The regional powers research program: a new way forward

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Abstract

This introduction to our special issue on Revisiting Regional Powers examines ways in which the study of regional powers can enhance our ability to understand the dynamic nature of the international system today. The article, first, summarizes and highlights how the study of regional powers remains relevant to the broader discipline of international relations but also indicates that there remains much to improve and investigate, for instance by more systematically including less traditional issue areas for regional power engagement, including the environment or public diplomacy, by integrating disciplines beyond IR, including sociological and linguistic approaches. In today's shifting global order, researching regional powerhood is needed for a better understanding of the emergence of order(s); by highlighting, for example, less-than-global forms of cooperation and conflict, and their often-complex simultaneities. We highlight the need to investigate forms of power beyond increases in military and economic power, but also to expand the types of actors beyond the state that we consider taking on functions of regional powerhood.

Keywords Regional powers · IR theory · Global order · Regional order

Introduction

This special issue examines ways in which the study of regional powers enhances our ability to understand the dynamic nature of the international system. Our general contention is that the study of regional powers remains important to the broader discipline of international relations despite the scholarship being weighed down in debates over concepts and definitions. The essays in this issue attempt to move

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beyond this burden by demonstrating the diversity of perspectives that a regional powers approach can bring to our understanding of international politics, while also identifying the problems such an approach brings. In this introduction to the special issue, we provide an overview of these perspectives, along with a brief discussion of why they are important.

To set the context, we begin with a look at the early 2000s when the resurgence of regional powers as a prominent field of study in international relations took place. Much of the energy and effort during this period resulted from the idea that the distribution of power was transforming the international system. Some argued we were witnessing a more entrenched unipolarity, while others noticed increasing weakness in the overall ability of the United States to maintain what was commonly referred to as the 'liberal order'. In either case, researchers engaged in regional power dynamics found themselves having to develop two sets of ideas regarding regional powers in international politics. Two related questions, what defined a regional power and what roles did they play in international interactions, exemplified the first set of ideas. The second set of ideas focused upon the application of the aforementioned questions to real-world environments. In other words, who were the regional powers exactly, and what were they doing in international politics specifically?

Scholars during this period made significant headway in discussions related to those states that seem poised to take their place in the hierarchy of power. Thus, there were many discussions about the foreign policies of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa and their collective BRICS identity as a counterweight to the Western dominance of the international system. This identity particularly was the case as it related to economic influence. As much of the literature during this period suggests, these states possessed enough material capabilities to fulfill the various roles required to regulate and manage patterns of interaction amongst regional members. Successfully filling these roles, most notably that of leadership, subsequently allowed these states to better represent their regions' interests in the global order.

While such perspectives and arguments appeared theoretically sound, the empirical realities of the last decade suggest flaws in the regional powers approach. One lacking aspect of extant research was the failure to examine domestic support and capabilities for external power protection, both in economic and security terms. Brazil and South Africa, for example, turned inward to focus on domestic problems, limiting their ability to perform expected roles at the regional level. India, for its own domestic reasons was never particularly keen about its regional place in comparison with its global aspirations. As it relates to Russia and China, most scholars did not deal with the distinction between what arguably were rising or returning global powers, versus simply rising regional powers. Theoretically, this split reflected questions about the nature of the international system, namely whether the rise of global powers, or in the case of Russia the return of one, would lead to a diminished role for the regional system or whether the concept of global power was losing meaning such that even these two states primarily focused on regional ambitions.

Finally, scholars failed to move beyond a limited conceptualization of regional power. Thus, regional powers research and what we will refer to here as the Regional

Powers Research Program (RPRP) (see Garzon, this issue) limited itself to focusing on a small number of actors. This limitation included a failure of the RPRP to extend its reach into the global North, with a noticeable lack of discussion about regional powers being something more than a concept reserved for global South members. In failing to do so, scholars inadvertently reduced the generalizability of the RPRP while simultaneously treating the global South as quite different in international interactions than its counterpart in the North.

Having briefly set the context, in the remainder of this introductory essay we discuss why we think the Regional Powers Research Program remains strong, particularly identifying what sorts of issues scholars believe they can address using a regional powers approach. We provide an overview of the articles contained within this issue and in doing so, we identify the ways in which this research builds on the existing program to strengthen our knowledge. Specifically, we discuss the contributions with a focus on the issues they address, and how they differ from the literature that currently exists. We conclude with a brief assessment of the way forward for the Regional Powers Research Program based on the types of contributions found in this special issue.

