

**Action Speaks Louder than Words:
Variation in Regional Integration Arrangements and Violent Conflict**

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Abstract

Does institutional variation have implications for questions of conflict and peace? Realists expect no independent effect of international organizations on militarized interstate disputes and dismiss the importance of variation across such organizations. Liberals, on the other hand, offer several mechanisms by which international organizations may alleviate violent conflict. This paper evaluates these competing expectations in the context of regional integration arrangements (RIAs). These organizations display a great deal of variation in their level of institutionalization. Employing an event count model with a panel-data setup and controlling for several alternative explanations, the empirical analysis indicates that higher levels of institutionalization, when implemented, are associated with less conflict. This paper also builds on the statistical results to conduct a qualitative large-N analysis. This analysis provides additional support for my argument. At the same time, it points to some limitations of the liberal claim and to the conditions under which RIAs mitigate conflict.

Institutionalists argue that institutions can be instrumental in reducing inter-state violent conflict and propose several causal mechanisms by which they may do so. As discussed in Chapter 2, the effects of these institutional features on conflict depend in important ways on their level of institutionalization. In this chapter I conduct an empirical analysis of the hypotheses with respect to the effect of regional institutionalization on violent conflict. In particular, I examine how the aggregate level of regional institutionalization, both designed and implemented, affects the number of intra-regional militarized disputes. The next section elaborates on issues of research design, and on the dependent, independent, and control variables. The third section reports the results of the empirical analysis, which indicate that regional institutionalization mitigates intra-regional violent conflict, but only to the extent that it is implemented. In the fourth section I use the quantitative results as a springboard for a more qualitative analysis. This large-N qualitative analysis offers additional support to the argument that implemented regional institutionalization reduces violent conflict.

Research Design

In order to test the hypothesized effect of regional institutionalization on violent conflict, I use the original data set described in Chapter 3. Because regional institutionalization is an attribute of an RIA, the empirical analysis is conducted at the regional level of analysis, as defined by organizational membership. For the sake of consistency, the dependent variable and the control variables are also defined and measured at the regional level. This setup expands on other quantitative analyses on the link between international organizations and conflict, which commonly employ a dyadic setup (Bearce and Omori, 2005; Mansfield and Pevehouse, 2000; Mansfield and Pevehouse and Bearce, 1999/2000; Russett and Oneal, 2001; Russett, Oneal, and Davis, 1998).

Although the dyadic level of analysis provided numerous insights into the sources of violent conflict, it suffers from some limitations. In particular, it reduces all international interactions to the dyadic level. There are good reasons to believe that some types of interactions are not adequately captured by a dyadic setup and are more amenable to a regional one. Regional institutionalization is, of course, an organizational trait of the RIA and not of any particular dyad. The dependent variable, violent conflict, is also not necessarily a dyadic phenomenon (Gleditsch, 2002:41). Many disputes involve multiple participants, often involving neighboring states. Some conventional explanations for the likelihood of militarized interstate disputes point to a similar conclusion. The regional balance of power and the existence of a regional hegemon, for example, require one to identify the region itself. Recent studies point out that security relations, regime types and the level economic interdependence tend to cluster geographically, suggesting that regional dynamics are at work (Gleditsch, 2002; Buzan and Wæver, 2003).

Taken together, these observations point to the significance of interaction in the regional arena and reinforce several calls for greater scholarly attention to this level of

analysis (Buzan, 1991; Buzan and Wæver, 2003; Gleditsch, 2002; Kacowicz, 1998; Lake and Morgan, 1997; Lemke, 2002). Such analysis can serve as a useful complement (rather than a substitute) to the dyadic level of analysis. The definition of particular regions according to membership in regional international organizations emanates from my attempt to evaluate the effect of these organizations on conflict in the region. While there is a lack of consensus on how exactly to define a region and on the identification of specific regions, identifying regions by organizational ties is one conventional way to proceed (Mansfield and Milner, 1999; Väyrynen, 2003). In addition, as pointed out above, my sample covers most regions in the world, which reduces the risk of selection bias.

Estimation Technique

The dependent variable is a count of intramural violent disputes and is characterized by a Poisson distribution. Therefore, an *event count* model is used for estimation. In addition, the significance of the goodness-of-fit parameters in the statistical models below indicates that a *negative binomial regression model* (NBRM) is most appropriate. This model assumes a Poisson distribution but allows a conditional variance that is greater than the conditional mean (Long, 1997). Finally, the data is arranged in a panel setup. I employ a random effects count model to account for cross sectional unobservable contextual heterogeneity.¹

In this chapter, I address endogeneity concerns, raised most prominently by realists, in two main ways. First, the variables that capture the institutional features – as well as the rest of the independent variables – are lagged behind the dependent variable. Second, I control for the level of similarity of interests among member-states. If indeed such prior affinity determines the level of conflict, the effect of international institutions (to the extent that there is one) should disappear.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is intra-regional violent conflict. As with other variables, I aggregate the number of disputes over a five-year period. Because violent disputes are rather rare events, such aggregation provides meaningful variation on this variable. To minimize the risk of endogeneity, the five-year periods succeed the year in which the main independent variables are measured (discussed below).² For each RIA, I count all of the intra-regional dyadic disputes in all years in which they took place. I do not count disputes between members and non-members. In infrequent cases where a dispute involves several participants that are both members and non-members, I count only dyads in which both participants are members. I do so because the theoretical framework generates expectations regarding relationships between RIA members, rather than between member and non-member states.

¹ Panel data refers to datasets that are cross-sectionally dominated. My dataset contains 25 sections (RIAs) and up to four time points. The command `xtbreg` in Stata is used.

² Specifically, the dependent variable is aggregated as follows: 1982-86; 1987-91; 1992-1996; 1997-2001.

