HARVARD UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT

GOVERNMENT 94CT
THE GOVERNANCE AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS OF WORLD REGIONS
FALL TERM, 2022 – WEDNESDAYS 9:45 TO 11:45 A.M., CGIS KNAFEL K109

Professor Timothy J. Colton
Email tcolton@fas.harvard.edu
Office CGIS South 333
Office telephone (617) 495-4345
Office hours Wednesday 2 to 4 p.m., or by appointment
Foreign ministers of Association of Southeast Asian Nations meet, Singapore, 2018

Pro-Brexit protest, London, 2019
Judges of African Court on Human and People’s Rights, Arusha, Tanzania, 2016

University building shelled by Russian Army in Kharkiv, Ukraine, 2022
ABOUT THE COURSE

Gov 94CT builds on an observation the headlines drive home every day: ours is an unsettled time. The post–Cold War vision of a Pax Americana, 24/7 and planetwide, now fits awkwardly with reality. Venerable pecking orders, rules, and norms are under extreme stress. “Nobody Wants the Current World Order,” blares an article by an Indian statesman on the syllabus below. Prognosticating a future world order, or conceivably disorder, has mushroomed into a cottage industry.¹

The world regions explored in Gov 94CT are taken to be multi-country neighborhoods defined by physical proximity, and thus positioned midway between the global and the national.² They have mattered in international politics for some while now, as regional arenas, actors, and institutions have proliferated. A bigger challenge analytically is claims of a deeper shift – beyond a world with regions and toward a world of regions, where, it is said, more or less amicable clusters grouped around core states or coalitions become foundational to the whole system. An ambition of Gov 94CT is to put this notion to the test, using a broad range of tools and data. Is it true to the established or emerging facts? If not, what would be a better approximation of reality?

For decades, the narrative regarding regional communities held them to a single gold standard, i.e., the expansive supranational project eventually christened the European Union. A Eurocentric approach today might find as many doubters as devotees. The EU itself has been roiled by Brexit and by discord over centralization, the eurozone, migration, rule of law, and Covid – although it has also proven to be, to borrow a phrase, a cat with nine lives. When we scan the horizon, it is clear that no one size fits every region: the stories converge in some respects and diverge in others. International politics can in principle cohere regionally in a repressive or a conflictual mode, and not necessarily in a cooperative mode. Nor are regional relations in any given locale set in stone. On the contrary, the record shows them to be capable of changing in fine detail or even at root, for reasons imperfectly understood. Accordingly, our class aims to acquaint students with this variation across space and time and to come up with explanations for it.

The course engages with large and diverse scholarly literatures. References to the canonic international relations theories of neorealism, liberal institutionalism, and Wendtian

¹ The industry has generated numerous labels for the budding state of affairs, led by the familiar multipolarity and the rather hackneyed “new world disorder.” One list of exotic tags includes plurilateralism, multimodal order, multiplex world, decentered globalism, polymorphic globalism, multi-order world, and deep pluralism. Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, The Making of Global International Relations (Cambridge UP, 2019), 65.
² Do not confuse these with official subnational units of government (e.g., Bavaria, Gujarat) or with what geographers dub “vernacular” within-country regions (e.g., the Midlands, Silicon Valley).
constructivism, joined now by nascent “global IR theory,” will give us much food for thought. Paradigms from comparative politics will afford additional insight.

The emphasis in Gov 94CT, however, is on overlapping perspectives or lines of attack closer to the behavior at hand. They frame region as place, experience, choice, ideas, and outcomes; the accent is on the third and fourth.

Here is a sketch of the five perspectives and a sampling of the concrete items we will address in discussion.

