The Legitimacy of Regional Integration in Europe and the Americas

Achim Hurrelmann
and
Steffen Schneider

Transformations of the State

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Series Preface

Over the past four centuries, the nation state has emerged as the world's most effective means of organizing society, but its current status and future are decidedly uncertain. Some scholars predict the total demise of the nation state as we know it, its powers eroded by a dynamic global economy on the one hand and by the transfer of political decision making to supranational bodies on the other. Other analysts point out the remarkable resilience of the state's core institutions and assert that even in the age of global markets and politics, the state remains the ultimate guarantor of security, democracy, welfare and the rule of law. Does either of these interpretations describe the future of the OECD world's modern, liberal nation state? Will the state soon be as obsolete and irrelevant as an outdated computer? Should it be scrapped for some new invention, or can it be overhauled and rejuvenated? Or is the state actually thriving and still fit to serve, just in need of a few minor reforms?

In an attempt to address these questions, the analyses in the *Transformations of the State* series separate the complex tangle of tasks and functions that comprise the state into four manageable dimensions:

- the monopolization of the means of force;
- the rule of law, as prescribed and safeguarded by the constitution;
- the guarantee of democratic self-governance; and
- the provision of welfare and the assurance of social cohesion.

In the OECD world of the 1960s and 1970s, these four dimensions formed a synergetic constellation that emerged as the central, defining characteristic of the modern state. Books in the series report the results of both empirical and theoretical studies of the transformations experienced in each of these dimensions over the past few decades.

Transformations of the State? (Stephan Leibfried and Michael Zürn (eds), Cambridge 2005), *Transforming the Golden-Age National State* (Achim Hurrelmann, Stephan Leibfried, Kerstin Martens and Peter Mayer (eds), Basingstoke 2007), *State Transformations in OECD Countries: Dimensions, Driving Forces and Trajectories* (Heinz Rothgang and Steffen Schneider (eds), Basingstoke 2015) and *The Oxford Handbook of Transformations of the State* (Stephan Leibfried, Evelyne Huber, Matthew Lange, Jonah Levy and Frank Nullmeier (eds), Oxford 2015) define the basic concepts of

state transformation employed in all of these studies and provide an overview of the issues addressed. Written by political scientists, lawyers, economists and sociologists, the series tracks the development of the post-World War II OECD state. Here, at last, is an up-to-date series of reports on the state of the state and a crystal-ball glimpse into its future.

Preface and Acknowledgements

The rise of regional governance on the continental or sub-continental scales is one of the most noteworthy features of the internationalization of formerly state-based political tasks and responsibilities examined in this book series. In all parts of the world, processes of regional integration have progressed in past decades, and regional organizations with significant policy responsibilities have been created. This volume asks how legitimate the resulting regional governance arrangements are in the eyes of the population. Focusing on Europe, North America and South America, it examines how the legitimacy (or illegitimacy) of regional governance has been constructed (or challenged) in public opinion, political discourses and contentious politics. It also asks whether – and how – such legitimacy contestation has in turn influenced the trajectories of regional integration processes.

The idea for this volume was developed in the context of the editors' joint transatlantic research project on 'The Legitimacy of Regional Integration: Europe and North America Compared', which was funded by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation under its TransCoop Program. This project was housed in the Transformations of the State (TranState) Research Centre at the University of Bremen (2003–14). Cofunding was provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and by the Dean of the Faculty of Public Affairs at Carleton University. Chapters 9 and 10 are direct outcomes of this collaborative project. The present volume took shape during an authors' workshop that was held in July 2013 at Ludwig-Maximilians University (LMU) in Munich, at which first versions of all chapters were presented and discussed. This workshop was financially supported by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the TranState Research Centre; LMU Munich provided infrastructural support. We thank all these institutions for their contribution to making this book possible.

In addition, a number of individuals deserve special mention. Our colleagues Arthur Benz, Laura Macdonald, Neil Nevitte, Frank Nullmeier, George Ross, Martin Thunert and Ingeborg Tömmel provided important comments on our project at an early stage. At the University of Bremen, Stephan Leibfried enabled the association of the project with the TranState Centre; he was also instrumental in having this book included in the Centre's book series. Dieter Wolf and Maritta Zimmer

(who sadly passed away in 2011) provided indispensable administrative support. At Carleton University, Joan DeBardeleben supported a visiting scholarship for Steffen Schneider in the fall of 2010 that greatly facilitated the launch of the project. In the process of finalizing the volume, Anika Sparling acted as highly effective editorial assistant. Our editor at Palgrave Macmillan, Judith Allan, showed unwavering support, which included targeted (and much needed) pressure to complete the last stages of the manuscript. Last not least, we wish to thank all of our authors for their enthusiasm for this publication.