The regional powers research program continues

The evolution of the international system continues, unabated by scholars' efforts to make sense of it. This inability exists, despite a general consensus among scholars that the system is far removed from the unipolar environment that best categorized the end of the Cold War. Whether we can speak of multipolarity, multiplexity, nonpolarity, or other descriptions, it appears clear to most that the international system quite often is a product of interactions beyond the great powers. In this sense, regional power behavior seems to matter for international politics. Thus, it is our contention that a renewed set of efforts in the Regional Powers Research Program is required to understand just how relevant regional powers are in a changing international system.

These renewed efforts will not take place in a vacuum of research, however. Despite there being some perceived stagnation in the RPRP, there remains a continued stream of work on regional powers that suggests scholars still find the program value added. While a thorough literature review is beyond the scope of this essay (see Garzon this issue for a historical review), it merits mentioning a few of the themes on display over the last several years to demonstrate the utility still found in a regional powers approach.

Recent work directly related to the study of regional powers remains steady and varied. Regional security remains a prominent area within the RPRP. Kamrava (2018), Lockyer (2015) and Wilkins (2019), for example, speak to the challenges within regions like the Middle East and East Asia in terms of security. In these cases, scholars have focused on the relationship between power and roles played within regions to mitigate instability or to change historical patterns of interaction. Boukars (2019) takes a similar approach with respect to regional powers in an analysis of the roles of Morocco and Algeria in providing security management for the Maghreb

and Sahel. As referenced before, these studies examine the perceived changes in the security environment at the regional level brought about by the changes in power at the global level, while also recognizing that regional dynamics are much more varied than descriptions of power alone would suggest.

Theory development and its application to particular regions also remains an active research area. Rodrigues Bessa Mattos, Lemos de Matos and Kenkle (2017), Seabra (2017), and Ogunnubi and Okeke-Uzodike (2016), for example, extend ideas like regional security complex theory into deliberations of regional dynamics in the South Atlantic and West Africa, respectively. This type of research is attuned toward the making of connections between RPRP concepts and more traditional IR approaches like hegemony and regionalism more broadly. Along these lines, one dynamic that continues to be salient in the RPRP is the attention devoted toward understanding regional hierarchy. For instance, Le Gourillec (2018) looks at hierarchy in East Africa, assessing the concept of hegemony in the case of Ethiopia and its security provision role. Freeman (2018) sheds light on China's goals vis-à-vis India as the two compete for dominance in what has been traditionally viewed as India's 'neighborhood'. Finally, theory development need not be an extension of ideas but even the creation of new ones. Destradi's (2017) conceptualization of reluctance, for example, gets at persisting difficulties in explaining the inability or lack of engagement by some regional powers in security dynamics. Several scholars point to this phenomenon as influential in their understandings of a specific region's security environment (e.g., Destradi 2019; Clark 2016), with some such as Hofmann et al. (2016) identifying when reluctance may be better described as an indirect approach to regional power engagement. As we will see below, Schenoni and Nolte build upon this idea in the special issue, looking at leadership specifically, arguing not for an indirect approach but rather one that is conditioned by structure at the global level.

There remains work in the RPRP that seeks to apply extant knowledge of regional power behaviors to new areas of concern. Nelson's (2016) examination of the role of regional powers in climate change as well as Verspieren's (2019) work on Japan's regional power behavior in space data sharing demonstrates such work. Similar to previous literature, these articles clearly demonstrate a sense that new challenges are both a product and result of global level changes (i.e., changes in polarity, US global leadership, etc.) that require different approaches for resolution than those traditionally used or identified in previous periods. Koga's (2020) work on Japan, namely its role in the Indo-Pacific given the rise of China and its potential challenge to the existing hierarchy, represents one of the most recent efforts to do this holistically in the context of this region. Wilkins' (2019) research on Australia's strategic dilemma in the Indo-Pacific, while centered on the relationship between Australia and the United States, also fits the model of new challenges in changing regional security dynamics.

