

Gridlock: Why Global Cooperation Is Failing when We Need It Most. By Thomas Hale, David Held, and Kevin Young. Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013. 368p. \$69.95 cloth, \$26.95 paper.

Climate Governance in the Developing World. By David Held, Charles Roger, and Eva-Marie Nag. Malden, MA: Polity Press. 272p. \$69.95 cloth, \$24.95 paper.
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For decades, much of the scholarship within international relations has been organized around explaining institutionalized cooperation. Countries join forces to create institutions that advance their interests. Those institutions generate information, lower transaction costs, and boost credibility—all of which begets still more collective action. We scholars have debated the underlying forces that explain institutional success, but the impact of institutionalized cooperation in the postwar era is undeniable. It is perhaps the single most important feature of international relations for the last fifty years.

Thus, the news that international institutions are running into gridlock on every front is worrying news. Is the postwar order coming unhinged? What can be done to move beyond gridlock? Such questions animate this thoughtful new book from Thomas Hale, David Held, and Kevin Young. They offer a diagnosis and explanation for gridlock as well as a tour of how gridlock has affected three major areas of international cooperation: security, economy, and the environment. Their book is convincing, well written, and sobering. Part of the answer lies with the rise of large developing countries. On that front, the well-informed and thorough account of how these nations are managing their climate change policies—edited by David Held, Charles Roger, and Eva-Maria Nag—offers a helpful look at how these important countries actually behave.

The diagnosis is straightforward and familiar from the newspapers. In security, nations can't even agree on the right agenda, let alone whether and how to contain Iran, remove Assad, or practically any other important question of the day. In economics, the current Doha round of trade talks is all but dead and the G20 has a hard time agreeing on much that is practically relevant. In the environment, despite two decades of effort in building institutions, nations have made no real dent in the problem of global warming and many other looming problems—from biological diversity to the pillaging of global fisheries—remain unsolved.

To explain gridlock, Hale, Held, and Young look to four pathways. The first is multipolarity, which makes collective action harder through a sheer increase in numbers of players, as well as the relative decline of the US. Quite apart from whether America is actually in decline, its incentive to invest in international institutions and other global public goods is smaller when it can't easily set the

agenda and reap the largest benefits. Second is what Hale, Held, and Young call “institutional inertia,” which is the tendency for institutions to be sticky in their goals; once created, they don't easily change to reflect new players and interests. Inertia could cut either way—it could make cooperation easier by helping to lock earlier commitments into place—but to the authors, inertia helps explain why important countries lose their commitment even to institutions they helped create.

Third is the rise of problems that are harder to address because they are much more complex and more deeply intertwined with domestic politics, rather than pure foreign policy that stops at national borders. These problems, which James Rosenau has called “intermestic,” are now evident everywhere, and for most countries it is hard to make credible commitments in this realm, let alone to reliably monitor and enforce performance globally. Fourth is fragmentation—the sheer explosion in numbers of institutions, which has created intense challenges for coordination. In a world of dense and overlapping governing systems—what many people are now calling “regime complexes”—it can be costly to organize collective action.

None of these four pathways—each of which Hale, Held, and Young map to particular causal mechanisms—is a surprise. What's valuable in this book is that they are assembled in one place and put through their paces as a single theory. Gridlock isn't the result, always, of any particular pathway; it's all four working in tandem.

Another strength of the book is its application of this single theory through a fresh retelling, across three chapters, of the recent history of international cooperation efforts in security, economy, and the environment. Those three chapters are packed with information—perhaps too much, since each runs 60–90 pages—but they make the case that gridlock is a systemic problem. When the authors turn to history it is often hard to keep the forest and the trees distinguished, and one weakness in the book is that the theory of gridlock isn't reliably and rigorously applied to the cases. It's hard, in the end, to figure out which pathways and mechanisms are really doing most of the gridlocking and which are just correlated and along for the ride.