Achim Hurrelmann and Steffen Schneider
Ottawa and Bremen, April 2015

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Understanding the Legitimacy of Regional Integration: A Comparative and Mixed-Method Perspective

Steffen Schneider and Achim Hurrelmann

Shifts of political authority to regional integration projects such as the European Union (EU) are a key element of the globalization and denationalization trend in today's world (for many, see Keohane and Milner 1996; Zürn 1998; Kahler and Lake 2009). The EU is, of course, the most prominent and advanced example of regional governance, but it is hardly the only case that deserves scholarly attention: The literature on the 'new' (wave of) regionalism documents that integration projects running the gamut of varieties – from free trade arrangements to more ambitious projects at least partially inspired by the EU – have become ubiquitous (van Langenhove 2011; de Lombarde and Söderbaum 2013). As a consequence, European and regional integration studies have come full circle: The genuinely comparative perspective assumed by the neofunctionalist pioneers of the 1950s and 1960s (Haas 1971; Schmitter 1970), abandoned by most Europeanists in the following decades, is increasingly rediscovered today (Börzel 2011, 2013; Börzel et al. 2012).

This burgeoning comparative perspective is underpinned by much agreement on the *policy relevance* of regional integration, but the debate on its precise meaning and effects goes unabated. Some authors view regionalism as a corollary to the broader globalization trend; others argue that it is a political countermovement to the denationalization of economic forces and the diffusion of the neoliberal policy agenda (Coleman and Underhill 1998; Hettne 2003). What this debate indicates is growing attention to the *politics* of regional integration. Scholars have begun to probe the extent to which it affects public opinion and

political discourses, civil society mobilization and election outcomes. One prominent strand of the literature argues that international and regional governance is increasingly *politicized* and examines the scope and nature of this trend (Hooghe and Marks 2009; Zürn et al. 2012; Zürn 2014); another strand examines the link between politicization and the *legitimacy* of regional integration projects (Ribeiro-Hoffmann and van der Vleuthen 2007; Schrag Sternberg 2013).

However, the case of the EU arguably dominates both of these research agendas, and many existing studies on legitimacy in international relations have a strongly normative bent (for instance, Buchanan and Keohane 2006; Keohane et al. 2009). Against this backdrop, the present volume intends to fill a twofold gap in the literature. First of all, it offers a genuinely *comparative* view on the politicization and legitimacy of regional integration. Secondly, it considers politicization and legitimacy as multidimensional empirical phenomena best studied in a *mixed-method* perspective. In the remainder of this introductory chapter, we first elaborate on the two key concepts of the volume. Secondly, we justify our selection of regional integration cases. Finally, we provide an overview of the 12 chapters in Parts I through IV of the volume, each of which privileges a different methodological approach to examine politicization and legitimation processes in Europe and the Americas.

Concepts: Regional integration, politicization and legitimacy

Just like other international regimes, the existing cases of regional integration were initiated by member state governments, and their day-to-day governance processes have remained elite-dominated. Therefore, citizens' interest in – and even their knowledge of – regional affairs was widely assumed to be low in comparison to their interest in national political affairs until fairly recently. With hindsight, the first steps towards regional integration in Europe and elsewhere do not appear to have been significantly *politicized* – not salient in the minds and public discourses of elite actors and citizens – and hence they seem to have enjoyed latent support, a 'permissive consensus' in the words of Lindberg and Scheingold (1970a). Uninformed citizens presumably granted political elites a free hand in handling 'boring' technical and regulatory issues at the regional level, and intergovernmental decision making on such issues did not give rise to public contestation.

This assessment is, however, increasingly questioned, at least in the European context. A number of authors have diagnosed growing

politicization and a fading away of the permissive consensus since the 1990s (Hooghe and Marks 2009; de Wilde and Zürn 2012; Statham and Trenz 2013a, 2013b). The strongest evidence for this trend is provided by controversies about the EU in the wake of the Eurozone financial crisis and the unprecedented success of Eurosceptic parties in the 2014 European Parliament elections. However, the politicization of regional integration is arguably more than just a symptom of the exceptional circumstances of the Eurozone crisis; public contestation of the EU predates the crisis (Hutter and Grande 2014), and hence there is reason to doubt the claim that European integration has ever been entirely uncontested or depoliticized (Schrag Sternberg 2013).