One interesting observation to be noted here is that so much of this research emphasizes the utility of determining how Western centered IR approaches fit other contexts, in a sense testing concept generalizability to parts of the world typically left out of traditional IR analyses. This observation becomes even clearer in examining the research that has branched off or references the RPRP. We note here

the research on emerging/rising powers and even continued work on the concept of middle-powers; both utilize regional power approaches and concepts, even if only to distinguish them apart from each other.

Emerging/rising power research reflects a new branch of work that appears very much derived from the RPRP, while middle power research stems from a longer tradition in which non-great power states with outsized global influence are viewed as playing unique roles in the international system. While at one point work in this field was fairly limited, discussions about the concept of middle powers, particularly their relationship to regional and emerging/rising power concepts again have become more noticeable in the literature. To repeat, we believe this re-emergence reflects the accepted notion that changes in systemic structure are providing more space for actors like these to influence their regional neighborhoods and perhaps for some to influence more global level phenomenon. Green's (2019) work on Korea's middle power diplomacy, for example, illustrates this point. Despite over a decade of significant activism in international forums and initiatives aimed at effecting changes in the regional security environment in Northeast Asia, Green argues Korean middle-power diplomacy has failed as the system dynamics have changed to reflect a more entrenched rivalry between the United States and China. In this case then, earlier opportunities brought about by the systemic move away from unipolarity have been shut off, at least in the case of Northeast Asia. For Green, these opportunities have been lost despite the value added for the region that could be found in Korea's success as a middle power.

Similar to work in the RPRP, conceptualization remains a focus for these two related fields of middle and emerging/rising powers. Cezar Dutra Fonseca, de Oliveira Paes and Moreira Cunha (2016) put forth an interesting deconstruction of the concept of emerging powers with comparisons to middle and regional powers and what these concepts tell us about the nature of the international system with respect to hierarchy. The authors in this case remain consistent with work in the RPRP in their efforts to understand the relationship of power to status and identity and what it means to be categorized in a hierarchical system. In their comparison of middle power defense strategies, Edstrom and Westberg (2020) also note the identity, behavioral, and positional approaches to the concept of middle powers and the limitations of each. In contributing their own definition, one that is focused on the positional approach, Edstrom and Westberg end up evaluating middle powers in ways similar to scholarship evaluating regional powers in the RPRP. Indeed, the authors discuss middle powers in the context of regional security complexes, leading to theoretical questions regarding the difference between middle powers and regional powers. For our purposes, these concerns show just how closely tied together these programs remain, despite differences in terminology. Dal's (2016) study of Turkey as an "emerging regional power" directly speaks to this point, as she takes great pains to sort out the confusion and distinctions between the concept of regional, middle, and emerging powers.

In sum, given the extant research mentioned here and the many others that have shaped or been shaped by the current regional powers research landscape, we view the continued interest in the RPRP and associated concepts as resulting from a continued desire by scholars and policymakers to account for two specific and

dynamic aspects of the international system. First is the fact that there exists regional variation in behavior and outcomes regarding interstate interactions.[1] Second, there is broad acknowledgement of the weakening of global power engagement in terms of both systemic and regional influence. Both aspects of the current international system, as dynamic as they are, lead to the identification of several issues and/or questions that the Regional Powers Research Program will continue to address, similarly to earlier literature. First, how can we conceptualize regional powers in ways that allow for both comparison and variability among cases? Second, how do we discuss these powers in such a way that we can examine the impact of their behaviors on the nature of regional order? Differing from previous research, however, we find it necessary to expand on the concept of regional power and shift our attention to the examination of different regional power behavior such as conflict management and environmental governance. Third, while there is a general consensus that the region will continue to matter, perhaps even more so than it has in the past, there remains the question of how best can we understand the nexus as identified by the interplay between the global and regional systems? This aspect of the RPRP was not particularly well-developed in the previous period of research and presents a definite challenge to fully exploring the utility of a regional power approach. In this issue, we expand the RPRP with articles that take this challenge head-on. In sum, the articles in this special issue tackle these outstanding issues and questions, helping to push forward a stronger Regional Powers Research Program.

The conceptualization of regional powers perhaps has been the most challenging for scholars in the RPRP. In this issue, we include two articles that re-examine what it means to be a regional power. Malte Brosig begins with a look at the concept of BRICS and its relevance for the current period. Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa most often represented the original actors identified as regional powers in the early 2000s. While attracting much of their attention based on economic successes, the BRICS countries seemed initially to work as a group to offer alternatives to the established rules of international order driven by the West. Simultaneously, these countries were viewed individually as being able to provide regional stability in ways that furthered the group's global ambitions.