A dispute between Sierra Leone, on the one hand, and Nigeria, Guinea, and Ghana, on the other, that lasted from 1997 to 1998 illustrates my counting method. As all four states are members of ECOWAS, this dispute produces a count of six for this RIA (one dyadic dispute between Sierra Leone and each of the other three members for each year). Only Sierra Leone and Guinea are also members of MRU, so the same dispute will produce two counts for this RIA (one dyadic dispute between the two members for each year). Again, the logic is that one might expect MRU to influence the relationship between Sierra Leone and Guinea, but not between Sierra Leone and Nigeria. To operationalize this variable, labeled MID, I use the conventional Militarized Interstate Disputes (MIDs) data set (Ghosn, Palmer, and Bremer 2004; Jones, Bremer, and Singer 1996).

Independent Variables

The main independent variables examined in this chapter are the designed and implemented regional institutionalization, labeled DERI and IMRI respectively. The setup of these variables was discussed in details in the previous chapter. The theoretical framework expects these variables to decrease the level of intra-regional conflict. In order to ensure that the relationship between regional institutionalization and conflict is not spurious, we need to account for potential alternative explanations. The extant literature offers several such explanations. In what follows I briefly review the arguments and discuss the operationalization and measurement of these control variables. Table 4.1 provides descriptive statistics for the independent variables.

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
MID	90	3.53	6.02	0	48
DERI	90	13.67	7.07	1	30
IMRI	90	7.81	6.12	1	29
TRADE SHARE	86	10.44	12.97	.10	60.50
CONCENTRATION	90	.43	.19	.11	.93
DEMOCRACY DUMMY	86	.26	.44	0	1
CIVIL WAR	90	7.97	9.66	0	40
MEMBERS	90	7.37	4.05	2.20	21.80
BORDERS	90	8.80	7.29	0	35
AFFINITY ALLAINCES	90	.93	.10	.524	1
AFFINITY UN	90	.958	.12	.10	1
INTERVENTION	90	2.61	1.40	1	4
DECADE	90	.55	.49	0	1
DEMOCRACY CONTINUOUS	86	.27	6.03	-9.53	10
DEMOCRACY SQUARE	86	36.03	32.26	0	100
DEVELOPMENT LOG	90	8.11	.91	6.28	10.04

Economic interdependence, usually conceptualized in terms of international trade, is a widely cited explanation for peace. According to proponents of this theory, free trade results in gains to individuals in the involved countries. Because war and violence jeopardize these beneficial ties and can create substantial losses to commercial interests, simple calculation will show that war is too costly and irrational under conditions of free trade. This argument was popularized by 19th century British liberals, such as Richard Cobden, and attracted a renewed scholarly attention in recent years (Polachek, 1980; Russett and Oneal, 2001; for a recent review see Mansfield and Pollins, 2001). Indeed, as discussed above, several scholars argue that RIAs mitigate conflict partly because they reduce barriers to regional trade and increases economic interdependence (Mansfield and Pevehouse, 2000). From this perspective, accounting for regional economic interdependence allows one to evaluate the effect of regional institutionalization on conflict independent of its indirect effect through trade. The level of regional economic interdependence is usually captured by regional trade share, which is the intra-regional trade as a percentage of the total regional trade (Grieco, 1997; Page 2000).³ A greater proportion of intra-regional trade indicates that RIA members trade more among themselves relative to their trade with the rest of the world, which in turn suggests greater regional interdependence. UNCTAD provides information on trade share for most RIAs, based on their exports.⁴ TRADE SHARE is expected to reduce the level of violent conflict in a region.

Proponents of the “democratic peace” research program contend that democracies rarely go to war against other democracies and are less likely to fight each other relative to other groups of states (the body of literature on this issue is voluminous).⁵ Most of the empirical research on this issue, however, is conducted at the dyadic level. While the empirical findings using dyadic setup are generally robust for alternative specifications, the explanatory power of the theory at other levels of analysis is yet to be determined (Gleditsch and Hegre, 1997; Gortzak, Haftel, and Sweeney, 2005). Particularly, although both regime type and conflict tend to cluster geographically, the effect of regime type at the regional level has attracted only scant attention (Gleditsch, 2002). Nonetheless, studies that examine the sources of regional conflict posit that higher levels of democracy in the region should result in less conflict, at least as a starting point (Kacowicz, 1998; Gleditsch, 2002; Lemke, 2002). To measure regional democraticness, I employ the widely used Polity IV definitions and data (Jaggers and Gurr, 1995; Marshall and Jaggers, 2002). A composite measure of democracy is the difference between the level of democracy and the level of autocracy and can range from -10 to 10 for strong autocracy and strong democracy, respectively.⁶ Upon calculating the regional average of the composite variable, I distinguish between regions inhabited by mature democracies and

³ Grieco (1997) refers to this measure as trade encapsulation.

⁴ Trade data for SACU is not available, and most likely does not exist (see Page, 2000:117).

⁵ For a concise statement of the theory and findings, see Russett and Oneal (2001).

⁶ Where DEMOC > 6 indicates coherent democracy, DEMOC < -6 indicates coherent autocracy, and any number in between indicates anocracy (Jaggers and Gurr, 1995). Data on the OECS states is not available.

all other regions. Thus, DEMOCRACY DUMMY is a dichotomous variable that scores one if the average level of democracy is greater than six, and zero otherwise.⁷ It is expected to reduce the level of regional violent conflict.

Theories of power transition hold that preponderance of power is associated with more stability and less violence (Gilpin, 1981; Organski, 1968; Pollins, 1996). According to proponents of this perspective, global hegemony has both the ability and the willingness to impose order that mitigates the concerns of other states with respect to their survival and security. Therefore, greater power disparity should result in lower levels of war and other militarized disputes (Pollins, 1996). Several recent studies examined the implications of this logic at the regional level (Kacowicz, 1998; Lemke, 2002; Mansfield and Pevehouse, 2000). Lemke (2002), for example, develops a “multiple hierarchy model,” in which he argues that regional hegemony should result in lower levels of interstate war. His empirical tests support this proposition. In the context of economic regionalism, Mansfield and Pevehouse (2000: 800-801) find empirical support for the notion that greater power disparity reduces the likelihood of militarized disputes among regional members.

