

WORLD POLITICS

*A Quarterly Journal of
International Relations*

Volume 70, Number 2 April 2018

UNDER THE EDITORIAL SPONSORSHIP OF
PRINCETON INSTITUTE FOR
INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL STUDIES

PUBLISHED BY CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

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ABSTRACTS

“BIG” TREATIES, SMALL EFFECTS

THE RTAA AGREEMENTS

By JOANNE GOWA and RAYMOND HICKS

It seems obvious that agreements to cut tariffs will raise trade between their signatories. But recent studies show that some agreements widely considered to be landmarks in economic history had either a remarkably small impact on trade or none at all. Among those agreements are the Cobden-Chevalier Treaties and the long series of tariff accords concluded under the auspices of the GATT/WTO. Both sets of agreements cut import duties on many goods that applied to all trading partners entitled to most-favored-nation treatment, but neither increased aggregate trade between their members. This article examines the agreements concluded by the United States under the 1934 Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act (RTAA). The authors use an original data set that records changes in tariffs and US imports at the product-line level for each of the twenty-seven bilateral agreements. No comparable data exist either for the nineteenth-century trade network or for the postwar trade regime. The results show that the RTAA treaties failed to raise aggregate US imports from its treaty partners. They also show that these agreements did lead to a large and significant rise in US imports of specific products from specific countries. Because the same bargaining protocol that produced the RTAA agreements also governed the European treaty network and the GATT/WTO, the argument advanced in this article can also help to explain why neither treaty exerted a significant impact on aggregate trade between their signatories.

DECAY OR RESILIENCE?

THE LONG-TERM SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE
IN SIERRA LEONE

By CARLO KOOS

This article examines the long-term impact of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) on prosocial behavior in Sierra Leone. Two theoretical arguments are developed and tested. The first draws on the feminist literature and suggests the presence of a decay mechanism: victims and their families are stigmatized by their community and excluded from social networks. The second integrates new insights from social psychology, psychological trauma research, and anthropology, and argues for a resilience mechanism. It argues that CRSV-affected households have a strong incentive to remain part of their community and will invest more effort and resources into the community to avert social exclusion than unaffected households. Using data on 5,475 Sierra Leonean households, the author finds that exposure to CRSV increases prosocial behavior—cooperation, helping, and altruism—which supports the resilience hypothesis. The results are robust to an instrumental variable estimation. The ramifications of this finding go beyond the case of Sierra Leone and generate a more general question: What makes communities resilient to shocks and trauma?

PRECOLONIAL LEGACIES AND INSTITUTIONAL CONGRUENCE IN PUBLIC GOODS DELIVERY

EVIDENCE FROM DECENTRALIZED WEST AFRICA

By MARTHA WILFAHRT

Scholars have long identified political bias in the way African politicians distribute state resources. Much of this literature focuses on the role of group identities, mainly ethnicity, and partisanship. This article shifts the focus to local governments, which have become increasingly important players in basic social service provision, and argues that public goods allocation under democratic decentralization is intimately shaped by historical identities. Specifically, the author highlights the role of identities rooted in the precolonial past. To explain this, she articulates a theory of institutional congruence, arguing that greater spatial overlap between formal institu-

tional space and informal social identities improves the ability of elites to overcome local coordination problems. Looking to the West African state of Senegal, the author deploys a nested analysis, drawing on interviews with rural Senegalese elites to understand how the precolonial past shapes local politics today via the social identities it left behind. She also tests the argument with a unique, geocoded data set of village-level public goods investments in the 2000s, finding that areas that were once home to precolonial states distribute goods more broadly across space. These patterns cannot be explained by ethnic or electoral dynamics. Two brief examples from on-the-line cases illuminate how the presence of precolonial identities facilitates local cooperation. The article thus calls into question the tendency to treat identities as static over time, highlighting the interactive relationship between institutions and identities while drawing attention to emerging subnational variation in local government performance following decentralization reforms across the developing world.

PARTY STRENGTH AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

By FERNANDO BIZZARRO, JOHN GERRING, CARL HENRIK KNUTSEN, ALLEN HICKEN, MICHAEL BERNHARD, SVEND-ERIK SKAANING, MICHAEL COPPEDGE, and STAFFAN I. LINDBERG

While a large literature suggests an important role for political parties in development, this article is the first attempt to layout and test a comprehensive theory connecting parties to economic growth. The authors argue that strong parties broaden the constituencies to which policymakers respond and help politicians solve coordination problems. These features help to ensure better economic management, public services, and political stability. And this, in turn, enhances economic growth. Drawing on a novel measure of party strength from the Varieties of Democracy data set, the authors test this theory on data drawn from more than 150 countries observed annually from 1901–2010. They identify a sizeable effect that is robust to various specifications, estimators, and samples. The effect operates in both democracies and autocracies, and is fairly stable across regions and time periods.