HARVARD UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT

GOVERNMENT 94CT
THE GOVERNANCE AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS OF WORLD REGIONS
SPRING TERM, 2022 – MONDAYS 3 TO 5 P.M., CGIS KNAFEI K109

Professor Timothy J. Colton
Email tcolton@fas.harvard.edu
Office CGIS South 333
Office telephone (617) 495-4345
Office hours Wednesday 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., or by appointment
Judges of African Court on Human and People’s Rights, Arusha, Tanzania, 2016
ABOUT THE COURSE

Gov 94CT builds on an observation that the headlines drive home every day: ours is an unsettled world. The post–Cold War vision of a Pax Americana, 24/7 and planetwide, now fits poorly with reality. Venerable leadership roles, pecking orders, rules, and norms are under stress. Prognosticating a future order, or conceivably disorder, has mushroomed into a cottage industry.¹

The world regions explored here are multi-country neighborhoods defined by physical proximity, and thus positioned midway between the global and the national level.² A proliferation of regional arenas and actors in decades past is cause enough to pay attention. Regions have mattered in international politics for some while now. A bigger challenge analytically is the recent claim of a deeper shift – beyond a world with regions and toward a world of regions, where, it is said, more or less harmonious spatial clusters grouped around core states or coalitions become foundational to the whole system. An ambition of Gov 94CT is to put this intriguing but largely untried notion to the test, using a broad range of tools and data. Is it true to the facts or at a minimum to the emerging facts? If not, is there a closer approximation of reality?

The narrative regarding regional communities long held them to a single gold standard, i.e., the expansive supranational project eventually named the European Union. A Eurocentric approach today might find as many doubters as devotees. In Europe itself, the EU has been roiled by Brexit and by discord over centralization, the eurozone, migration, rule of law, and public health in the Covid age – although it has also proven to be, to borrow a phrase, a cat with nine lives. If a multiplicity of regions are scrutinized, it is apparent that no one size fits all: stories converge in some respects and diverge in others. International politics can in principle cohere regionally in a hierarchical or conflictual mode, and not necessarily in a cooperative mode. Nor are regional relations 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 constructivism

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. Taken from 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).
abound and give much food for thought – categories that will be elucidated in the early running. Paradigms from comparative politics 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 quick sketch of the five perspectives and a sampling of the concrete items we will reckon with 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 – 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 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, conflict as potential region maker
- the nexus between regional and national political agendas

IDEAS. Taking cues from the constructivist school, this viewpoint focuses 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 for and struggle for status – is this about power only, about identity, or both?

diffusion, adaptation, and localization of the ideology of regionalism

hyphenated regionalism: inter-, extra-, cross-, trans-, pan-, sub-

linkages between nationalism, populism, and anti-regionalism

OUTCOMES. At the end of the day, what is the bearing of all this 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 examine the empirics of particular regional theaters, drawing thematic connections between them and reaching for macro generalizations and conclusions. Our designated areal targets, using the conventional (and disputable) toponyms, are:

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

Special note is made of heavyweight states in or in the vicinity of given regions, including the United States, China, Russia, Japan, India, Indonesia, and Brazil.

The center of gravity of the course, in sum, is the study of very specific places,

3 The plural Asias referred to in ordinary parlance and expert work are a reminder that regional boundaries are often contested. The World of Regions book by Katzenstein on our syllabus refers to Asia as a whole as a region. An excellent new study by T. J. Pempel (A Region of Regimes: Prosperity and Plunder in the Asia-Pacific [Cornell UP, 2021]) uses time-honored terminology about “Asia-Pacific” and “East Asia” to encompass many of these same countries. These naming issues will be discussed in the class.
comparatively and with rigor and a dose of empathy.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

Grades are assigned proportionally for:

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

PARTICIPATION: Students are expected to do the readings (see the description of the “minus three clause” below), have a say in the weekly meetings, and carry out a few low-key verbal contributions – ins and outs to be finalized once enrollment is known.

RESPONSE PAPERS: Students are to write brief responses to the readings for any three of weeks 4 through 13. So as to ensure timely feedback, a first response paper must be submitted by no later than week 6 (February 28). 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. Please email them to me by 9 a.m. on the Monday of class – in MS Word, for ease of commenting on the text.

FINAL PAPER: The final assignment is a research paper of approximately fifteen pages due during the reading period on the date assigned the course by the Registrar.