There are several ways to operationalize and measure regional hegemony. One simple measure examines the relative size of the largest state in the RIA relative to the weakest state or to the rest of the group (Grieco, 1997:173-74; Lemke, 2002:99). Although this measure is intuitively reasonable, it is somewhat crude and can be misleading (Smith, 2000:160). A more sophisticated measure of asymmetry is the concentration ratio (Mansfield, 1994; Mansfield and Pevehouse, 2000; Smith, 2000). This measure takes into account both the relative weight of all members and the number of members. The value of this index increases as asymmetry grows and is bounded between 0 and 1. This index offers a reliable grasp of regional asymmetry and it contains several useful statistical properties.⁸ GDP data from the Penn World Tables is used to calculate this variable (Heston, Summers, and Aten, 2002). CONCENTRATION is expected to reduce the level of violent conflict in a region.

The internationalization of civil wars in Central and West Africa as well as in Central Asia and South America attests to the potential effect of domestic violence on neighboring states. As Brown (1996:590) points out, “almost all internal conflicts involve neighboring states in one way or another. The vast majority of internal conflicts have important implications for regional stability.” From a theoretical standpoint, the logic of diversionary war points to the possibility that government will turn to international conflict in order to ameliorate domestic unrest or take advantage of states that experience high levels of domestic strife (Dassel and Reinhardt, 1999; Davies, 2002). To measure the level of regional conflict, I count the number of domestic armed conflicts as reported in the Uppsala dataset on armed conflicts (Gleditsch et al., 2002). The Uppsala dataset distinguishes among four types of wars: interstate armed conflict, extrastate armed conflicts, internationalized internal armed conflicts, and internal armed conflicts. It also

⁷ This threshold follows the conventional practice in the definition of mature democracies.

⁸ For the advantages of this index, see Smith (2000).

divides armed conflicts into three levels of intensity: minor armed conflict, intermediate armed conflict, and war.⁹ I count all the incidents among members of an RIA that are defined as internal armed conflict.¹⁰ As with other variables, CIVIL WAR is expected to increase the level of regional interstate conflict.

Realists and other skeptics contend that cooperation through institutions is endogenous to the level of amity in the region. It is thus important to take into account the level of interest similarity among RIA members. I employ an S score to capture the intra-regional similarity of interests (Signorino and Ritter 1999). The S score ranges from -1 to +1 where a value of 1 indicates that the interests of two states are perfectly aligned and a value of -1 indicates that the interests of the two states are diametrically opposed. Like in other variables, the dyadic scores are averaged for the region. I measure the S score with the two most conventional methods: similarity of alliance portfolios (Bueno de Mesquita 1981; Signorino and Ritter 1999)¹¹ and similarity of voting in the United Nations (UN) General Assembly (Gartzke and Jo 2002). The former is labeled AFFINITY ALLIANCES and the latter AFFINITY UN. Since these two variables measure the same concept, I run them in separate models. They are expected to reduce conflict.

It is widely agreed that regional political dynamics do not operate in isolation and are affected by external forces, like great power intervention. What the exact effect of these forces on regional conflict is not clear, however. Some people argue that great power competition tends to exacerbate local conflict and to inflame otherwise peaceful regions. Others, by contrast, contend that great powers restrain their local clients in order to prevent local conflict from expanding to the global arena (for review of these contending perspectives, see Stein and Lobell, 1997; Miller 2001). Although these opposing effects may cancel out, it seems important to account for the possibility of great power intervention.

The need to account for great power intervention is convincing, but it poses an empirical challenge to the analyst. Systematic data on great power intervention does not exist. Moreover, several difficulties may hamper the construction of a dataset of this sort (Lemke, 2002:147).¹² I offer two indirect ways to examine the effect of the broader international system on the level of regional conflict. First, I consider the structure of the international system. The conventional wisdom holds that the Cold War compelled the great powers to interfere in the politics of different localities, and that regions experience greater independence in the post-Cold War era (Lake and Morgan, 1997). Although the

⁹ A minor armed conflict involves at least 25 battle-related deaths per year and fewer than 1,000 battle-deaths during the course of the conflict. An intermediate conflict involves at least 25 but less than 1,000 battle-related deaths per year and an accumulated total of at least 1,000 battle-deaths during the course of the conflict. Like in the COW dataset, a war involves at least 1,000 battle-deaths per year.

¹⁰ Internationalized internal disputes are excluded in order to minimize the possibility of overlap with the dependent variable.

¹¹ I use the globally weighted measure of alliance portfolio. Data is obtained from the EUgene software, Bennett and Stam 2000.

¹² The main obstacle is to identify intervention when it occurs. For example, interventions can be sometimes covert.

jury is still out regarding the implications of this retreat for matters of regional security (Stein and Lobell, 1997), we can use this structural change as a first cut into the effect of great power intervention on regional conflict. Thus, DECADE is a categorical variable that scores 1 for the 1990s, and zero otherwise.

The broader international structure tells us nothing about potential cross-regional variation. It is plausible, however, that not all regions are equally vulnerable to outside intervention. Although no systematic information exists on which power intervened in which region, one can estimate the *ability* of great powers to project their power in different regions. Douglas Lemke did just that. He used each great power's military capabilities, distance from any particular region, and types of terrain to estimate the ability of any one of the great powers to exert their power in different regions (Lemke, 2002). I employ his coding and count the number of great powers that can intervene in any particular region.¹³ When more powers can interfere in a particular region, its vulnerability to external intervention increases. Thus, INTERVENTION is a count of the number of great powers that are capable of interfering in any RIA, and can vary from 0 to 5.¹⁴

It is reasonable to expect that the number of states in a region will be associated with the number of disputes. A greater number of states may result in additional opportunities of interaction and friction, and thus more conflict (Pollins, 1996:110). MEMBERS is a lagged five-year average count of the states that are members of an RIA. MEMBERS is expected to increase the level of interstate conflict. In addition, it is widely accepted that geographical proximity provides more opportunities for interaction and in turn for conflict (see, e.g., Gleditsch, 2002). Thus, BORDERS measures the number of borders in a region.¹⁵ I operationalize this variable with the COW Direct Contiguity Dataset, Version 3 (Stinnett et al., 2002). BORDERS is expected to increase the level of interstate conflict.

