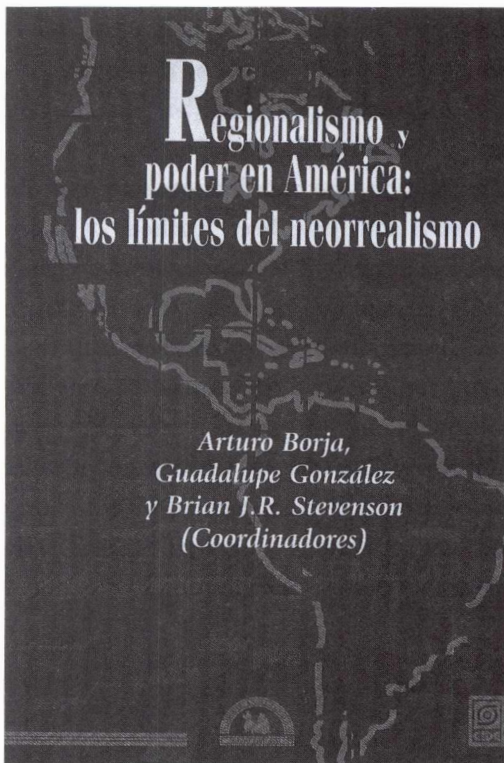


Reviews



**Regionalismo y poder en América:
los límites del neorealismo**
(Regionalism and Power in America:
The Limits of Neorealism)

*Arturo Borja, Guadalupe González
And Brian R. Stevenson*

Miguel Angel Porrúa-CIDE
Mexico City, 1996, 495 pp.

This book's central aim is to explain how some currents of thought in the realist and neorealist schools in the social sciences explain international integration today. A second objective is to offer up an initial critique of neorealism in the existing complex international political and economic system. Lastly, it presents us with a stimulating analysis of regionalism in the post-Cold War period, some case studies and considerations about political coalitions and non governmental organizations (NGOs), of great importance in the Americas.

This critical look at different realist and neorealist theoreticians (Carr, Kehoane, Nye, Watz, etc.) has the virtue of restricting itself to the Western Hemisphere. This makes it especially original and important, both in terms of theoretical proposals for the study of international relations in our time and, more particularly, its focus on countries in the Americas as its central empirical reference point.

This Mexican-U.S. collaborative effort was made in and from Mexico on the initiative of Mexican academics who invited Canadian, U.S., Mexican and Latin American experts to participate, including J. Ikenberry, U. Pipitone, M.K. Hawes, J. Chabat, J.M. Grieco, B. Torres, C. Escudé, V. Arriaga and the book's coordinators themselves. Besides being a theoretical reformulation of the study of the new phenomena in the Americas, it is an

“The traditional view of international politics as a chess board is no longer tenable, given that not all the players on the important boards are states.”

introspective work on the methodology used for understanding regional phenomena as a watershed for the reorganization of the end-of-century new order.

In commenting the book's proposals, a first mention should be made that a study about any country's territorial expansion (in this case, the United States, the dominant actor in the region) would be unfortunate if at the same time an effort is not made to theoretically understand its regional dimension. Along these lines, and with reference to K. Boot, we can say that divorcing strategic from area or regional studies is ineffectual since it amounts to thinking in a void.

Throughout the entire book, the authors persevere in the analysis of the realist and neorealist schools, attempting, in addition, a parallel study which reveals the relatively divergent temporal, spacial and political planes that they occupy in the global organization of the past-present. In this sense, it is estimated that “the traditional view of international politics as a chess board is no longer tenable given that in contemporary world politics not all the players on the important boards are states, and variation of the boards limits state behavior. Some are more susceptible than others to the use of force.”

In the light of this historical approximation, the authors reexamine ideas of neorealist thinkers about realism and “complex interdependency.” They maintain that “from the start, their intention was to make a synthesis of—not completely reject—realism like their predecessors, the modernist liberals, had. At the center of their

analysis is the creation of an ideal type, which they called ‘complex interdependence.’”

Outstanding among the articles on regionalism vs. the nation-state is the work by Jorge Chabat, who expounds the case of Mexico's integration into the post-Cold War world; by Ugo Pipitone, who deals with new regional actors; and by Alan Grieco, who writes about regional economic institutionalization.

The last part of the book includes several case studies vis-à-vis the systemic level as a limitation of neorealist theory. Agustín Arriaga's article is about U.S.-Mexican commercial reciprocity from 1883 on, and Héctor González delves into the relationship between Colombia and Mexico in the domestic and international fight against drugs. Brian R. Stevenson and Guillermo Torres present an interesting article in which they analyze the role of non governmental organizations in the relationship between Canada and Latin America in the context of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

In their conclusion, the coordinators state that the book's three initial aims have been reached: 1) understanding the most important tendencies toward change in the political system of the Americas; 2) evaluating the usefulness and limitations of realist and neorealist theories for studying international relations in the Americas; and 3) establishing points of contact between European and U.S. internationalists (the two laboratories in which these theories were initially experimented with) and their Mexican and Latin American counterparts. Finally, the authors suggest that this is a contribution to the process

The authors reexamine ideas of neorealist thinkers about realism and “complex interdependency.”

of generating theories “from the South and from the North” which “would help us, through empirical analysis, to better understand and predict the international forces that will mark the behavior of societies and states in the Western Hemisphere as we approach the twenty-first century.”

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde
 Researcher at CISAN