role of leader in a region to particular states, leadership may vary from issue-area to issue-area. Leaders and followers may be viewed as lying at the edge of the spectrum of hierarchical relations: not fully anarchic, but still informally organized, with a lower expectation of coercive behavior. As in hierarchical relations, leaders provide benefits to followers in return for their deference in certain policy domains and their willingness to contribute to collective ends identified by the leader. Leadership and followership do not incorporate constraints on sovereignty, as normally understood, but whether leadership can shade into more hierarchical and coercive relations, such as an informal sphere of influence, remains an important question for prospective leaders and, even more, for their prospective followers. The norms of behavior shared by leader and followers may serve as a significant determinant of the evolution of their relationship along the spectrum from ordinary diplomatic relations to more structured and predictable leader–follower relations to a variant of hierarchy in which the threat of coercion and constraints on the behavior of subordinates intensify.

## 2 Regional Powers and the Norms of Leaders and Followers

Given the spectrum of leader–follower relations, treating leadership as an array of possible strategies, governed in part by norms, may clarify both the motivations of the more powerful actor (the aspiring leader) and the reasons that other states may

accept that actor's position (and their own role as followers). As described above, the core test of a leader–follower relationship is behavioral: The leader's declared preferences in a given policy domain or issue are reflected in the actions of its followers over time. (In other words, the actions of the followers are not simply the result of a single set of negotiations but reflect a pattern of behavior.) Two regional powers can be taken to represent two ends of the spectrum of leadership, one willing to threaten and deploy coercion to rebuild a sphere of influence in its immediate neighborhood and the other abstaining from the threat of coercion and relying on pooled sovereignty in regional institutions to exercise regional leadership.

Russia has embarked on a strategy of coercive regional dominance, deploying economic and military instruments to confirm its dominance within a hierarchy that encompasses parts of its “near abroad.” The coercive aspect of Russian strategy was on full display in 2014, when it seized the Crimea and eastern portions of Ukraine, a move precipitated when Ukraine appeared to shift its allegiance to the European Union by negotiating a new economic agreement with the EU. Earlier, Russia had exercised leverage over other former Soviet republics by creating jurisdictions under its protection through frozen conflicts in Moldova (Transnistria) and Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia). In 2015, Russia also created an economic supplement to its regional aspirations in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). A limited customs union arrangement that includes four former Soviet republics in addition to Russia (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan), the EAEU has not attracted new members since its creation. Its economic success has been limited by Russia's coercive policies, which led other members to stall deeper economic cooperation. The result is an economic institution that is “far closer to an empty shell than a functioning economic body” (Michel 2017). Russia's quest for regional hegemony through the use of force also produced resistance from those outside the former Soviet space: Sanctions were imposed by the USA and the European Union, following the invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea. The response to Russia's use of force by the USA and the European Union demonstrates that norms of regional leadership can be enforced by those outside the region.

In contrast to Russia, Germany has chosen a radically different course, following previous attempts at constructing a coercive regional domain that ended in national catastrophe. By embedding itself in a larger European institutional project, Germany was able to reassure its European neighbors of its peaceful intentions, even as reunification enlarged its economic and political weight within the region. Its acceptance of an extra-regional guarantor, the USA, was essential to the success of its strategy of assurance. The European Union—and a constellation of other European institutions—had created a strong normative basis for the most successful security community in modern history, one in which the use of force among its members was unthinkable. Longstanding regional rivalries, in particular its antagonism toward France, were replaced by a partnership that sustained the new institutions. A commitment to the web of European institutions and to multilateralism as both a norm and a strategy also strengthened the regional leadership position of Germany within Europe. In addition to regional institution-building that both amplified and constrained its power, Germany pursued two additional strategies that reinforced its leadership: economic integration and public goods provision. Germany promoted

the creation of an open European economic space, one that awarded Germany a central place as one of three global hubs of manufacturing value chains. Its public goods provision occurred through its support for a common European currency (Economic and Monetary Union), despite the skepticism of many in the German electorate, and its net contribution to EU structural and investment funds.

Germany's followers in Europe did not always accept its non-coercive strategy of leadership based on liberal and democratic norms. Several points of resistance have emerged in recent years. Members of the EU, especially those Mediterranean economies that faced financial crisis after 2010, bridled at the policies of fiscal austerity favored by Germany. Germany's fiscal stance was not supportive of rapid economic recovery in other parts of Europe; critics also saw German policies as aimed at guarding the interests of German banks rather than promoting the wider European interest of spurring higher levels of regional economic growth. More objections were voiced in 2015, when the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, took an explicitly normative stance in favor of admitting large numbers of asylum-seekers to Europe. German efforts to win burden-sharing for this wave of migrants from the other members of the EU were met with fierce resistance by many much smaller European countries, those who would normally fall into line behind the German lead on such a salient issue. The fracturing of European normative consensus on immigration, a fracturing that has invaded European domestic politics, has produced a challenge to German leadership and the unity of the EU. Finally, the German public itself has balked at the costs of leadership. The title of European "paymaster" is not one that sits easily with either the German electorate ("pay") or with regional partners who resist German policy preferences ("master"). Nevertheless, the normative foundations of European integration have both legitimated German leadership and reassured other European countries.