Results

Tables 4.2 and 4.3, respectively, report the results of the empirical analysis for designed and implemented regional institutionalization. These tables begin with a basic

¹³ Consistent with the Correlates of War Project, Lemke identifies five great powers: the U.S., China, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France. According to Lemke, the U.S. can intervene in all regions of the world, China can intervene in Southeast Asia, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union can intervene in North and West Africa and the Northern part of South America, and the Soviet Union can also intervene in the Southern part of South America (2002:150-51). Lemke does not code Central and North America, Western Europe, and Central Asia. Based on his criteria and upon personal communication with Lemke, I assume that the U.S., Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union can intervene in Europe and the Americas and that the U.S. and the Soviet Union can intervene in Central Asia. Also, our operationalization of specific regions often diverges. To the extent that at any great power can interfere in at least two members of an RIA, I consider the RIA as vulnerable to intervention by this great power.

¹⁴ In practice it varies from 1 to 4. The U.S. can project its power in all corners of the globe and no region is vulnerable to all great powers' intervention.

¹⁵ Following the conventional practice, I define a border as either a boundary of land or a water separation of less than 150 miles (Russett and Oneal, 2001).

model that controls for the most conventional explanations for regional conflict. The next model substitutes regional affinity based on shared alliances with similarity of voting in the UN. Two additional models include the variables that pertain to the international system. Table 4.4 provides substantive interpretation of the significant variables. Because a negative binomial regression is non-linear, the substantive interpretation of these results requires one to exponentiate the coefficients. The numbers in Table 4.4 reflect the expected value of the incidence of the dependent variable as conditioned by the values of certain independent variables.

Table 4.2 indicates that the estimate of DERI is negative. This is consistent with the expectations of the theoretical framework, which predicts that higher levels of regional institutionalization will reduce conflict. This negative effect is not statistically significant, however. Different model specifications do not change this basic conclusion. We thus cannot rule out the possibility that regional institutionalization has no effect on intra-regional conflict. This finding seems to lend empirical support to the skeptical position that the pacifying impact of international agreements and institutions. At the same time, this result may also emanate from the disparity between the design and implementation of many RIAs discussed in the previous chapter. In other words, it is possible that signed agreements, in and of themselves, cannot alleviate conflict, but the implementation of these agreements may indeed be conducive to peace.

The results reported in Table 4.3 offer ample support for this contention. As my theory expects, the estimate of IMRI is negative and indicating that implemented regional institutionalization reduces the number of militarized inter-state disputes. This time, the coefficient is also statistically significant at a ninety-five percent level of confidence. This result remains intact across the different model specifications. The effect of IMRI is not only statistically significant, but also substantively meaningful. As reported in Table 4.5, moving from the twenty-fifth percentile to the seventy-fifth percentile on this variable reduces the number of violent conflicts by 57 percent. It is apparent that action does indeed speak louder than words. That is, to the extent that RIA members follow up on their signed agreements and implement them, they actually produce the pacifying effect expected by my theoretical framework.

The performance of the control variables is generally consistent across the various model specifications. The estimate of TRADE SHARE is negative, as liberals expect, but not statistically significant. We thus have little confidence in the claim that regional commercial interdependence mitigates conflict. This finding is compatible with a growing number of scholarly studies that challenge the theoretical foundations and the empirical findings that link commercial interdependence and peace (Barbieri, 2003; Bearce, 2003; Keshk, Pollins, and Reuveny, 2004; Morrow, 1999). These studies suggest that – for a host of possible reasons¹⁶ – the effect of trade on conflict is indeterminate. Similarly, my analysis indicates that democratic regions are not more peaceful than their non-democratic counterparts. DEMOCRACY_DUMMY is almost always positive and

¹⁶ Discussion of this literature is beyond the scope of this study. For a recent review, see Mansfield and Pollins (2001).

never approaches a conventional level of statistical significance. This result points to the possibility that – outside the industrialized regions of the North – high levels of regional democraticness may actually increase political tensions and the consequent number of militarized disputes (Henderson, 2002). The structure of the international system and the vulnerability of a region to great power intervention does not seem to affect the level of violent conflict. These results provide initial support to the notion that the main sources of regional conflict are domestic and regional rather than global in nature (Miller, 2001).

Table 4.2: Random-effects negative-binomial estimates of the effect of designed regional institutionalization on Intra-Regional MIDs, 1982-2001

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
DERI	-.016 (-.87)	-.011 (-.62)	-.019 (-1.04)	-.014 (-.74)
TRADE SHARE	-.012 (-1.04)	-.017* (-1.30)	-.014 (1.17)	-.013 (-1.07)
CONCENTRATION	-1.570** (-2.30)	-1.564*** (-2.37)	-1.636*** (-2.38)	-1.569** (-2.30)
DEMOCRACY DUMMY	.022 (.07)	.008 (.03)	-.097 (-.29)	.052 (.15)
CIVIL WAR	.050*** (4.70)	.049*** (4.68)	.052*** (4.85)	.052*** (4.16)
MEMBERS	.000 (.01)	.003 (.06)	.020 (.34)	-.003 (-.06)
BORDERS	.062*** (2.33)	.062** (2.31)	.053** (1.94)	.064*** (2.31)
AFFINITY ALLAINCES	.438 (.37)		.360 (.31)	.428 (.36)
AFFINITY UN		-1.164 (-.86)		
INTERVENTION			.096 (1.11)	
DECADE				-.057 (-.24)
CONSTANT	.037 (.03)	1.537 (1.08)	-1.058 (-.09)	.051 (.05)
LOG LIKELIHOOD	-158.01	-157.77	-157.39	-157.98
WALD CHI ²	203.93***	209.56***	195.37***	203.72***
NT	82	82	82	82

Note: *p<.1; **p<.05; ***p<.01 (one-tailed test). Figures in parentheses are z statistics.