Other continents have also seen the emergence of regional organizations with significant governance functions in recent decades. This development raises the question of whether growing politicization – or the alternation of politicized and depoliticized phases of regional integration – is truly restricted to the EU or rather represents a global phenomenon. There is certainly prima facie evidence for such cycles of politicization and depoliticization in the Americas. In North America, regional integration was vigorously debated and played a significant electoral role in the member states when it was initiated in the late 1980s with the Canada–United States Free Trade Agreement (CUSFTA) and developed further to become the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) including Mexico in 1994. The issue occasionally returned to the public agenda, and while there is arguably less contestation at present, new regional initiatives such as the ill-fated Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) after 2005 also fostered public debate and civil society mobilization (Ayres and Macdonald 2009; Pastor 2012).

In Latin America, too, much (trans)national civil society mobilization around regional integration and against its presumptive neoliberal bias has occurred – most prominently in the case of Mexico, where the Zapatista uprising coincided with the entry into force of NAFTA. Similar evidence abounds in South America: The Mercado Común del Sur (Common Market of the South, MERCOSUR) and other regional initiatives such as the Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, ALBA) or the South America-wide Unión de Naciones Suramericanas (Union of South American Nations, UNASUR) have also been touted as a counterweight to the forces of economic globalization and the free trade agenda of the Washington Consensus (Grugel 2006; Dabène 2009; von Bülow 2010).

There is a strong, if ambiguous, link between politicization and the *legitimacy* of regional integration projects: Some observers argue that

a modicum of politicization is a necessary prerequisite for the (democratic) legitimacy of emerging regional polities such as the EU (Zürn 2014); others regard politicization as 'constraining' (Hooghe and Marks 2009) – that is, as an impediment to further integration – because it presumably implies growing legitimacy *challenges* for regional organizations. Yet, while the literature on the alleged legitimacy deficit of the EU is now extensive (for many, see Díez Medrano 2003; McLaren 2006; Thomassen 2009; Fuchs and Klingemann 2011; Duchesne et al. 2013; Schrag Sternberg 2013), the same cannot be said for genuinely comparative treatments of the levels and foundations of support for regional integration projects.

The term legitimacy denotes the *rightfulness* of political authority, but a normative and an empirical – or an actor's and an observer's – perspective on legitimacy have to be clearly distinguished (Barker 2007: 19–21; Hurrelmann et al. 2007: 7–8). In the actor's perspective, political scientists formulate their own normative criteria and legitimacy assessments. In the observer's perspective, as first advocated by Max Weber (1978: 212–301) in his seminal analysis of legitimate political authority, the legitimacy beliefs, claims or assessments of rulers and their subjects or citizens are examined as social facts, using empirical methods.

The present volume concentrates on this empirical strand of legitimacy research, which tends to follow David Easton (1965, 1975) in further distinguishing legitimacy from the broader notion of *support* for – or identification with – political communities and regimes. In line with Easton, individuals may support a regime in return for the specific benefits it produces (specific support) or grant diffuse support of a more generalized kind. Legitimacy is the type of diffuse support that is underpinned by citizens' explicit recognition of political authority – here: authority vested in regional governance arrangements – as rightful, appropriate or at least acceptable (the second type of diffuse support distinguished by Easton and much subsequent public opinion research is trust). Conversely, a withdrawal of support may be diagnosed where regional integration is evaluated as corrupted, inappropriate or unacceptable. Thus, legitimacy assessments, just like the self-legitimating claims of political elites, draw on normative benchmarks and justifications, but they are citizens' or rulers' own benchmarks – which need to be studied empirically – rather than the ones political scientists might consider to be appropriate (see, for instance, Ribeiro Hoffmann and van der Vleuten 2007 for such a normative perspective on the legitimacy of regional integration).