Both Russia and Germany illustrate a partial translation of regional norms and practices into global leadership norms. Russia occupies an unusual international position: Having lost its superpower status, it has pursued policies under Vladimir Putin designed to reinstate it as a global power. Although it has aligned with emerging powers in the BRICS group, it does not share their economic or demographic profile. Its economic shortcomings have led to reliance on coercive means of dominance in its regional neighborhood; at the global level, its diminished global economic standing has also produced a reliance on military means of influence. As a result, it has overturned deep-seated global norms, such as the norm against conquest. Germany, on the other hand, has incorporated liberal leadership norms from Europe into its global posture, embracing multilateralism and working through existing global institutions, contributing to global public goods, and endorsing new EU trade agreements with the regional bloc's partners.

### 3 Emerging Powers and the Norms of Regional Leadership

Three emerging powers—China, India, and Brazil—are of particular interest for their pursuit of regional leadership, the response of others in their regions to their aspirations, and the norms of leadership and followership that have emerged as their

economic and political influence that has grown. In contrast to Russia, these three regional powers have not deployed the threat of military coercion or intervention as a central element in their strategy for asserting regional leadership. Overall, they have endorsed the norms embodied in the United Nations Charter for the interstate use of force and nonintervention on the domestic affairs of other states. India, however, has a history of ignoring that norm in its immediate neighborhood, and China has deployed force against regional neighbors in defense of its territorial claims (Ayres 2018, 134; Fravel 2008). Both India and China have used economic pressure to demonstrate their displeasure with neighboring states: China targeted the Philippines over territorial claims in the South China Sea, Japan over its territorial dispute in the East China Sea, and South Korea over its deployment of the THAAD anti-missile system in 2017. India appeared to use similar economic tactics toward Nepal over a constitutional draft in 2015, claiming that internal protests prevented economic shipments from reaching Nepal; Nepal claimed economic blockade by India.

Although coercive instruments have not been entirely eschewed by these regional leaders, their strategies of leadership have more often emphasized economic interdependence (the importance of their rapidly growing domestic markets and their ability to provide aid and investment), the provision of regional public goods, and the building of regional institutions. Their strategies of regional leadership have been guided by national interests, grounded in domestic politics, but those strategies have also been shaped by evolving normative expectations in each region.

Economic interdependence, as Albert Hirschman demonstrated, can award substantial leverage to the more powerful party in a trade relationship (Hirschman 1945). Interdependence may have other effects that also reinforce the position of an aspirant regional leader. Informational effects of trade may heighten transparency and trust. Trade and investment can serve as a transmission belt for norms, shifting national identities through the creation of vested interests linked to the regional leader or the reinforcement of domestic coalitions—liberalizing or statist—that adopt the regional leader’s preferences (Kastner 2013; Solingen 1998). The regional leader and dominant economic power may also find its use of asymmetric economic interdependence limited by the outside options enjoyed by regional followers, by the constraints on its own behavior required to assure others that economic ties will not be exploited, or by the liberalizing norms that the leader (and the growth of economic exchange) have encouraged.

The provision of regional public goods is another instrument for establishing regional leadership. The public goods in question can be material—infrastructure that provides benefits to the region as a whole (as well as the leader) or services that would be less effectively provided by individual national governments (diplomatic mediation or intelligence sharing).<sup>2</sup> As in the hierarchical relations described by Lake, the terms of exchange between leader and followers are often disputed, as are the public character of the goods provided (rather than the private benefits that accrue to the regional leader). For example, the fixed character of infrastructure may necessarily constrain future national policies, directing economic transactions

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<sup>2</sup> For examples, see Flemes and Wehner (2015, 167).

through the leader's economy rather than alternative destinations. The exchange may also require policy concessions, such as voting in an international organization as desired by the regional leader. Regional and global norms filter into these bargains through the leader's short-term or long-term perspective, striking less favorable short-term bargains in the interests of regional stability in the longer term.

A final instrument deployed by each of these rising powers, particularly over the past two decades, has been regional institution-building, an instrument that is often closely linked to deepening economic interdependence and providing public goods. Institutions can have their own independent effects as well. The informational and normative basis of leadership can be enhanced through institutions, especially if they promote a norm of transparency and information-sharing as part of their mandate. The provision of forums for negotiation and dispute resolution represent additional benefits provided by regional institutions. Finally, engagement and membership in regional institutions may have transformational effects on national governments through socialization and the internalization of institutional norms (Kahler 2012; Checkel 2005). Each of these institutional effects may operate on regional leaders as well as their prospective followers; as in the case of economic linkage, the asymmetry of these effects will determine whether the regional leader gains more than followers. For example, a regional institution aligned with the norms promoted by the dominant regional power is more likely to encourage followership in the region.

Before considering the mix of economic integration, public goods provision, and institution-building that constitute the strategies and identities of regional leaders and followers, one important meta-norm should be underscored: the identity of the region itself, which is seldom limited solely to geographical proximity. Region is a political and cultural construct that may be treated as a given by agents in the region. At other times, different versions of that construct will be contested by prospective leaders and their followers, who have an interest in defining the region in ways that will expand their relative influence and confirm particular identities.