Table 4.3: Random-effects negative-binomial estimates of the effect of implemented regional institutionalization on Intra-Regional MIDs, 1982-2001

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
IMRI	-.072** (-1.99)	-.069** (-1.71)	-.071** (-1.99)	-.070** (-1.93)
TRADE SHARE	.006 (.43)	.005 (.28)	.003 (.24)	.006 (.38)
CONCENTRATION	-1.725*** (-2.59)	-1.682*** (-2.58)	-1.794*** (-2.68)	-1.722*** (-2.59)
DEMOCRACY DUMMY	.128 (.41)	.101 (.32)	.043 (.14)	.150 (.46)
CIVIL WAR	.050*** (5.17)	.049*** (5.30)	.052*** (5.29)	.051*** (4.71)
MEMBERS	.017 (.33)	.021 (.41)	.030 (.56)	.014 (.27)
BORDERS	.056** (2.31)	.056** (2.30)	.050** (1.97)	.058** (2.28)
AFFINITY ALLAINCES	.433 (.39)		.327 (.30)	.442 (.40)
AFFINITY UN		-.139 (-.09)		
INTERVENTION			.081 (.98)	
DECADE				-.050 (-.23)
CONSTANT	.171 (.16)	.669 (.44)	.081 (.08)	.173 (.16)
LOG LIKELIHOOD	-156.39	-156.46	-155.91	-156.36
WALD CHI ²	205.96***	206.34***	200.18***	205.35***
NT	82	82	82	82

Note: *p<.1; **p<.05; ***p<.01 (one-tailed test). Figures in parentheses are z statistics.

Table 4.4: *Substantive interpretation of the effects of significant independent variables on the expected count of militarized interstate disputes, 1982-2001*

25th Percentile	Continuous Variables (50th Percentile)	75th Percentile
1.60 (3.00) <i>31</i>	IMPLEMENTED REGIONAL INSTITUTIONALIZATION (6.75)	.90 (11.00) <i>-26</i>
1.49 (.29) <i>21</i>	CONCENTRATION (.41)	1.00 (.52) <i>-18</i>
.95 (1.00) <i>-22</i>	CIVIL WAR (6.00)	1.56 (11.00) <i>28</i>
.97 (3.00) <i>-20</i>	BORDERS (6.00)	1.59 (12.00) <i>30</i>
1.71 (-5.15, 26.52) <i>-19</i>	DEMOCRACY DEMOCRACY SQUARE (-.875, .76)	1.53 (6.27, 39.31) <i>-27</i>
1.73 (7.31) <i>55</i>	LOG DEVELOPMENT (8.07)	.74 (8.69) <i>-33</i>

Notes:

1. Expected count is bolded. Actual value of independent variable is in parentheses. Expected percentage change of the dependent variable from the baseline is in italics.
2. Calculations are based on Model 1, Table 4.2 with the exception of Democracy (Model 2, Table 4.3) and Development (Model 3, Table 4.3).
3. All variable held at their 50th percentile (median) in the baseline model. The baselines for comparison are 1.22 for Model 1, Table 4.2; 2.11 for Model 2, Table 4.3; and 1.11 for Model 3, Table 4.3.

Regional concentration of power has a negative and highly significant effect on the level of regional conflict across most models. Substantively, moving from the first to the third quartile reduces the expected count of disputes by almost 40 percent. This suggests that regions with a hegemon enjoy low levels of MIDs, while regions in which power is more evenly distributed are more violent-prone. These findings are consistent with recent theoretical and empirical studies on this question (Buzan and Wæver, 2003; Lemke, 2002; Mansfield and Pevehouse, 2000). The estimate of CIVIL WAR is positive and highly significant across all models. This variable has a sizable substantive effect as well. This result points to the potential international repercussions of domestic conflicts, which may spillover to produce interstate violence (Brown, 1996; Dassel and Reinhardt, 1999; Davies, 2002). As expected, as the number of borders between member-states increases, the number of militarized disputes increases as well. Thus, more opportunities for interaction produce disagreements and conflict. In contrast, the sheer number of RIA members does not have a bearing on the expected number of militarized disputes. Finally, the estimates of similarity of interests – measured either with alliance portfolios or with voting in the UN – are not statistically significant. These results indicate that the similarity of interest is not a good predictor of violent conflict. Moreover, they mitigate concerns of realists that the effect of regional institutionalization reported above is endogenous to prior relationship between states.

Robustness Checks

How robust are the results reported above? I now consider several additional extensions to the basic model. I first examine alternative specifications to the concept of regional democracy and the effect of economic development. I then consider the possibility that the EU has an undue influence on the results. Table 4.5 reports these additional analyses.

Table 4.5: Random-effects negative-binomial estimates of the effect of implemented regional institutionalization on Intra-Regional MIDs, 1982-2001, extensions to the basic model

Independent Variables	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4: EU dropped</i>
IMRI	-.074** (-2.06)	-.055* (-1.71)	-.071** (-2.00)	-.054* (-1.47)
TRADE SHARE	.002 (.14)	.001 (.06)	.013 (.82)	.018 (1.14)
CONCENTRATION	-1.878*** (-2.85)	-1.662*** (-2.57)	-1.739*** (-2.72)	-1.548*** (-2.34)
DEMOCRACY DUMMY			.481 (1.24)	.056 (.18)
CIVIL WAR	.047*** (5.36)	.036*** (3.70)	.052*** (5.56)	.048*** (5.02)
MEMBERS	.030 (.59)	.071* (1.40)	.003 (.07)	.032 (.65)
BORDERS	.051** (2.13)	.027 (1.13)	.062*** (2.64)	.049** (2.12)
AFFINITY ALLAINCES	.663 (.62)	.359 (.37)	-.190 (-.17)	.202 (.18)
DEMOCRACY CONTINUOUS	.028* (1.30)	.035* (1.52)		
DEMOCRACY SQUARE		-.009** (-1.97)		
DEVELOPMENT			-.322* (-1.54)	
CONSTANT	.133 (.13)	.629 (.60)	3.293* (1.46)	.175 (.16)
LOG LIKELIHOOD	-155.66	-153.76	-155.17	-150.25
WALD CHI ²	213.22***	222.32***	205.83***	209.49***
NT	82	82	82	78

Note: *p<.1; **p<.05; ***p<.01 (one-tailed test). Figures in parentheses are z statistics.