PLACE. A region is anchored in place. Place is space infused with meaning. Any regional meaning is open to interpretation, contestation, and reinvention. Some items of interest:

- mental maps of region – how autonomous from geography and climate?
- precursors, e.g., civilizations, empires, tributary systems, Braudel’s Mediterranean world, the 19th century Concert of Europe
- perplexing regions – porous, nested, intersecting, competing, mega, extinct

EXPERIENCE. Human experience brings regional place to life. From this point of view, individuals are embedded to some extent (to what extent?) in regions. Their regional experience comes through in trans-border connectivity and resonance. Some items of interest:

- connectivity with benign effects (e.g., supply chains, labor mobility, pop culture), harmful effects (e.g., terrorism, criminality, epidemic disease), mixed effects (e.g., refugee flows, social media)
- shared practices in daily affairs, business, politics, cuisine, etc.
- the weight of regional vs. global and national experience

CHOICE. Political scientists are likely to care most about region when it is a base for the exercise of power, the purposive choice of policy or partisan objectives, or the strategies to achieve them. Some items of interest:

- crafting cooperative regional institutions – why the contrast between, say, the oft-extolled EU and the “zombie” SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation)?
- geopolitics, role of the great powers (starting with the United States), local hegemons and would-be hegemons, hot and cold wars, coercive regional orders, conflict as region maker
- the nexus between regional and national political agendas
- the nexus between regional and national hierarchies and power structures (economic,
IDEAS. Taking cues from the constructivist school, this viewpoint tends to focus on identity, the imaginary, and socialization. **Some items of interest:**

- language, religion, and history as sources of regional identities and of alternatives to them
- the search and struggle for status
- diffusion, adaptation, and localization of the ideology of regionalism
- hyphenated regionalism: sub- (what to make of Scandinavia, the Adriatic, the Levant, etc.?), inter-, extra-, cross-, trans-, pan-
- linkages between nationalism, populism, and anti-regionalism

OUTCOMES. At the end of the day, how does all of this bear on the shape of the international order and on good governance? **Some items of interest:**

- is there indeed a trend toward a world of regions?
- the efficacy of regional vs. national or global responses to vital issues
- a uniform governance formula or differentiation by issue area?

The first few sessions of Gov 94CT are budgeted for familiarization with the knowledge base and with key puzzles and debates. Successive weeks deal with the micro empirics of **particular** regional theaters, reaching out from them for macro generalizations.

Our areal targets, using the conventional toponyms, are:

- Europe
- post-Soviet Eurasia
- Northeast Asia
- Southeast Asia
- South Asia
- the Middle East
- Africa
- Latin America and the Caribbean
ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

Two evaluation packages are available.

**PACKAGE A.** I expect most students to choose this package. In it, grades are assigned proportionally for:

- class participation – 30 percent
- response papers – 30 percent
- final paper – 40 percent

**Participation:** Students are expected to do the readings (subject to the “minus three clause” below), have a say in the weekly meetings, and carry out some low-key verbal contributions – ins and outs to be finalized on the go.

**Response papers:** Students are to write brief responses to the readings for any three of weeks 4 through 13, submitted (NB) in advance of the discussion of the designated topic. So as to ensure timely feedback, a first response paper is to be submitted by no later than week 6 (October 12). Length is three or four pages (double-spaced, 12 font). The essays may either (a) synthesize the readings or (b) bear down on a selected aspect or theme. Please email them to me by 9 a.m. on the Wednesday of class – in MS Word, for ease of me commenting on the text.

**Final paper:** The final assignment is a longer paper of approximately fifteen pages on a topic of the student’s choosing. It will be due during the reading period on the date assigned the course by the Registrar.

**PACKAGE B.** The second option is more research-oriented and omits the response papers. The components are simply:

- participation – 30 percent, same as above
- an in-depth research paper of approximately twenty-five pages – worth 70 percent, not 40 percent

It is not necessary to choose between A and B until week 5 or 6.
BOOKSTORE AND READINGS

A half-dozen books are stocked at the Coop. This link will be of use: https://tinyurl.com/F22-PLACE-COOP-BOOK-ORDER-HERE. In the order of utilization, the books are:

- Alice D. Ba, (Re)Negotiating East and Southeast Asia: Region, Regionalism, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Stanford UP, 2009); ISBN-13: 978-0804760706

For those prioritizing affordability over convenience, all these books can be accessed digitally through HOLLIS, the Harvard Library’s online catalogue. The mechanism for downloading can be a bit cumbersome but it does work for the most part.