### 3.1 China: Economic Dominance and Regional Leadership

China's regional stance in the 2000s aimed to provide assurance to its regional neighbors that its growing economic scale was an opportunity and not a threat. With its history of hostility to the existing capitalist economic order and transnational support for revolutionary movements, China also needed to identify with norms of economic openness, trade and investment liberalization, and non-interference in the domestic politics of its regional neighbors.

Supporting its aspirations to regional leadership was a central economic position in an increasingly integrated region. China's openness to trade and foreign direct investment spurred the growth of global supply chains, in which China and other Asian economies played an important role (Baldwin and Lopez-Gonzalez 2013). China also initiated a wave of preferential trade agreements (PTAs) in the region with its offer of a PTA to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2000; since then, the number of PTAs and other regional economic agreements

in the Asia-Pacific has soared, reaching 155 PTAs signed and in effect by 2018.<sup>3</sup> Although PTAs were a useful instrument for China to assert its economic leadership in the region, the result was not a China-centered web of agreements: Both India and Japan were active initiators of PTAs, and ASEAN emerged as a hub for many trade agreements in the region. Many PTAs were also completed with countries outside the region.

China's PTAs have tended to avoid commitments to deeper integration and harmonization of domestic regulations and policies (Kleimann 2013). The proliferation of China's PTAs and their lack of ambitious content led some to see their motivation as competition with Japan for regional leadership or as a means of assurance directed toward the smaller economies of the region (Grimes 2008; MacIntyre and Ravenhill 2013). Their normative contribution to China's leadership aspirations may have been equally important: They served as a visible commitment device, signifying China's openness to trade and investment. Through PTAs, China's normative commitment to trade liberalization and regional economic integration reassured countries that feared the imposition of more hierarchical and domestically contentious agreements. Given China's socialist past and the continuing prominent role awarded to the state and state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in the Chinese economy, PTAs confirmed China's choice for outward economic integration. At the same time, by endorsing conventional PTAs, rather than more intrusive efforts, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (or its successor, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, CP-TPP), China distanced itself from economic agreements that could be seen as infringements on national sovereignty and policy autonomy.

Both China and its regional neighbors have emphasized China's provision of regional public goods, particularly infrastructure, as a second, central element in establishing regional leadership. These public goods serve the interests of Chinese exporters and the growing number of Chinese firms investing abroad, as well as meeting China's national interests in energy and natural resource security. The most ambitious Chinese program, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), centered on Asia but extended well beyond it. First announced by President Xi Jinping in 2013, the BRI had expanded by 2017 to invited participation from all countries. In its expanded version, BRI represented a turn toward the west and an assertion of Chinese leadership that extended to the Middle East, Africa, and Europe (Economy 2018, 194). In normative terms, the BRI represented an appealing alternative to the emphasis on good governance and social infrastructure stressed by Western donors; China was exporting its experience of "economic development first," spurred by intensive investment in infrastructure, a model appealing to a very heterogeneous group of governments.

At the same time, the terms of China's lending and the lack of transparency in the terms of BRI projects have produced concern over a pattern of indebted development as an instrument of Chinese influence, one that could constrain future policy choices (Hurley et al. 2018). For example, Sri Lanka has become increasingly indebted to

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<sup>3</sup> Statistics reported by the Asian Development Bank for the Asia-Pacific region: <https://aric.adb.org/fta>.



China as the result of loans made under the Rajapaksa government; China received a long-term lease on a deep-water port in exchange for a recent debt write-off. Newly elected governments in Malaysia and Pakistan have re-examined BRI projects agreed under their predecessors, and, in the case of Malaysia, announced that some projects would be cancelled. These setbacks have called into question the public goods character of China's investment in regional infrastructure, as well as its "no questions asked" approach to large infrastructure projects, which are often the site of rent-seeking and corruption. China's challenge to Western norms of good governance and transparency has itself been challenged by publics increasingly mobilized against corrupt elites and their foreign supporters.

Closely linked to regional economic integration and provision of public goods, China demonstrated new activism in regional institution-building in the twenty-first century (Shambaugh 2004/05; Shambaugh 2013, 97–99). Nevertheless, the Chinese leadership initially deferred to its neighbors in ASEAN in the normative content, institutional model, and style of leadership incorporated in those new institutions. In other cases—Asia-Pacific Cooperation (APEC) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB)—incumbent powers stood in the way of Chinese leadership, or China shared leadership, as it did with Japan in the Chiang Mai Initiative (later the CMIM). China-led regional organizations became more common after the formation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 1996. The SCO, which did not include either Japan or the USA in its membership, became a chosen vehicle for building a subregional security order on China's western frontier. China assumed the presidency of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in 2014, an organization with a membership centered on central and western Asia. Its agenda intersected with the security requirements of the BRI and further extended China's leadership in the Asian security domain: Japan and the USA were observers, but not members, of CICA. In their agendas emphasizing counter-terrorism, these organizations exemplified a means of exerting Chinese normative leadership in an arena characterized by considerable domestic sensitivity.