However, more than a decade after its emergence, the economic growth story is somehow less compelling, with domestic and other challenges undermining the group's potency. In the context of this presumed decline of relevance the article asks what foreign policy value added is BRICS providing? Brosig turns his focus toward the political and security dimensions of the group as both dimensions provide for a number of tangible benefits for its members, including a focus on domestic regime stability, protection from un-wanted external interference, flexible alignment in foreign policies and boosting regional authority. To exemplify this value added, Brosig works through the rhetorical codification of BRICS summit documents and traces the un-codified principles of cooperation among its members, using specific

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[1] This variation allows for regional comparisons and cross-regional applications of ideas. Aharm, Köllner and Sil's (2018) edited volume on comparative area studies, for example, demonstrates the added utility of such comparisons for IR scholarship.

case studies to illustrate his argument. In sum, Brosig finds that the BRICS remain a useful concept in the RPRP.

Mattheis' approach to conceptualization is quite different. For Mattheis, regional powers conceptually have been derived primarily from cases with identifiable states that serve as contenders to regional leadership. He argues this focus has eclipsed regional orders where evident regional powers are absent, thus omitting possible candidates for regional power designation. He proposes to address this bias by exploring how the functions of regional powers are assumed by other actors, institutions and interplays. First, the functions typically associated with regional powers are abstracted to be able to transfer them to other kinds of political actors. Second, the driving actors of regionalism in the absence of an evident regional power are scrutinized in relation to these functions. Third, the concept of regional power is revised and made compatible with these actors by focusing on function rather than form. Mattheis shows that Central Africa, for example, contains institutionalized forms of regionalism but no evident regional power. However, regional institutions, external actors such as France, and a shifting balance by neighboring states, all emit elements of regional powerhood and thus suggests that current conceptualizations of regional powers are too narrow in scope.

From different perspectives on conceptualization, we turn our attention to articles that expand upon our understanding of regional power behavior and explore real-world aspects of the RPRP. As we alluded to above, Schenoni and Nolte look at regional power leadership, focusing on the conditions under which some states seem reluctant to pursue such a goal. Their argument takes a relatively new idea (reluctance) and examines it with a return to classical IR theory. Using a neo-classical realist framework that pushes back against the dominant role-theoretical perspective in the RPRP, the authors see leadership as an auxiliary goal, one that may or may not be pursued depending on the environment in which a regional power finds itself. Applying their framework to Brazil during the Cardoso and Lula presidencies, Schenoni and Nolte's contribution provides thought-provoking pushback against the older RPRP tradition while also pointing a way forward in thinking about regional leadership in a new era of great power competition.

Heibach examines the valorization of public diplomacy in regional leadership struggles from the perspective of recent Saudi foreign policy, a widely neglected topic in discussions on regional power behavior. The existing literature offers explanations for how already-established regional leaders seek to maintain their position, yet the proposed binary set of coercive and persuasive strategies in the literature does not capture the complexities of regional leadership struggles globally. Heibach argues instead that aspirant leaders become prone to resort to a strategy mix combining elements of both coercion and persuasion. Because of the inconsistencies of applying such antithetical policies, public diplomacy gains significantly in importance as a balancing tool. Based on an analysis of recent Saudi foreign policy, Heibach suggests that the public diplomacy of aspirant leaders may serve three purposes: to give substance to the leadership claim, to obfuscate the leaders' use of coercive means, and to retain the support of extra-regional powers. In sum, public diplomacy represents an underexplored aspect of regional power behavior and one that is likely to help explain the outcomes of many regional interactions.

One such set of interactions that attract global attention are those related to security and conflict. Simply put, political, military and humanitarian crises endanger regional order. Even though regional powers are expected to act as providers and stabilizers, Seabra and Mesquita show how their responses to these dire demands vary in intensity and loci. Reactions go from zealous engagement to prolonged indifference and reluctance (building on Destradi's 2019 crisis management argument), privileging at times global multilateral institutions and at times regional or ad hoc mechanisms. Seabra and Mesquita's study explores the variation in the provision of stability by regional powers in crises discussed at the United Nations. Focusing on Brazil and South Africa as regional stabilizers, the authors compare key regional crises that displayed high (Haiti and Somalia) and low (Colombia and Congo-Brazzaville) salience in their efforts to uncover underlying factors motivating different levels of engagement for regional powers. Their work in this issue takes the RPRP into a new area of research in terms of understanding regional behavior both with respect to issue (crisis) and methodology (quantitative).