Unless signposted otherwise, journal articles and book chapters are available for reading online or downloading as pdf files through the Gov 94CT site on Canvas. You will probably find it easiest to access them in weekly groupings. These can be found on the course home page (Week 1, Week 2, etc.), and also at the Modules tab, which duplicates the weekly grouping from the home page. For those who prefer, all these materials are also listed individually at the Files tab, alphabetically by author. A small number of readings are to be retrieved on the WWW by clicking a URL.

Each weekend, I will email students a short “roadmap” to the readings for the next Wednesday’s scheduled meeting.

NB: THE MINUS THREE CLAUSE. Scan the books for their meat and relevance to essential stuff. For the copious articles and book chapters, students who have the study bandwidth to peruse them all are encouraged to do so, and should learn a lot from them. Students who are hard pressed for time are free under a Gov 94CT “minus three clause” (a.k.a. the mercy clause) to subtract up to three articles or book chapters from their list that week. This will
still leave us a robust representation of the full set when the group gathers at the seminar table.

DISCUSSION TOPICS AND READINGS BY WEEK

1. INTRODUCTION (SEPTEMBER 7)

No assigned materials – but feel free to read ahead!

2. THE BASICS – PLACE AND PEOPLE (SEPTEMBER 14)


Amrith, *Crossing the Bay of Bengal*.

OR Kaplan, *Adriatic*.


3. THEORETICAL LENSES (SEPTEMBER 21)


### 4. Regions and the International Distribution of Power (September 28)

Katzenstein, *World of Regions*. Concentrate on chaps. 1, 2, 3, 7.


5. EUROPE’S AMBITIOUS UNION AND ITS DISCONTENTS (OCTOBER 5)

Usherwood and Pinder, *European Union*.


6. POST-SOVIET EURASIA (OCTOBER 12)


Charap and Colton, *Everyone Loses*.


7. CHINA, “NORTHEAST ASIA,” AND BEYOND (OCTOBER 19)


8. SOUTHEAST ASIA (OCTOBER 26)

Ba, (Re)Negotiating East and Southeast Asia.


Bilahari Kausikan, “Threading the Needle in Southeast Asia: How Biden Can Work with Countries That Can’t Afford to Alienate China,” *Foreign Affairs* (online), May 11, 2022.
9. SOUTH ASIA (NOVEMBER 2)


10. THE MIDDLE EAST (NOVEMBER 9)


**11. AFRICA (NOVEMBER 16)**


Jeffrey Herbst, “Crafting Regional Cooperation in Africa,” chap. 4 in Acharya and Johnston, *Crafting Cooperation*.


12. LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (NOVEMBER 30)


Carlos Closa and Stefano Palestini, “Tutelage and Regime Survival in Regional Organizations’ Democracy Protection: The Case of MERCOSUR and UNASUR,” *World Politics* 70 (July 2018), 443–76.


13. READING-PERIOD REVIEW AND WRAPUP (DECEMBER 7)

Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse, “Three Cheers for Comparative Regionalism,” chap. 27 in *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Regionalism*. 


**HONOR CODE**

Lest anyone be unaware, Gov 94CT is guided by the College’s Honor Code. The code reads: “Members of the Harvard College community commit themselves to producing academic work of integrity – that is, work that adheres to the scholarly and intellectual standards of accurate attribution of sources, appropriate collection and use of data, and transparent acknowledgement of the contribution of others to their ideas, discoveries, interpretations, and conclusions. Cheating on exams or problem sets, plagiarizing or misrepresenting the ideas or language of someone else as one’s own, falsifying data, or any other instance of academic dishonesty violates the standards of our community, as well as the standards of the wider world of learning and affairs.”