A normative challenge to dominant global institutions was more prominent in the formation of two multilateral development banks (MDBs), the New Development Bank (NDB), and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). The NDB was a creation of the BRICS group; the AIIB had a much larger membership that included many industrialized countries. Both institutions were headquartered in China, however, and a Chinese national, Jin Liqun, became first president of the AIIB. Despite the egalitarian governance structure of the NDB and the limits on China's share of voting rights in the AIIB, "Chinese supremacy in these institutions is inevitable" (Wang 2016, 10).

The announced motivations for the formation of these new MDBs matched in many respects those of China's public goods provision: A regional need for infrastructure that was not being met by the World Bank and the ADB coupled with discontent over the dominance of the industrialized countries in those institutions. Apart from their emphasis on infrastructure, however, normative divergence from existing MDB practices remained uncertain. The AIIB, which was opposed by the USA, recruited extensively from personnel with experience in existing MDBs; it announced intention to pursue co-financing with the World Bank and other MDBs

was confirmed by its first projects. Nevertheless, both institutions also aimed to become “leaner and more efficient” than their incumbent peers, which could mean a weakening of standards for good governance and social and environmental protection established by other MDBs. As one observer has noted, “China’s leadership role in the NDB and the AIIB will likely mean influence of the Chinese development model in their operations.” (*Ibid.*, 10) If China’s development model is interpreted to mean a disregard for the social and environmental costs of development in the interests of rapid economic growth, these new institutions will promote norms that clash with those promoted in recent decades by other regional and global development institutions.

In the multiple instruments that China has used to claim regional leadership, one can identify normative commitments, some of which reflect existing global norms; others suggest a revision of those norms. Through its regional PTAs and support for the World Trade Organization (WTO), China has endorsed trade and investment liberalization, but it has not moved beyond a model of liberalization that concentrates on barriers to economic exchange at the border to a “WTO+” model that would intrude into domestic regulatory regimes or labor and environmental standards. This “thin” version of liberalization allows China to pursue protection of specific sectors, which are excluded from foreign investment, as well as favoring national champions through an array of state supports. Although China has both participated in and founded multilateral regional organizations, its provision of infrastructure, largely through BRI-related projects, remains overwhelmingly bilateral. Perhaps most significant, throughout its quest for regional leadership in a highly heterogeneous region, is China’s acceptance of governments as they are: expecting deference to Chinese interests but attaching less formal conditionality to its lending, as compared to Western aid donors or MDBs. Support for state-led development, less attention to transparent and accountable governance, fewer safeguards for social and environmental standards—these might be seen as an alternative set of norms that run counter to those promoted by incumbent powers. Whether China’s mix of strategies and its normative alternative will award it regional leadership remains uncertain, however. Although it has not turned to an overtly coercive regional policy in asserting its leadership, the Chinese government has increasingly wielded both economic incentives and sanctions in bargaining with prospective regional followers. Vietnam, for example, has confronted both Chinese claims in its Exclusive Economic Zone and offers by China of joint infrastructure development and monetary cooperation, as well as membership in the AIIB, which Vietnam has accepted.<sup>4</sup>

It is uncertain whether this tougher bargaining stance, when coupled with the creation of new China-centered institutions such as the AIIB and the promotion of alternative norms, will reinforce China’s leadership of the region. Although China has invested in regional public goods and engaged with regional institutions, its exchange of such goods with regional partners has not entirely offset the unease that has resulted from China’s rapid economic rise. Regional institutions have been

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<sup>4</sup> Brian Spegele, “China Takes a Carrot and Stick Approach to Dealing with Neighbors,” *Wall Street Journal*, 12 November 2015.

neither institutionalized enough nor China-centered enough to confirm China's regional leadership. Although many of the norms advanced by China in support of its regional leadership resonate with other governments—particularly its emphasis on economic development, infrastructure investment, and less policy conditionality—their publics increasingly demand greater transparency and symmetry in external bargains that commit their societies for decades to come. Finally, the prospective followers of China remain attached to the norm of open regionalism—their ability to maintain economic ties and institutional memberships that include non-Asian powers. China must assure its regional partners that a China-led order will continue to reflect that longstanding norm.

### 3.2 India: Asymmetry, Bilateralism, and Limits on Regional Leadership

History, asymmetry, and a recent record of intervention have presented obstacles to India's strategy for leadership of South Asia. The violent disintegration of the British Raj left a shared colonial legacy and a shared elite language as well as an unresolved territorial dispute (Jammu and Kashmir), a longstanding rivalry between India and Pakistan, and suspicion of India's intentions on the part of smaller states in the region. The acceleration of India's economic growth in the 1990s only intensified the asymmetry between India and its South Asian neighbors. Unlike China and Brazil, India also has a recent history of military intervention in neighboring states. As Harsh Pant describes, India asserted a *de facto* Monroe Doctrine in the region while proclaiming its attachment to the norm of nonintervention. Other powers were meant to stay out of the region, and any appeal by a regional state for such external assistance was viewed as hostile (Pant 2014; Mohan 2013, 37).