BOOKSTORE AND READINGS

A half-dozen books are stocked at the Coop (this link will be of use: [https://tinyurl.com/W22-GOVT-94CT-1](https://tinyurl.com/W22-GOVT-94CT-1)). In the order of utilization, they are:

- Samuel Charap and Timothy J. Colton, *Everyone Loses: The Ukraine Crisis and the

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 valuing economy over convenience, the Amrith, Katzenstein, Usherwood/Pinder, and Charap/Colton texts may be viewed digitally through HOLLIS, the Harvard Library’s online catalogue. The mechanism can be quite cumbersome, depending on the book.

Unless signposted otherwise, journal articles and book chapters are accessible for reading or downloading as pdf files through the Gov 94CT site on Canvas: check the Files tab or Modules by week. Some readings are tagged as viewable through HOLLIS, and a few are to be retrieved on the WWW by clicking a URL.

Several days before, I will email students a short roadmap to the readings for the next Monday’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 will 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.

**CLASS SCHEDULE AND WEEKLY READINGS**

1. **INTRODUCTION (JANUARY 24)**

2. **THE BASICS – PLACE AND PEOPLE (JANUARY 31)**


Amrith, *Crossing the Bay of Bengal*.

**OR** Kaplan, *Revenge of Geography*.


3. THEORIES (FEBRUARY 7)


4. REGIONS AND THE INTERNATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF POWER (FEBRUARY 14)

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


5. EUROPE’S AMBITIOUS UNION AND ITS DISCONTENTS (FEBRUARY 21)

Usherwood and Pinder, *European Union*.


6. POST-SOVIET EURASIA (FEBRUARY 28)

Charap and Colton, *Everyone Loses*.


7. CHINA, “NORTHEAST ASIA,” “GREATER EURASIA,” AND “BELT ROAD” (MARCH 7)


Scott A. Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads: Autonomy and Alliance in an Era of Rival Powers* (Columbia UP, 2018), chap. 8.

Takuya Matsuda and Jaehan Park, “Geopolitics Redux: Explaining the Japan-Korea Dispute and Its Implications for Great Power Competition” War on the Rocks, November 7,


MARCH 14 – HARVARD SPRING RECESS

8. SOUTHEAST ASIA (MARCH 21)

Ba, (Re)Negotiating East and Southeast Asia.


Alice D. Ba, Cheng-Chwee Kuik, and Sueo Sudo, eds., Institutionalizing East Asia: Mapping and Reconfiguring Regional Cooperation (Routledge, 2016): chap. 6 (Chanintira Na Thalang and Pinn Siraprapasiri, “ASEAN’s (Non-)Role in Managing Ethnic Conflicts in Southeast Asia: Obstacles to institutionalization”); chap. 7 (Nguyen Quog Viet, “Institutionalization of Sub-Regional Cooperation: The Case of the Greater Mekong Sub-Region”).


9. SOUTH ASIA (MARCH 28)


S. D. Muni, “Narendra Modi’s Foreign Policy: Rebuild South Asian Neighbourhood,” Centre for Land and Air Warfare Studies (New Delhi), Summer 2015.


Rahul Roy-Choudhury and Kate Sullivan de Estrada, “India, the Indo-Pacific and the Quad,” Survival (June 2018), 181–94.


10. THE MIDDLE EAST (APRIL 4)


Louise Fawcett, ed., International Relations of the Middle East, 4th ed. (Oxford UP, 2016): chap. 1 (Fred H. Lawson, “International Relations Theory and the Middle East”); chap. 5 (Giacomo Luciani, “Oil and Political Economy in the International Relations of the Middle East”); chap. 8 (Peter Mandaville, “Islam and International Relations in
the Middle East: From *Umma* to Nation State”); Chap. 9 (Fawcett, “Alliances and Regionalism in the Middle East”).

11. AFRICA (APRIL 11)


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


12. LATIN AMERICA (APRIL 18)


UNASUR, ALBA and CELAC’’); chap. 21 (Thomas Legler, “Beyond Reach? The Organization of American States and Effective Multilateralism’’); chap. 22 (Diego García-Sayán, “The Inter-American Court of Human Rights: Its Decisive Impact on Latin American Rights’’).

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. WRAPUP – A WORLD OF REGIONS? (APRIL 25)

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.”