Hutto also looks at the crisis management influence of regional powers in his article on territorial crises in the cases of Saudi Arabia, Brazil and Russia. What makes this work both challenging and interesting is Hutto's comparison across three distinct international systems, one characterized by Cold War overlay, another by American unipolarity, and the third by a multiplex of regional systems. Hutto demonstrates that the regional management of territorial crises is ultimately constrained by the structure of the international system. Under conditions of overlay and unipolarity, the likelihood of external intervention by regional powers is high, with regional powers able to build conflict management strategies that tend toward compromise solutions and concessions to shore up their influence over their region, while protecting the region from great power involvement. This sort of behavior is what we observed during the earlier years of the RPRP. Now with systemic change, Hutto shows that the likelihood of external intervention is declining and suggests that regional powers will increasingly rely on military power to stabilize regional crises. Regional powers have always had to mediate the global–regional nexus, yet how they go about this process is changing, creating a new avenue to explore and expand the RPRP.

In terms of the global–regional nexus, earlier research in the RPRP failed to account for the interaction and difficulties of regional powers having to reconcile competing regional and global pressures. Two of the articles in this issue examine more in detail the idea of multiple levels of engagement for regional powers. Burilkov, Prys-Hansen and Kolmaš discuss the usefulness of thinking about regional power behavior in terms of a 'politics of scale'. Politics of scale describe whether and how actors navigate the complex landscape of "scales" in international politics; so rather than studying regional power behavior at either the regional or the global level, this approach, borrowed from political geography, helps to study how regional powers traverse scales in pursuing their foreign policy objectives. This move seems highly intuitive yet absent in the regional power literature. Burilkov, Prys-Hansen and Kolmaš illustrate the empirical applicability of the concept with two cases in the issue area of environmentalism. One is Australia, for whose regional power role in the Pacific is clearly embedded in the global context, but also shaped

by differentiated domestic dynamics. The other is Japan, which has long been a regional power in East Asia as well as a substantial global economic power. In addition to discussing the differences in interactions between the two countries as it relates to the issue of environmentalism, the authors utilize the concept of scale to identify "hidden spaces" of transnational engagement. Such an approach offers unique insight into both actors' ability to work through some of the limitations that have bound them in previous standard interactions at the regional and global levels. More broadly, the authors show that a scalar perspective might contribute to the resolution of several inherent challenges of the regional powers research program, including its rather monolithic view of the state; the ontological solidification of the region; and the lack of theory regarding the creation, boundaries, and processes of regional orderings.

Frazier and Sobecki also agree that studying either the global or regional levels is flawed. In their article, the authors contend that the current understanding of international order pointing toward a coherent set of rules, norms and behaviors among states is inaccurate if only looking from the vantage point of the global level. This inaccuracy exists due to the idea that while the current international order may be wide, it is not very deep and it is often ambiguous. As a result, regional powers are able to influence their own regional security orders in ways that reinforce or push back against international expectations, opening up the possibilities for a renegotiation of global norms and expectations of behavior at the regional level. Frazier and Sobecki argue this renegotiation is more likely when there is a considerable amount of ambiguity at the global level regarding norms and behavior. Examining this argument in the issue area of nuclear non-proliferation and focusing on the role of China in shaping the translation of global level norms to the regional level, their findings suggest a complicated interplay between the global and regional. Indeed, because regional powers are directly involved in this interplay, global norms and behaviors actually can shape unintended and perhaps counterproductive outcomes at the regional level. In the area of nuclear non-proliferation (and we suspect other issues as well), this is particularly problematic. From this research we are left with the idea that scholars and policymakers need to reconsider the influence and nature of international order. Not only should there be no expectations of uniform impacts at the regional level, there seems less global influence in the current period than in earlier ones, reaffirming suspicions that we are far removed from the order defined by US unipolarity.