Economic integration has proven to be a weaker support for India's regional leadership than it has been for China. Gradual liberalization of its trade regime during the 1990s led India to become more interested in the promotion of regional economic interdependence as a means of expanding markets for its exports. In the case of Pakistan, the second largest economy in South Asia, politics continued to dominate economics. Although India gave Pakistan most-favored-nation status in 1996, Pakistan did not reciprocate. Trade between the two rivals remains well below levels that have been projected in the absence of politically imposed restrictions (Desai 2010, 17–18; Ayres 2018, 178). Several of the smaller economies in the region pursued similar policies of self-defeating (in economic terms) trade barriers and resistance to Indian foreign direct investment, even though such investment would have reduced persistent trade deficits with India (Desai 2010, 18). In its active promotion of PTAs outside South Asia, India's liberalization ambitions were limited. Its PTA resembled with the ASEAN–China agreement in its avoidance of deeper integration and its limited scope. None of its commitments exceeded those of the WTO, causing one critic to label it an “essentially hollow agreement” (Kleimann 2013, 46). India's weak normative commitment to trade and investment liberalization has deep roots in Indian politics. Its conflicted stance was reflected recently in Prime Minister Modi's 2018 Davos address in which he compared protectionism to the dangers of terrorism

or climate change; at the same time, India raised import duties on a wide range of products “to provide adequate protection to domestic industry.”

Domestic politics and the persistent appeal of protectionism hindered India’s use of economic interdependence as a powerful instrument of regional policy. Despite Modi’s “Make in India” campaign, India export success lays in its services industries; unlike China, it had not become central to one of the global clusters of supply chain manufacturing centered in East Asia, North America, and Europe (Baldwin and Lopez-Gonzalez 2013). One explanation for India’s relatively weak performance as an exporter of manufactures lays in the deficiencies of its infrastructure. Those deficiencies have also influenced a second strategy that India might have deployed to establish its regional leadership: the provision of regional public goods. China’s contributions to regional infrastructure confirmed its central position in the regional economy. India’s inability to mobilize similar resources in support of regional connectivity was yet another limitation on its leadership in South Asia. In the case of other public goods, such as the provision of regional security or conflict resolution, India did not play a prominent role, in part because of its interventionist past. Its willingness to cooperate with extra-regional agencies and powers in resolving conflicts, such as those in Nepal and Sri Lanka, only underscored the shortcomings of its own strategies (Bajpai 2013, 125–26).

Although India has participated in regional institution-building with partners in both South Asia and Southeast Asia, these institutions have hardly been the centerpiece of India’s regional policy, much less its overall foreign relations. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), founded in 1985, was initially viewed by India as a vehicle of policy constraint promoted by its smaller neighbors. By the 1990s, India adopted a more positive attitude toward SAARC, but its modest investment in the organization did not produce a greater degree of success (Mohan 2013, 34–35; Raghavan 2013, 60). SAARC did provide a useful venue for summits among national leaders. Much like the APEC summits, informal meetings on the side of the formal gatherings have sometimes produced positive diplomatic results (Desai 2010, 21). The South Asia Free Trade Area (SAFTA), initiated in 2006, has not produced concerted liberalization; its design permitted national opt-outs from tariff reductions, allowed for a lengthy phasing in of liberalization commitments, and permitted politically driven restrictions on India–Pakistan trade to continue (Desai 2010, 22; Ahmed 2013).

Spurred by the growing economic presence of China in South Asia, India has pursued bilateral agreements with SAARC members as well other regional options (Ayres 2018, 177). India was a founding member of several regional initiatives outside SAARC. These agreements excluded Pakistan and included other members of SAARC as well as Southeast Asian and Africa partners. The Indian Ocean Rim Association received Indian attention, in light of China’s BRI projects in the region, and the Indian Navy founded the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) in 2008 to coordinate discussions on regional maritime defense. The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), and the Mekong–Ganga Cooperation (MGC) offered thin institutional support for cooperation with India’s eastern regional neighbors. Indian governments were initially enthusiasts for these entities, which complemented India’s Look East policy.

Their record was ultimately disappointing: “nothing of substance has been achieved in these organizations” (Michael 2013, 188). In the wider Asian region, India has collaborated with China in such organizations at the SCO, the NDB, and the AIIB. China is the clear leader in these institutions, however, even though an Indian national heads the NDB.

India’s effort to achieve regional leadership demonstrates that sheer economic weight within a region does not translate easily into acknowledgment of a leadership role by the other states in a region, much less into support for the aspiring leader’s global ambitions. On the contrary, India exemplifies the barriers to cooperation when other, smaller countries fear both India’s economic power and its military capabilities. India’s rivalry with Pakistan is of longer standing than China’s tense relationship with Japan, and it colors regional relations more directly. India’s economic reforms and opening may have given impetus to India’s interest in regional arrangements, but that impetus did not produce sustained Indian support for any of the avenues that might produce regional leadership: “The challenge for Indian diplomacy lies in convincing its neighbors that India is an opportunity, not a threat.” (Malone 2011, 127). Rather than serving as instruments of assurance for its smaller regional partners, efforts to build regional cooperation in the presence of a “trust deficit” often served to increase fears of Indian domination (Desai 2010, 26).