Implied in this understanding of regime support and its foundations is the notion that legitimacy is socially constructed rather than

being a regime attribute that lends itself to objective measurement by an external observer. In this volume, we use the term *legitimation* (and delegitimation) when referring to the processes or practices involved in the (re)production or withdrawal of legitimacy. As Rodney Barker (2001: 26) has pointed out, only legitimation is directly accessible to empirical research:

> '[L]egitimacy' does not exist as a feasible subject of empirical or historical inquiry, in the same sense that God does not exist as a possible subject for social scientific study. We need to speak of both legitimacy and God when describing the actions of people engaged in politics and religion, but when we do so, we are describing their actions and language, not any independent phenomenon.

In other words, inferences on individual legitimacy beliefs or aggregate levels and foundations of support for a regime and its institutions must ultimately be based on the observation of such behavioural or discursive practices of (de)legitimation. These practices arguably come to the fore in the phases of politicization that both the EU and the regional integration projects of the Americas seem to have experienced in recent decades. While regional integration might not persistently occupy the top spot of the political agenda, legitimacy is most likely to be at stake when the salience of regional governance arrangements peaks and there is more public contestation of their powers and policy biases, their democratic quality or their impact on the national values and identities of member states than usual. Put differently, a certain level of politicization is a necessary prerequisite for (de)legitimation processes: A regime that is not politicized cannot be legitimate or illegitimate; it is merely 'a-legitimate' (Steffek 2007: 190).

However, various recent studies suggest that international organizations and regimes are indeed confronted with growing legitimacy requirements not only by member state governments but also by national societies (Steffek 2003, 2007; Zürn 2004; Zaum 2013). Thus, while regional integration projects continue to be largely elite-driven, they too are increasingly unlikely to be viewed as 'a-legitimate' by the national societies that are subject to their decisions, or to enjoy a 'permissive consensus' all the time. Consequently, explicit regime support becomes a key political resource where public attention to regional integration and the authority transfers it entails is growing. Like international regimes in general (Hurd 1999), regional organizations usually have no strong coercive powers and cannot always rely on favourable

cost-benefit calculations by member states and their citizens. Hence, compliance with their decisions, their further development and their greater or lesser success may increasingly depend on their capacity to mobilize adequate levels of regime support of the legitimacy type.

Cases: Regional integration in Europe and the Americas

What drives politicization and (de)legitimation processes? What is the impact of these processes, and which additional factors mediate it? We submit that comparative analysis is required to produce more general insights into the dynamics of politicization affecting regional integration projects, to explain varying levels and foundations of regime support and to assess the effects of societal legitimacy on the future development of regional governance. This book focuses on Europe, North America and South America precisely because the historical dynamics, institutional features and policy impact of regional integration projects on these continents differ greatly (Table 1.1).

Regionalism in Europe has the longest history and is most advanced. Created in the 1950s to secure peace on the European continent and increase economic prosperity, this regional project – labelled the European Union since 1993 – has more than quadrupled the number of its member states, which reached 28 in the summer of 2013; the EU has taken on a huge array of decision-making responsibilities that leaves hardly any fields of member state policy untouched and notably includes the creation and regulation of a Common Market and a regional currency; it has also developed powerful supranational institutions with the capacity to issue binding Europe-wide legislation and court decisions.

By contrast, North American regionalism is much more recent, limited to three member states (the United States, Canada and Mexico), weak in terms of institutions and restricted in its policy scope, rule-making and adjudicative powers. Its main achievement, NAFTA, came into force in 1994 and established a free trade area with national treatment rules for investment – not an EU-like Common Market. NAFTA institutions and decision making remain firmly intergovernmental; there is no supranational legislation, and while procedures for the binding adjudication of conflicts over treaty rules exist, these are affected by significant compliance problems, especially on the part of the United States (Clarkson 2008).

Finally, in South America, regional integration efforts date back to the 1960s but have, according to two prominent observers, 'a poor record when it comes to concrete accomplishments' (Malamud and Schmitter