Finally, the last two papers look to the benefits of approaches that move beyond traditional international relations, specifically Historical and Comparative Regionalism, in studying regional powers. By drawing on insights from critical geopolitics in accounting for the socially constructed nature of regions, Fawcett and Jagtiani offer a decentered perspective on regional power behavior in world politics that takes into account the shifting power balances in international relations. They pay particular attention to the regional–global nexus within which the international relations of regional powers have been conducted, and how regions feature into states' strategies of seeking higher status at the global level. They also examine that nexus historically, arguing that historical trajectories are important as sites of learning about the longstanding ambitions and policies of regional powers.

The article illustrates the interdependent nature of regional strategies and global outlooks through the cases of India and Iran.

Garzon's contribution provides a more critical engagement with the RPRP in general, focusing on the utility of Comparative Regionalism as a competing way forward for the study of regional powers. He begins by tracing through the origins of the regional powers research program, asking why such an interest emerged, given the peripheral nature of the topic previously. He then reviews the development of the program through what he argues are three phases: a conceptually based phase, one dealing with behavior (i.e., strategies, roles and orientations of regional powers), and a third phase studying the reactions of other states, including neighbors and extra-regional actors. Despite this development, however, Garzon argues that the program has not gone beyond this last stage and has failed in its objective to explain the political and economic organization of regions by relating structural, behavioral and interactive variables. As such, Garzon's position identifies a great degree of scepticism about the chances of the research program developing in this direction and, as a result, calls for bringing it closer to the subfield of Comparative Regionalism.

RPRP and the way forward

The papers of this Special Issue in their entirety show the continued relevance of the RPRP, and yet as Fawcett and Jagtiani and Garzon both show, there remains much to do to strengthen the program in a way that continues to create opportunities to advance our knowledge in the field. The papers point out some of the possible ways forward, including the study of less traditional issue areas, the opening of traditionally rigid conceptual applications, and the integration of disciplines beyond international relations. Future research should look beyond what has been done here, however, for further opportunities to develop the RPRP. There is a broad array of political science sub-disciplines, such as Political Economy, that remain ripe for exploration. Other areas such as sociological and linguistic approaches too may help to shed light on regional powerhood in terms of differentiation and the study of the emergence of order and power through mechanisms beyond increases in military and economic power.

An additional insight from this Special Issue includes the recognition of the potential limits of a "level-focused" research where national, regional and international levels are taken for granted and used as fixed anchors in time and space. Burilkov, Prys-Hansen and Kolmaš, and Frazier and Sobecki show that the scales and areas in which the functions of regional power are played out do not necessarily conform to pre-existing regions. Instead, actors may have an interest in changing the meaning of a region or creating entirely new arenas of action that can include or exclude other players (Adamson 2016; Sjoberg 2008). Again, here we see a broad and vastly underexplored field of research that is beginning to flourish, including studies of China's construction of the different meanings of the Belt and Road Initiative (e.g., Summers 2020) as well as other states' reactions to it, the construction and strategic use of new 'oceanic regions' (Sengupta 2020) and the

role of the politics of infrastructure and logistics that has been highlighted in critical geography (e.g., Gergan 2020). These sorts of explorations are rarely used in the context of regional power and regional order within international relations.

Third, the articles show that it is useful to have a broader look at the types of actors that assume functions of regional powerhood, as well as the tools available to these kinds of actors. While this Special Issue points, for instance, to the role of public diplomacy, more work is required to look at the ways in which actors use digital diplomacy to achieve their goals, as well as new issue-areas and arenas that have emerged that require different strategies and actions (e.g., cyberspace). Future work also will need to connect to the expanding work on issue-specific interactions, like many of the articles here, and develop answers to the question of whether it makes sense to speak about such actors as 'environmental' regional powers' or 'digital regional powers'? Last but not least, the RPRP needs to relate better to rapidly shifting conditions of global politics. The COVID-19 pandemic has painfully highlighted the many vulnerabilities of powerful actors, as well as their diverging abilities to 'cope', often depending on a mixture of domestic and regional factors. Changing conditions also may continue to emerge through the diagnosed backsliding of democracy on a global scale and the embracing of this backsliding by regional powers long opposed to standard definitions in the global community. For example, the impact of growing populism on democratic foreign policies is a field that is attracting growing interest (Plagemann and Destradi 2019) and the linkages to RPRP call out to be explored. With so many possibilities left to work through in the Regional Powers Research Program, we hope the articles contained within serve as an effective springboard to another decade of useful contributions to the field.

Declarations

Conflict of interest On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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