Equally important, one strains to see a normative basis for India’s regional leadership that would compensate for its economic, infrastructure, and institutional deficits. Its credibility as an economic magnet for the region, despite its size, has been undermined by equivocation in its attachment to the norms of trade and investment liberalization. Overall, it has shared China’s “hard” view of sovereignty, despite its record of occasional intervention in neighboring states. In contrast to China, however, India is a successful liberal democracy, despite a high level of ethnic, religious, and linguistic heterogeneity. In contrast to Brazil, another democracy, it operates in a region of considerable political diversity. Unlike the USA or the European Union, India has not exported its model of democracy as a mean of exercising regional leadership. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has shared technical expertise in organizing elections on a large scale, but India has abstained from proselytizing on behalf of either democracy or human rights at either the regional or global level (Ayres 2018, 152–158). Its attachment to political openness is also qualified by such legislation as the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), which governs external funding to Indian NGOs. A turn to Hindu nationalist identity would further undermine the normative basis of its leadership among its Muslim- and Buddhist-majority neighbors.

### 3.3 Brazil: Seeking Low-Cost Leadership in a Zone of Peace

At first glance, Brazil appears to confront lower barriers to its quest for regional leadership than China or India. Historical and structural features accompanying its rise should create conditions for a leader acceptable to its prospective followers. As Malamud and Alcañiz (2014) describe, Brazil’s region has enjoyed a long period of interstate peace. Brazil’s economic rise has not been accompanied by either military

modernization on the scale of China and India or a record of forcible intervention in the affairs of its neighbors. Most important, in the 1980s Brazil resolved its persistent, militarized rivalry with Argentina and moved quickly to implement regional economic cooperation in the Southern Common Market (Mercosur). Brazil is the largest economy in South America, an asymmetry that should support its claims to regional leadership. At the same time, the intra-regional asymmetry in economic weight (and the perceptions of threat that it might produce) is not as great as that between India and its neighbors. (Brazil's economy is 3.7 times larger than Argentina's; India's is more than eight times the size of Pakistan's). Brazil also enjoys the advantage of being a liberal democracy in a region that, with few exceptions, is committed to the norms of liberal democracy.

Despite these promising initial conditions, Brazil has not confirmed its position as the undisputed leader of South America, much less Latin America. Despite a program of trade liberalization that paralleled the opening of the Chinese and Indian economies, economic interdependence has not served as a prominent instrument for building a Brazil-centered regional order. Brazil's economic scale has not been matched by equivalent economic openness. Brazil's economy is neither as open as China's nor as central to global supply chains in manufacturing: Brazil has not built "Factory Latin America." Its normative attachment to economic openness has long been tempered by an even more powerful attachment to an interventionist state and a developmentalist policy orientation.<sup>5</sup> A deep economic recession (2015–2017) and political uncertainty created by a massive political scandal (Lava Jato or Car Wash scandal) as well as the impeachment of one president and the near-impeachment of another was accompanied by a turn toward market-oriented policies under President Temer. Brazil's record in Mercosur, however, has not demonstrated consistent leadership in favor of trade liberalization. Mercosur's long-running negotiations with the EU for a preferential trade agreement have been offset by earlier measures of protection directed against third parties and other Mercosur members, which undermined the customs union.

Since Brazil's economic leverage has not enabled it to "buy its way into regional or global leadership" (Malamud and Alcañiz, 5), it has relied on other instruments of influence: the provision of regional public goods and institution-building as a means of asserting its leadership role. Brazil has incorporated the promotion of regional connectivity in its support for the Initiative for the Integration of the Regional Infrastructure of South America (IIRSA). The initiative, which became part of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), has so far engaged principally in agenda-setting and planning (Carciofi 2012). Its projects have been criticized as violating emergent norms governing environmental protection and the rights of indigenous peoples. Brazil's own infrastructure deficits, which have become a salient issue in Brazilian politics, also make a major contribution to regional infrastructure more controversial. In the provision of regional services, particularly in the domain of security, Brazil has been "a stingy contributor," participating actively in the UN mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), but

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<sup>5</sup> On these features of Brazil's economy and economic policies, Porzecanski (2015) and Villela (2015).

limiting its financial contribution and conceding a measure of leadership to the USA following the 2010 earthquake (Malamud and Alcañiz, 14–16; Flandes and Wehner 2015, 167). Brazil has also demonstrated an “inexplicable unwillingness to become more involved in transborder problems in South America,” such as crime and drug trafficking (Montero 2014, 172). This reluctance to lead is owed in part to the same domestic political scrutiny that is confronted by India and China: as countries with relatively low levels of per capita income, contributions to regional public goods—and the provision of benefits to richer neighbors—can become a target of domestic critics (Gratius and Gomes Saraiva 2013).