Table 1.1 Regional integration projects in Europe and the Americas

	European Union	**NAFTA**	**MERCOSUR**
Member states	Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom	Canada, Mexico, United States	Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela
Size of population	506 million (2013)	470 million (2013)	282 million (2013)
Size of economy	$17.4 trillion (2013)	$19.9 trillion (2013)	$3.2 trillion (2013)
Scope of integration	All internal economic activity; monetary policy (for euro states); external trade; agriculture and environment; regional development; justice and home affairs; foreign and security policy	Trade between member states; side agreements on labour and environment with little practical relevance	Trade and economic policy coordination; desirability of more activities in non-trade fields disputed among member states
Model of economic integration	Common Market (free trade plus customs union)	Free trade area	Common Market (free trade plus customs union)
Model of political integration	Balance of supranational (e.g., European Commission, European Parliament) and intergovernmental institutions (e.g., Council)	Weak regional institutions; decision making exclusively intergovernmental	Intergovernmental; nascent supranational institutions (e.g., PARLASUR) with little influence
Legislative role	Active production of legislation that is binding on member states and supersedes national law	No regional legislation	Common Market Council can issue binding decisions
Judicative role	European Court of Justice as binding arbiter of all legal conflicts involving EU law	Ad hoc panels to resolve individual trade disputes	Ad hoc panels for dispute resolution; appeal possible to Permanent Tribunal of Revision
Institutions for citizen input	European Parliament elections; take place every five years	Absent	PARLASUR elections, but: have not taken place everywhere; Parliament has only consultative role
Other regional institutions (selection)	Council of Europe (47 member states), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO, 28 member states), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE, 57 member states)	North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD, 2 member states), multiple bilateral initiatives (e.g., Beyond the Border Initiative of United States and Canada)	Andean Community (CAN, 4 member states), Caribbean Community (CARICOM, 15 member states), Central American System of Integration (SICA, 8 member states), Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA, 11 member states), Union of South American Nations (UNASUR, 12 member states)

2011: 140). MERCOSUR, the case we focus on in the present volume, was established in 1991 by Argentina and Brazil together with their smaller neighbours Paraguay and Uruguay; Venezuela formally joined in 2012. While the gap between rhetoric and reality diagnosed for other South American integration projects might also hold for MERCOSUR (Malamud 2005), it has nevertheless been counted among the regional integration projects 'that have reached the greatest level of formal accomplishment after the EU' (Malamud and Schmitter 2011: 135). The initial objectives of economic development and of democratic consolidation in the wake of roughly two decades of military rule (strengthened by the 1998 Protocol of Ushuaia), as well as the bloc's set of institutions and its international legal personality (established in the 1994 Protocol of Ouro Preto), indicate the EU's role as a model. However, MERCOSUR has not yet completed its development towards a Common Market, and the envisaged customs union – let alone a political union of its member states – remains incomplete.[1]

Considering such differences, it has often been suggested that comparisons between various regional integration projects – and especially between the EU and all the others – are of limited utility. Much of the European integration literature treats the EU as *sui generis*, and many contributions to the literature on the 'new' regionalism in other parts of the world have in turn questioned the appropriateness of theoretical approaches and concepts gleaned from EU studies (Hurrell 2005: 46–51; for a critical perspective on this mutual fencing-off, see Warleigh-Lack 2006). In line with the growing literature on comparative regionalism (Acharya and Johnston 2007; Sbragia 2008; Laursen 2010; Söderbaum and Sbragia 2010; Acharya 2012; Warleigh-Lack et al. 2011; Börzel 2013), this volume takes the opposite stance: As different as regional integration projects such as the EU, NAFTA and MERCOSUR – or ALBA and UNASUR – undoubtedly are in many respects, we argue that they face similar challenges and have experienced comparable political dynamics when it comes to their legitimation.

The focus of our volume is regional integration projects as institutional arrangements, not some of the broader – and vaguer – concepts put forward in the 'new regionalism' literature, such as 'regionness' or 'regionalization'.[2] However, as shown by Francesco Duina (2006), formal legal rules and the norms embedded in political institutions are *themselves* socially constructed. The cases examined here – with the EU on one side and NAFTA and MERCOSUR on the other – may appear much less incomparable than in a strictly institutionalist or political economy perspective (Mattli 1999; Tsebelis and Garrett

2001) once the construction of identities and norms – including norms and evaluations related to legitimacy – are considered. Hence, differences in the nature and scope of the EU, NAFTA and MERCOSUR are unlikely to fully determine citizens' perceptions and evaluations of governance arrangements and decision-making processes on both sides of the Atlantic. Yet, hypotheses on the various drivers of politicization and (de)legitimation processes and their relative weight can only be tested and generalized on the basis of systematically comparative analysis.

Research questions, methodological approaches and overview of the volume

The present volume offers such an empirical, comparative perspective on the politicization and legitimacy of regional integration projects. While most of the individual chapters are case studies of regional integration in Europe, North America or South America, each of the following four book sections (Parts I to IV) reunites chapters examining all three regional contexts through a particular conceptual and methodological lens; several of the chapters are themselves explicitly comparative.