Above regional democracy was operationalized as a categorical variable that distinguishes between mature democracies and all other regimes types. While this variable captures the distinction between democracies and non-democracies, it also masks a great deal of variation within these categories. To ensure that the results are not affected by this, I replace the categorical variable with the continuous Polity score. Model 1 in Table 4.5 reports the results. Surprisingly, DEMOCRACY CONTINUOUS is positive and statistically significant at a ninety percent level of confidence. This result suggests that higher Polity scores are associated higher levels of violent conflict. Notably, IMRI remains negative and highly significant.

Mansfield and Snyder (1995, 2002) offer a clue regarding the unexpected results regarding the relationship between democracy and conflict. They argue that states that undergo democratic transition are more likely to engage in interstate disputes. According to them, states that go through a process of democratization usually lack the necessary institutions that are required to function as a mature and stable democracy. Facing such institutional challenges, leaders have incentives to resort to nationalist ideologies. These ideologies, in turn, lead to aggressive foreign policies and militarized disputes. This is especially the case for states that experience an incomplete democratization and have a partially democratic regime (or anocracy) for several years (Mansfield and Snyder, 2002). The logic of this argument suggests an inverse U-shaped relationship between regime type and conflict.¹⁷ That is, thinking about regime type as a continuum in which mature democracies and complete autocracies are in the extremes and anocracies are in the middle, we should expect low levels of conflict in the extremes and high levels of conflict in the center.

To evaluate this relationship, the level of democracy is raised the second power. This variable is labeled DEMOCRACY SQUARE. A positive coefficient on DEMOCRACY CONTINUOUS and a negative coefficient on DEMOCRACY SQUARE are consistent with an inverse U shape relationship. Model 2 provides empirical support to this hypothesis. As expected the sign on DEMOCRACY CONTINUOUS is positive and the sign on DEMOCRACY SQUARE is negative and both are statistically significant at a ninety percent level of confidence or higher. Substantive interpretation provides additional support to this hypothesis. Conflict is maximized very close to 0, which is the middle point between autocracy and democracy. As Table 4.4 shows, movement in either direction drops the number of militarized disputes. More importantly for our purposes, even though adding DEMOCRACY SQUARE diminishes the statistical significance and substantive impact of IMRI, it remains negative and statistically significant.

While attracting little attention, the idea that high levels of economic development reduce conflict and war is not new. Joseph Schumpeter (1951) argued that capitalism and the rise of a powerful middle class will result in the overthrow of warlike interest groups that support imperialism. According to him, war jeopardizes economic prosperity, and therefore the middle class will find war too costly. Schumpeter's contention was echoed

¹⁷ Mansfield and Snyder examine changes in regime type rather their absolute values.

in recent years. Mueller (1989) argues that war among states in the developed world is obsolete and Friedman's (2000:249) "golden arches theory of conflict prevention" posits that states that have a big middle class would rather wait in line for burgers than fight wars. Finally, Mousseau (2000) argues that developed market economies are characterized by liberal norms such as equitable contract enforcement and respect for property rights. These norms, which are common only to highly developed states, give rise to similar preferences and low likelihood of military conflict. Mousseau also finds a negative association between the level of economic development and the likelihood of militarized interstate disputes. It seems appropriate to account for this possibility.

The natural log of the average regional GDP per capita is employed to measure the level of regional economic development, labeled DEVELOPMENT. I use data from the Penn World Tables to calculate this measure (Heston, Summers, and Aten, 2002). The results reported in Model 3 indicate that indeed higher levels of economic development are associated with a lower number of disputes. This effect is significant at a 90 percent level of confidence. As reported in Table 4.4, the substantive effect of this variable is quite sizable as well. Again, adding economic development to the model does not wipe out the pacifying effect of implemented regional institutionalization.

One may correctly point out that the European Union is qualitatively different from all other RIAs. Its supranational nature resembles a federal state more than an instance of international cooperation (Parsons, 2002). The extremely high value on the regional institutionalization measures, particularly the implemented one, shows that the EU is in fact an outlier. It is possible that my results are driven by this one observation. In order to rule out this possibility, I ran the basic model with the exclusion of the EU. As the results in Model 4 show, dropping the EU somewhat weakens the statistical significance of IMRI, but it remains in the expected direction and is statistically significant at a ninety percent level of confidence. It is also important to keep in mind that with a data set that contains a small number of observations, any drop of observations is likely to decrease the significance of the results. It seems, then, that the pacifying effect of implemented regional institutionalization is at work beyond the confines of Western Europe.

Table 4.6 summarizes the findings of the statistical analysis reported above. It highlights the central result of the analysis: higher levels of regional institutionalization, when implemented, lead to a lower number of intra-regional militarized disputes. Accounting for a host of alternative explanations and different model specifications does not change this main conclusion. At the same time, simply signing ambitious agreements but stopping short of implementing them is unlikely to mitigate violent conflict. Thus, implementation is essential for the causal mechanisms discussed in the theoretical framework to work. From this perspective, it seems that, indeed, action speaks louder than words.

Table 4.6: *Summary of Findings of the Statistical Analysis*

Variable	Expected Effect on the number of MIDs	Empirical Support
Designed Regional Institutionalization	Decrease	No
Implemented Regional Institutionalization	Decrease	Yes
Intra-Regional Trade	Decrease	No
Regional Democraticness	Decrease	No
Concentration Ratio	Decrease	Yes
Domestic Armed Conflict	Increase	Yes
Regional affinity	Decrease	No
Great Power Intervention	Unclear	No
International System	Unclear	No
Number of Members	Increase	No
Borders	Increase	Yes
Economic Development	Decrease	Yes
Regime Type	Inverse U-Shape	Yes

Qualitative Large-N Analysis

This section employs the statistical analysis reported above to examine the pacifying effect of regional institutionalization more closely. One useful way to do this is to compare RIAs with similar baseline prospects for conflict but different levels of regional institutionalization (Fortna, 2004). The baseline prospects for conflict refers to the number of intra-regional conflicts expected based on the values of all the independent variables *except* regional institutionalization. This baseline tells us how conflict-prone different regions are regardless the level of cooperation through international institutions. Adding the level of regional institutionalization to this baseline offers a clearer perspective regarding its effect on conflict.