Regional institution-building has been the centerpiece of Brazil’s quest for regional leadership, particularly during the presidency of Lula da Silva. During the 1990s, Mercosur confirmed a new cooperative relationship with former rival Argentina as well as creating economic opportunities for a liberalizing Brazilian economy. Although successive financial economic crises in Brazil and Argentina undermined Mercosur’s earlier successes, it was not discarded, and its membership eventually expanded. At a minimum, Mercosur served as “a vehicle for increasing leverage in the international system” (Gómez-Mera 2013, 7). For Brazil, Mercosur also provided a means of countering the US plans for a Free Trade Area of the Americas, plans that were effectively shelved in 2005 as a result of opposition from Brazil and its Mercosur partners (Gratius and Gomes Saraiva 2013; Teixeira 2012, 110–135). Brazil’s next major institutional project began with the South American Summits in 2000, meetings that paved the way for UNASUR, an institution that united Mercosur and the Andean Community and provided the rudiments of defense and security governance structure (Malamud and Alcañiz 2014, 7). UNASUR also established Brazil’s preference for a narrower rather than a wider region: South America rather than Latin America or the Americas. However, Brazil’s orientation toward regional institutional development was, like its stance on regional public goods, highly cost-conscious, insisting on “reciprocal multilateralism” in order to shift some of the burdens of regional leadership to others (Montero 2014, 174). The regional institutions that it sponsored were low-cost intergovernmental organizations with little permanent infrastructure and limited capacity.

Brazil’s regional strategies were marked by a deep-seated ambivalence because of its unwillingness to absorb the costs—whether in opening its economy, providing regional public goods, or building resilient regional institutions—of regional leadership (Gómez-Mera 2013; Gratius and Gomes Saraiva 2013, 10; Montero 2014, 174–175). That attentiveness to costs became even more apparent following the accession of Dilma Rousseff to the presidency, the emergence of protests over neglect of Brazil’s public infrastructure, and the onset of Brazil’s deep economic recession. Brazil also demonstrated the same “oscillation” found in China and India between “investing in region-building and pursuing global strategies” (Malamud and Alcañiz 2014, 15). The limited success of its regional strategies was confirmed in the response of prospective followers in the region. The middle powers of Latin America consistently indicated that they would not concede regional primacy to Brazil (Wehner 2014, 9–10, 14). They favored joint leadership and consensus in order to reach common positions, not a more hierarchical model dominated by Brazil.

Brazil's ambivalence toward these strategies of leadership also had a normative dimension. The values of economic openness and attachment to multilateral institutions were qualified by Brazil's historically grounded conceptions of liberalism, "a revisionist, idiosyncratic Brazilian approach to the globally dominant Anglo-Saxon notions of liberalism" (Maia and Taylor 2015, 35). Brazil's economic model awarded a larger role to the state and state intervention in the context of a democracy that faced rising domestic demands for public expenditure and fiscal imbalances that only deepened during the recession. Brazil's developmentalism shaped its ambivalence toward trade liberalization, which hampered its regional leadership, and its approach to regional institutions reflected a concern with sovereignty that left those institutions relatively powerless and dependent on national political leaders. These tendencies were reinforced when Mercosur was governed by left-wing governments in Brazil and other member states that were deeply skeptical of market-based liberalization as a model for regional integration. In one domain, however, Brazil's hard-won liberal democracy was reflected in leadership that was accepted in the region: the incorporation of democracy protection clauses that allowed for collective sanctions against authoritarian backsliding in both Mercosur and UNASUR. The adoption of these clauses reflected a conception of democratic tutelage on the part of larger South American states, including Brazil, over smaller democracies, such as Paraguay, that were perceived as less stable. The clauses served as the basis for intervention in four democracy-related crises in Paraguay by Mercosur and four additional interventions by UNASUR (Closa and Palestini 2018, 455).

#### 4 Leadership Norms and Regional Outcomes

The regional strategies of these three emerging powers and the norms that shape leaders and followers in their regions have not matched the alternatives represented by Germany or Russia. Germany's embrace of economic integration and regional public goods provision in a highly institutionalized environment represents a version of regional leadership that was guided by "hard" liberal norms, in many respects more consistently liberal than those endorsed globally by the USA. Although China, India, and Brazil each adopted programs of economic liberalization in recent decades, with dramatic and positive results, their liberalization has been highly qualified by varieties of developmentalism that award a large role to the state as a buffer and guide in negotiating the international economy. In the provision of regional public goods, they have been even more constrained than Germany by domestic demands and scrutiny: they are large economies (by global and regional standards), but they are not rich economies. Their activism in regional institution-building has resulted in a proliferation of regional forums in which they can play prominent roles, but they have been unwilling to build European-style, legalized institutions that might constrain their policy autonomy.

At the same time, none of these powers has followed Russia in pursuing an overtly coercive strategy for regional leadership. They have grappled with the dilemmas of asymmetry: a requirement for leadership but also a feature that must be countered with strategies of assurance, convincing regional followers that their regional



dominance will not be abused or used for exploitation. India's history of military intervention and China's recent willingness to deploy its economic weight to obtain acquiescence and support from regional governments make such strategies of assurance even more important.

Between the poles of Germany's liberal model and Russia's coercive model, these three regional powers have attempted to design leadership strategies and norms in line with both their domestic constraints—political and ideological—and the demands of a regional order that should award them a central place. Each has defined region identity in a way that enhances its influence. China designed regional organizations that looked toward central and western Asia, where its economic weight is most apparent; Brazil chose South America as a sphere that excludes two of its major competitors for leadership, Mexico and the USA. India, on the other hand, opted for wider regional definitions in order to disadvantage its rival, Pakistan, and to link to more dynamic economies in other parts of Asia. The identity of the region itself could provide an important normative basis for leadership claims.