The chapters make descriptive inferences and also probe causal relationships. Some of the chapters focus on politicization. They notably ask questions such as these: How politicized are the various regional integration projects in Europe and the Americas today? Are they increasingly politicized or have they experienced distinct phases of politicization and depoliticization? Which factors have driven growing politicization or cyclical patterns?

Other chapters concentrate on legitimacy – or regime support more broadly – and (de)legitimation processes. Are there structured legitimacy beliefs related to the issue of regional integration? Does politicization trigger explicit debates about the legitimacy of regional governance arrangements? If so, how much support do these arrangements enjoy and what are its foundations? Which legitimation resources are mobilized in support of regional integration projects, which criteria and arguments are used to challenge their legitimacy? Who are the legitimizers and delegitimizers of regional governance arrangements, and which (de)legitimation practices do they engage in to (re)produce, contest or transform the legitimacy of these arrangements and its foundations? To what extent has the legitimacy issue become a focal point for civil society mobilization and contentious politics? Again, causal relationships are also considered: What explains varying levels and normative

foundations of legitimacy? Is there, for instance, a link between a regime's powers, or its greater or lesser supranational character, and the extent of its politicization or the nature of legitimacy challenges? Conversely, how have (de)legitimation processes affected the institutional development of the integration project in question?

In probing the set of research questions outlined, the volume offers a mixed-method perspective. After a section that provides broad overviews of politicization and legitimation processes in the EU, NAFTA and MERCOSUR, each of the following three sections considers a different *dimension* of politicization and (de)legitimation processes, using pertinent methodological approaches to tap into them: the dimension of political attitudes, captured by public opinion research and survey experiments; the dimension of political discourses, examined with the help of text analytical methods; and a behavioural dimension in which indicators of politicization and (de)legitimation are gleaned from the observation of political participation and protest activities (Schmidtke and Schneider 2012). As a whole, then, the contributions to the volume not only illustrate the multifaceted character of politicization and (de)legitimation processes linked with regional integration but also give insights into the comparative (dis)advantages and trade-offs of various methods of politicization and legitimacy research.

Part I Politicization and legitimation trends in European and American regionalism

This section sets the stage for the remainder of the volume by giving an overview of the role that politicization and legitimacy debates have played in the development of regional integration projects in Europe and the Americas. The contributions identify specific phases and trajectories of politicization and (de)legitimation in the three regional contexts and discuss their impact.

Chapter 2 by Pieter de Wilde focuses on the EU; it shows that cyclical fluctuations and episodes of heightened public awareness and contestation are overlaid with a trend of growing politicization in an increasing number of member states. However, there is considerable variation in terms of the events and actors that drive the politicization of European integration and also in terms of the specific narratives offered. On the whole, de Wilde argues, politicization has strengthened the national channel of representation in the EU. This development is interpreted as a mixed blessing: on the one hand, accountability has been strengthened; on the other hand, politicization may challenge effective governance and member state equality.

Chapter 3 by Brian Bow deals with regional integration in North America; it highlights the importance of legitimacy not just in the supranational regime of the EU but also in the intergovernmental NAFTA regime. Bow describes the politicization of regional cooperation during the NAFTA debates of the 1990s and underlines the particular importance of concerns about democratic legitimacy in both right-wing and left-wing criticism of the agreement. He further argues that subsequent efforts by governments to depoliticize North American integration, for instance by pursuing the deliberately technocratic SPP or limited bilateral initiatives, have defused broad-based anti-regionalist impulses. They have, however, met with staunch opposition from activists, in part because depoliticization attempts exacerbated legitimacy concerns. Bow concludes that regional integration in North America can only move forward if these concerns are explicitly acknowledged and confronted by the proponents of further integration.

Finally, Chapter 4 by Andrea Ribeiro Hoffmann explores the link between politicization and legitimacy in MERCOSUR. Like de Wilde and Bow, she identifies episodes and cycles of politicization and depoliticization. The main driving forces of politicization in the history of MERCOSUR, in her account, were the activities of opposition parties, business and civil society organizations, all of which questioned the legitimacy of regional governance arrangements and put pressure on member state governments. In response, governments repeatedly chose to adapt policy priorities, decision-making processes and institutional arrangements of the integration project. This resulted in an ebb and flow of politicization rather than a long-term trend towards increasingly politicized regional governance, as in the European case.