Table 4.7 presents a summary of this analysis. It first groups RIAs according to their average baseline prospects for conflict. It then sorts the RIAs in each group according to their level of implemented regional institutionalization. Finally, it reports the actual number of intra-regional militarized disputes for each RIA. As one might expect, the predictions of the baseline model are generally on track: the actual number of conflicts increases as the expected level of conflict moves from lower to higher categories. It is also apparent that there is a lot variation in the level of regional institutionalization within each category of baseline prospects for conflict. In particular, some regions that experience intermediate or high prospects for conflict also have medium or high levels of institutionalization. This observation alleviates the concerns of realists and other skeptics that international institutions thrive only when and where they are not needed. The cases of ASEAN, ANCOM, CARICOM, and WAEMU stand out in this respect.

This within-group variation is also instrumental for a more fine-grained analysis of the effect of regional institutionalization on conflict. According to my theoretical framework, all else equal, higher levels of institutionalization should reduce conflict. Comparing RIAs with similar baseline prospects for conflict means that all else is largely equal. Thus, within each category we should observe a lower number of conflicts as regional institutionalization increases. Table 4.7 offers considerable support for this expectation but also reveals some differences across the baseline categories. The patterns in the medium and high categories correspond to my theoretical expectations rather nicely. In the medium category, it is apparent that the members of the two RIAs with low or medium levels of regional institutionalization experience noticeably greater conflict than members of the three RIAs with a high level of institutionalization. Similarly, in the high category, members of RIAs with low level of regional institutionalization experience a higher number of conflicts compared to RIAs with medium level of institutionalization.¹⁸ The latter experience a significantly higher number of conflicts compared to WEAMU, the only highly institutionalized RIA in this baseline category

¹⁸ LAIA seems to be an exception to this rule.

Table 4.7: *Regional Institutionalization and Militarized Inter-State Disputes, by Baseline Prospects for Conflict*

Regional Integration Arrangement	Baseline Prospects for Conflict	Implemented Regional Institutionalization	Number of Militarized Disputes
AMU	Very Low	Low	0.00
NAFTA		Medium	0.50
GCC		High	0.75
EFTA		High	0.25
MERCOSUR		High	0.00
IOC	Low	Low	0.00
CEPGL		Low	1.00
MRU		Medium	2.25
UDEAC		Medium	0.50
EU		Very High	1.00
ECCAS	Medium	Low	5.00
CACM		Medium	4.75
ANCOM		High	3.75
ASEAN		High	2.25
CARICOM		High	2.00
ECO	High	Low	7.66
BANGKOK		Low	3.00
LAIA		Medium	4.75
SADC		Medium	2.50
WAEMU		High	1.75
SAARC	Very High	Low	6.33
ECOWAS		Medium	8.00
COMESA		Medium	21.75

Note: the baseline prospects for conflict are determined by the prediction of the model that includes the following independent variables: TRADE SHARE, CONCENTRATION, DEMOCRACY CONTINUOUS, DEMOCRACY SQUARE, CIVIL WAR, MEMBERS, BORDERS, AFFINITY ALLAINCES, and DEVELOPMENT. The categories are as follows: Very Low: 0-1; Low: 1-2; Medium: 2-3; High: 3-5; Very High: 5 and higher. The categories for implemented regional institutionalization are: Low 1-4; Medium: 4-8; High: 8-13; Very High: 13 or higher.

Some concrete examples cast light on this general observation. On the lower end, weakly institutionalized RIAs could do little to alleviate conflict among their members. ECCAS, for instance, did not play a pacifying role in the numerous conflicts that revolved around the Democratic Republic of Congo from the middle 1990s to the early 2000s. During these years, ECCAS was largely dormant because of non-payment of membership dues. As a result, meeting among officials at all levels took place very infrequently and activity grinded to a halt (Panafrikan News Agency, February 24, 2001). While its members have envisioned ECCAS as an instrument that would promote peace and stability in region, the low level of institutionalization rendered it ineffective in this respect. CACM provides a second illustration of this reality. The members of CACM experienced recurrent violent disputes in the 1980s and the 1990s. These disputes were a result of some inter-state rivalries, such as the one between Honduras and El Salvador, and the spillover of civil wars, particularly the one in Nicaragua. CACM – while initially one of the more promising RIAs in the developing world – entered a period of protracted hibernation in the early 1980s. Mainly as a result of the economic crisis, regional integration lost much of its dynamism: signed agreements were not implemented and meetings among officials were very infrequent. Even though CACM was revived in the early 1990s, its level of institutionalization remains low (Bulmer-Thomas 1998). This low level of institutionalization did not allow CACM to play a pacifying role in the region.

In contrast, RIAs with high level of regional institutionalization proved valuable in mitigating violent conflict among their members. ANCOM and WEAMU offer two useful illustration of this point.¹⁹ In many ways, ANCOM is comparable to CACM. Both RIAs are in the same region, both have five members, both have a couple of ongoing rivalries, and both suffer from continuous domestic strife.²⁰ Yet, the members of ANCOM have experienced fewer militarized disputes than the CACM members. I would argue that this difference can be attributed to the more dynamic nature of ANCOM compared to CACM. One notable disparity is between the institutional frameworks of the two RIAs. Since 1979 the Andean Group instituted regular meetings among its foreign ministers, a commission, and a court of justice. In contrast, until the early 1990s the CACM's highest decisionmaking body was composed of economic ministers and it had no dispute settlement mechanism. Its corporate secretariat still lacks the power to make recommendations or take initiatives (Nicholls, Samuel, and Boodoo 2001). Similarly, the economic scope of ANCOM is wider and better implemented than the CACM's. For example, even though both RIAs agreed to form a customs union, only ANCOM actually moved forward in this direction, while CACM remains a free trade area. The high level of implemented regional institutionalization allowed ANCOM to ease some of the tensions in the region. The dispute between Peru and Ecuador illustrates this point. In 1995 a border dispute between the two states erupted into an open armed conflict. While

¹⁹ A third example is ASEAN. It is discussed in great details in Chapter 7, and is thus not discussed here.