Claims of exclusive regional identity, however, have been contested by prospective followers as a basis for regional cooperation, setting limits on the leadership aspirations of these emerging powers. Regional competitors—and even countries that are too small to be true competitors—are able to circumvent the leadership claims of these larger countries because of the availability of outside regional options and available global norms, an important distinction between the contemporary globalized world and earlier periods, such as the 1930s. Landlocked Central Asia finds economic partners in Japan and Korea, as well as China; Myanmar is courted by China, India, ASEAN, the USA, and the European Union. Chile crafts an economic strategy that includes associate status in Mercosur, free trade agreements with the USA and other partners, and membership in the Pacific Alliance, a group of market-oriented Latin American economies. None of these countries sees itself as “caged” in a regional definition set by the dominant power. As a result, they are willing and able to bargain over the claims for regional preeminence and global influence made of the largest regional power.

None of these powers has promoted a normative basis for regional cooperation that clearly confirms their status. China's combination of limited liberalization, state-sponsored infrastructure investment, and regional organizations that concede a wide scope for national sovereignty may offer a normative competitor that is more appealing to some state elites than the liberal model promoted by the EU and the USA. That model embodies its own contradictions, however, since the norms of non-interference and “hard” sovereignty set limits on the ability of the leader to constrain the policies of its followers.

## 5 From Regional to Global: Leadership Norms and Emerging Powers

Regional leadership norms and strategies adopted by the emerging powers may partially explain and predict their choices in an emerging polycentric global order. The constraints that they have faced as regional leaders are likely to become more binding at the global level. They confront powerful normative proponents and

constituencies that may be absent in their regions. In domestic politics, their contributions to regional public goods were a potential target for critics, who pointed to competing, unmet domestic needs. The costs of global leadership will be even more difficult to justify.

Although the emerging powers often accepted and adapted dominant global economic norms in their quest for regional leadership, their economic liberalism has been qualified by regulation of cross-border economic flows in the interests of domestic stability. Their willingness to provide international public goods beyond those that satisfy clearly defined national interests has been limited by domestic demands on their resources. Their embrace of multilateral institutions is often hedged by distrust of binding constraints on their policy autonomy, pointing toward a larger role for informal and less legalized institutions. While pressing for reform of global institutions and a greater role in global governance during their rise in global influence, the emerging powers were able to ward off threats to their own models of economic and political development posed by those same liberal norms, as interpreted by the incumbent powers. For example, they rebuffed pressure to remove restraints on cross-border capital flows; they offered a narrow interpretation of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). Overall, their present regional strategies points to a global future in which existing norms are modified and qualified, but not overturned.

For much of the post-Cold War era, the international environment accommodated this posture of the emerging powers. In recent years, however, China, India, and Brazil have confronted a different and less forgiving international setting. Liberal norms once taken for granted are now questioned by dominant powers—or political forces within them. Normative “free-riding” may no longer be possible. Choice for reformed liberal order or one less rule-based and subject to national discretion may be forced upon them. Their economic models, which have awarded a larger role for the state and a willingness to use protectionist measure in the interest of economic development, may be less acceptable to the USA and Europe, as the incumbent economic powers come under increasing domestic pressure from nationalist and protectionist political forces. At the same time, smaller developing economies, most at risk from a closed world economy, may call on the emerging powers to defend the existing liberal order as the price for accepting their leadership.

In forecasting the future of global leadership and its normative accompaniments on the part of these emerging powers, their appeal to sovereignty and self-determination has been the most attractive element in the norms that sustained their leadership claims. These norms were firmly embedded in existing international norms; in this sense, their concentration on these norms cast them as conservatives. On the other hand, recent ideological turns toward nationalism under Xi Jinping in China, Narendra Modi in India, and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, may limit the normative appeal of these powers and undermine the reassurance provided by their endorsement of non-interference in the affairs of other states.

The three emerging powers—China, India, and Brazil—will confront difficult choices in coming decades. Normative free-riding on a stable liberal international order may no longer be possible. In each of the critical areas where they had found a politically and economically comfortable compromise—economic opening, provision of public goods, and institution-building—past compromises may no longer

hold. One possibility is a deeper commitment to certain liberal norms, particularly those of economic openness and multilateral agreement. On the other hand, the emerging powers may take further steps to undermine the existing order to participate in a new constellation of great power competition, based on limited bilateral bargains and appeals to nationalism. Most likely, however, is a redefinition of the liberal order, already underway, that comports with their normative preferences. Those preferences, revealed in their claims of regional leadership, point away from the “micro-liberalism” of the USA and Europe, which emphasizes the reordering of domestic institutions and practices along liberal lines, and toward a “macro-liberalism” that matches the commitments of the emerging powers to sovereignty and self-determination and permits a wider space for variation in national institutions. Such a redefinition may provide the most likely normative basis for a new collective global leadership; whether that leadership will emerge is perhaps the most important question for international politics in the decades to come.

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