The chapters in Part I thus clearly indicate that politicization dynamics are driven by the interaction of social and political actors, societal mobilization and government response. Hence, a one-sided focus on politicization as a bottom-up societal development is misleading. Instead, the trajectories of politicization are strongly influenced by how governments react, often with the objective to contain politicization. Even where such containment strategies are successful in the short or medium term, politicization may force changes in the policy scope, institutional make-up or standard operating procedures of regional integration projects. Hence, all three chapters in Part I also consider politicization and the ensuing legitimation debates to be politically influential, shaping the future of the integration project in question, even though only the European case seems to be characterized by a clear politicization trend.

Part II Regional integration and public opinion

This section relies on survey research to measure support and gauge legitimacy beliefs. This research tradition has already produced a wealth of cross-sectional and longitudinal data on belief systems and attitudinal changes related to regional integration in Europe and the Americas, and this wealth of data also provides a particularly good starting point for the examination of causal relationships: Which factors explain differences in the structures of national or group-based belief systems and their transformation over time?

Chapter 5 by Dieter Fuchs and Romy Escher is a longitudinal case study of the EU that seeks to describe and explain changes over time in support for European integration. Based on Eurobarometer data, Fuchs and Escher show that crisis diagnoses that claim an erosion of EU legitimacy need to be qualified: Contrary to frequent claims in the literature, momentous changes in European integration such as the entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993 or the EU's eastern enlargement in 2004 did not result in a decline of the EU's perceived legitimacy. However, the Eurozone financial crisis does seem to have triggered a marked drop in EU support, especially in the crisis countries of Southern Europe.

Chapter 6 by Constantine Boussalis, Jennifer Merolla and Caryn Peiffer seeks to explain attitudes towards regional integration in North America. Based on data from the World Values Survey, the authors show that the degree of supranational identification is a crucial factor in explaining support for integration, but they also uncover cross-national differences in the strength of this relationship. The chapter then turns to survey experiments to further probe the impact that the priming of supranational identities has on attitudes towards regional integration.

Finally, Chapter 7 by Daniel Zizumbo-Colunga and Mitchell Seligson draws on a cross-sectional analysis of AmericasBarometer data that covers the whole of Latin America and the Caribbean to gauge levels and drivers of support for free trade agreements. Competing explanations for variation in support levels are tested. The authors find that citizens who have a positive perception of the state of their personal and national economies tend to consider free trade agreements as more legitimate. They show that citizens' perceptions of the economic competence of national governments also matter; citizens who regard their government as economically competent have a higher level of support for free trade agreements.

Taken together, the contributions to Part II demonstrate that even in the less institutionalized regional integration projects, public opinion about regional integration is well structured. All chapters emphasize

that regional integration projects rely on different sources of support, which may be utilitarian, identity-based or rooted in normative assumptions about democracy. They also stress that factors susceptible to short-term fluctuation – such as the ups and downs of the economy or the priming of various identity constructions in public discourse – play an important role in accounting for support levels. The chapters find less evidence for secular trends in public support; however, the effects of the Eurozone financial crisis on the legitimacy of the EU might be an exception in this respect.

Part III Regional integration and public discourses

This section uses text analytical approaches to study debates about the legitimacy of regional governance. Such approaches are particularly well suited to shed light on the *construction* of affirmative or critical legitimacy evaluations. The chapters examine discourses in the mass media and among laypeople. They assess the extent to which regional integration is politicized, which aspects of it are evaluated and which justifications are brought forward in debates about its legitimacy.

Chapter 8 by Virginie Van Ingelgom is a case study of the EU. It draws on data from the 'Citizens Talking about Europe' project, and especially on a qualitative analysis of focus group conversations in three member states (Belgium, France and the United Kingdom), to examine the politicization of the EU and the framing of legitimacy issues among Europeans. Van Ingelgom shows that even though most citizens pay little attention to EU affairs, they have accumulated a certain amount of latent knowledge about the EU. She identifies five characteristic (de)legitimation frames that play a role in all three countries, which indicates a remarkable convergence of EU-related legitimation debates across member state borders. Clearly, even though Europeans are not exceptionally well informed about the EU, they are more than just passive recipients of EU-related communication.