²⁰ The two rivalries are Peru vs. Ecuador and Venezuela vs. Colombia. Peru and Colombia, in particular, suffer from persistent domestic unrest.

this conflict has resulted in some casualties, it was contained and was followed by peace talks between the two sides. ANCOM played an important role in keeping this conflict in check. First, meetings between the Peruvian and the Ecuadorian leaders within the framework of the Andean Community allowed them to communicate their desire for compromise. These meetings also fostered reconciliation talks between officials from the two states, which were mediated by officials from other ANCOM members (Agence France Presse, March 11, 1996). Second, the two belligerents restrained themselves in order to prevent the collapse of ANCOM and the loss of the many accompanied benefits. As one news report points out, “tempers were calmed largely due to the pressure of economic agents that benefited from Andean integration” (Inter Press Service, April 25, 1997). In sum, it is apparent that ANCOM’s high level of regional institutionalization was instrumental in mitigating violent conflict in the Andean region.

WAEMU encompasses francophone western Africa. As Table 4.7 makes clear, the baseline prospects for conflict in this region are very high. Among other things, states in this region are among the least economically developed in the world and several of them suffer from continuous domestic strife. Despite the high vulnerability of this region to inter-state violent conflict, it experienced only a limited number of such incidents. Actually, it experienced the smallest number of MIDs among all RIAs in the medium and high baseline categories. What distinguishes WAEMU from other RIAs with similar baseline prospects for conflict is its high level of institutionalization. WAEMU covers a variety of issues including trade liberalization, a monetary union, and economic development. Unlike most of their counterparts in Sub-Saharan Africa, the members of WAEMU have implemented many of the agreements they signed. In addition, WAEMU has a solid institutional framework that supports the integration process. These institutions have proved useful in mitigating conflict in the region. In one instance, the ministerial council of the organization was instrumental in defusing a border dispute between Burkina Faso and Mali in 1985. A meeting of this council allowed high-level officials from the two states to meet in a relaxed atmosphere. It also facilitated mediation between the two rivals by officials from other member-states (BBC, January 1, 1986; Ero, Sidhu, and Toure 2001, 5). The increasing level of institutionalization in the 1990s further reduced the frequency of militarized inter-state disputes.²¹ It is thus apparent that the highly-institutionalized WAEMU was instrumental in fostering peace among its members.

So far I have examined medium and high levels of baseline prospects for conflict. What about other categories? Table 4.7 suggests that regional institutionalization has no consequence in the extreme categories. This is not very surprising. In the two lower categories, conflict is very unlikely to begin with. In them, states may have little to fight about, as in the cases of the small island-states that compose IOC and the members of EFTA that are spread across Europe. Or, even if they have disagreements, other conditions make violent disputes unlikely. The preponderance of the U.S. in NAFTA, the high levels of democracy and economic development in the EU, and the absence of civil war in Mercosur illustrate this point. In such instances, RIAs may provide other valuable

²¹ The most recent incident occurred between Mali and Niger in 1994.

benefits to their members, but their pacifying effect is probably redundant regardless of the level of their institutionalization. From this perspective, the lack of a clear pattern in these categories seems reasonable.

Regional institutionalization does not seem to alleviate violence in regions in which the baseline for conflict is very high. Instead, more institutionalized RIAs are actually associated with more conflict. This is not to suggest that higher levels of regional institutionalization result in higher violence. A closer inspection of this baseline category indicates that it differs from other categories in at least two respects. First, in contrast to other categories, the baseline prospects for conflict vary a great deal within this category. They are 6.11, 7.92, and 14.85 for SAARC, ECOWAS, and COMESA, respectively. It is safer to attribute the differences in the actual number of conflicts to this variation rather than to the level of regional institutionalization. In particular, while conflict within SAARC is driven mainly by the rivalry between India and Pakistan, conflict within ECOWAS and COMESA is driven by multiple rivalries and several ongoing civil wars. Second, the variation on regional institutionalization is rather limited and there is no representation of RIAs with a high level of institutionalization. This absence indicates that in regions in which conflict is very intense and widespread, international institutions are unlikely to thrive. This is consistent with the notion that in such war-prone regions the level of regional institutionalization is endogenous to the level of conflict. More broadly, the lack of an obvious relationship between regional institutionalization and the actual number of militarized disputes in this category suggests that RIAs may not be effective in reducing conflict in regions that experience extreme levels of violence. It is possible, then, that my theoretical argument may not be applicable to such regions.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the effect of regional institutionalization on violent conflict. In its first part, I utilized a multivariate regression technique to evaluate this effect. The analysis indicates that regional institutionalization, when implemented, mitigates violent conflict. This result is robust to a host of control variables and various model specifications. This finding provides empirical support to the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2. That is, it corroborates the notion that the level of institutionalization determines the value of international institutions as instruments of peace and stability. The statistical analysis also shows that high levels of regional institutionalization have a pacifying effect only to the extent that signed agreements are implemented. Highly developed institutional design, in and of itself, does not mitigate violent conflict. This shows that, indeed, action speaks louder than words.

In the second part of this chapter I utilized the statistical analysis to conduct a large-N qualitative analysis. This analysis offered a closer look at some of the cases and compared several RIAs that – apart from their level of regional institutionalization – are likely to experience similar levels of conflict. This analysis indicates that in instances in which the baseline prospects of conflict are rather high, the level of institutionalization makes an important difference. Regions that have more institutionalized RIAs experience less conflict than their counterparts. The cases of ANCOM and WAEMU, on the one hand, and ECCAS and CACM, on the other, illustrate this point. It appears that international institutions, to the extent that they are highly institutionalized, matter when and where they are needed. In contrast, the level of regional institutionalization is inconsequential in regions that have either low or very high baseline prospects for conflict. This finding, while preliminary, points to one potential limitation of the institutional logic as well as to the need to identify the conditions under which my theoretical framework applies. Nonetheless, taken as a whole, the empirical analysis presented in this chapter offers a great deal of support for my argument.

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