Chapter 9 by Achim Hurrelmann and Steffen Schneider demonstrates that a similar argument can be made about North American regionalism. Comparing findings about the politicization of European integration with insights gleaned from focus group conversations in the United States and Canada, they show that North American regionalism is more strongly politicized than expected. However, the politicization of regional governance in North America differs from the politicization of European integration; it focuses not on supranational institutions and their increasing decision-making authority, but on (perceived) transnational policy interdependencies cutting across state borders.

Finally, Chapter 10 by Steffen Schneider examines media discourses to gauge public support for NAFTA and MERCOSUR. It considers discourses in the quality press of the United States and Brazil, the dominant players in the two regional integration projects, and is based on a content and discourse analysis of legitimacy-related newspaper coverage in the 1990s and 2000s. The chapter reveals common features of discourses in the two settings, but also indicates that specific features of regional integration in North America and South America underpin the (re)production and contestation of legitimacy; overall, discourses in Brazil are considerably more intensive and normatively charged than discourses in the United States, often with the EU as an explicit model in the background.

The chapters in Part III indicate that regional integration is not among the most salient issues of political discourses in the member states; it is clearly overshadowed by national politics. However, regional integration is a relevant topic of media and citizen discourses. Indifference and knowledge deficits condition the emerging discourses, particularly at the citizen level. And yet these factors do not prevent citizens and the media from passing judgement on the legitimacy of regional governance. Just like the analysis of public opinion, the analysis of discourses therefore reveals structured belief systems.

Part IV The contentious politics of regional integration

This section examines the extent to which regional integration has become the focal point for political mobilization. One reason why legitimacy beliefs and legitimation discourses are important is that they are, presumably, linked with political behaviour that indicates more or less support for and compliance with regimes. The chapters therefore study the role played by regional integration in the campaigns or protest activities of parties, interest groups and social movement organizations. They discuss which aspects of regional governance have been highlighted in these activities and how much resonance mobilizing activities have had among their target constituencies.

Chapter 11 by Francesco Duina and Jared Bok analyses how separatist movements in NAFTA and EU member states have politicized regional integration. They show that some movements have put forth positive images of NAFTA and the EU to cast themselves as cosmopolitan actors and to portray their respective nation states as excessively confining, while others have painted negative images of NAFTA and the EU to highlight the corrupt nature of their national governments and to present themselves as protectors of local identities and traditions. Both movements from the left and right ends of the political spectrum have

employed versions of each form of politicization. Evidence comes from some of the most important movements in each region: Convergència i Unió in Spain, the Parti Québécois in Canada, the Lega Nord in Italy and the Zapatistas in Mexico.

While the study by Duina and Bok demonstrates that regional integration may be strategically leveraged by political actors to achieve domestic purposes, Chapter 12 by Ian Robinson examines explicit anti-NAFTA mobilization by social movement coalitions in the United States, Canada and Mexico. Robinson compares the composition of these coalitions, the frames and narratives each of them privileged in its criticism of NAFTA and the success of their delegitimating discourses. His analysis shows that opposition to NAFTA in all three countries was primarily value-based, focusing on the legitimating ideas of economic justice, democracy, human rights and environmental sustainability among critics on the political left and on the ideas of national sovereignty and national solidarity among critics on the political right. He argues that the mobilizing potential of the anti-NAFTA coalitions remains intact, which explains the reluctance of current North American governments to expose trade deals that are presently under negotiation to broader public debate.

Finally, Chapter 13 by Pia Riggirozzi focuses on two relatively recent regional initiatives in South America – UNASUR and ALBA – to show how civil society mobilization has contributed to a reconfiguration of South American integration since the early 2000s, leading to what she calls post-neoliberal regionalism. She discusses a number of regional initiatives that aim to redirect market economies towards social concerns. Yet, while these changes have in part been initiated through civil society mobilization, Riggirozzi argues that post-neoliberal regionalism has thus far failed to address the democratic deficit of South American regional governance, as it has not entailed the building of fixed and effective institutions for civil society movements to organize around. Hence, the capacity of social actors to break the historical legacy of elite politics and technocratic decision-making processes is still weak.

The chapters of Part IV of the volume, then, confirm that regional integration plays an important role in the mobilization strategies of civil society organizations, both as a strategic lever to reach domestic objectives and as the ultimate addressee of mobilization. Such challenges to the legitimacy of regional governance institutions have helped build transnational civil society networks. However, civil society has been less successful in actually shaping the institutional development of regional governance.