A particularly interesting attribute of both these books—and of the field in international relations more generally—is that topics long ago considered peripheral are now important areas for building and testing theory. Notably, the environment figures prominently, and environmental cooperation has all the attributes needed to understand how the new agenda of intermestic problems that are really hard to solve because they require costly and politically difficult action far behind national borders. Environmental matters are also rife with multipolarity as developing countries—especially the BRIC nations—rise in importance. (Full disclosure: my claim that environment has entered the mainstream is self-serving since that's where much of my own work

lies, but it is pretty clear that this claim is robust nonetheless.)

The Held, Roger, and Nag edited book is one of literally dozens that show how the rise of developing countries has had a big impact on international cooperation. Across 12 chapters they look at how 12 developing countries have engaged with the international agenda on climate change. The book makes it clear that there is no single strategy emerging from these countries, which suggests that international cooperation efforts will need to be flexible enough to accommodate many diverse approaches—an important point for policy makers to heed as they work toward a 2015 deadline for a new international climate treaty. It is also clear that no country is dealing with the climate issue in isolation. Instead, each is approaching climate change in ways that intersect with other policy agendas, such as alleviation of poverty, reducing air pollution, or promoting energy security. That may help explain why the climate agenda is so fickle—it depends heavily on other goals of countries, which is true worldwide and not just across the developing world.

A strength of Held, Roger, and Nag is that it offers a compact summary. A weakness, for experts, is that each chapter is so short that it can offer little more. The vast majority of the edited book is about controlling emissions; only one chapter (on Mozambique) is about what a growing number of developing countries now think is the really urgent climate agenda: adaptation (the chapter on Egypt also has passing discussion of this theme). As with most edited books, the chapters don't quite hold together. There is an editors' introduction that points to some common themes, but no conclusion. Nonetheless, it is clear that these countries—especially the big emitters—are now vital players in the international diplomacy on climate change.

What's still unclear is how gridlock will unfold generally or in any specific area such as climate change or international trade. Hale, Held, and Young, in their concluding chapter, explore routes beyond gridlock, but none of those seem particularly likely to have much impact. Indeed, in addition to the four pathways that explain increasing gridlock, most key countries are rife with internal problems that will be distracting and make it hard for them to engage in reliable international cooperation. And if international cooperation falters then more unsolved international problems will have harmful domestic consequences, leading to still more gridlock. It is not a pretty picture. Hale, Held, and Young conclude that “something has to give if the global challenges described in this book are to be met” (p. 310). What that is remains unclear, and the most likely outcome is that the problems won't get solved.

This book reveals, in my assessment, that we haven't done enough to explain the variation across issue-areas.

For Hale, Held, and Young, gridlock is a uniform problem that seems to afflict all issue-areas. But other scholars aren't so dark—for example, Dan Drezner's new book (*The System Worked: How the World Stopped Another Great Depression*, 2014) argues that within the realm of international financial coordination after the global financial crisis, the “system worked.” Future studies would benefit from stronger theory, applied more rigorously across diverse cases, and then an active effort to explain the variation across issue areas.

For scholars and policy makers, some important questions remain. If gridlock sets in, as it seems to be, then does cooperation remain in place or will it come unraveled? The bicycle theory of trade cooperation suggests that pedaling is important. If so, the absence of pedaling—gridlock—could make the whole system tip over. Hale, Held, and Young never really take this question head on, but they do seem to suggest that the stickiness of institutions will make them drift away from what countries are willing to sustain.

In my view, one of the most important questions lies with China. Will China be an institution builder (or at least not destroyer)? That question, in many respects, applies to all of Asia—the region whose economic prosperity is rooted in the fruits of successful international cooperation and yet is a conspicuous laggard when it comes to actually building international institutions. Here, too, it is never exactly clear where Held and Young stand, but their analysis suggests that gridlock will persist. In my view, it is hard to see how a country that is motivated by its own “wealth and power”—to adopt the phrase that Orville Schell and John Delury use to explain two centuries of China's national policy strategies—will necessarily invest much in international institutions that are more democratic and inclusive in their inspiration and benefits.

These are vital questions for policy and theory, and we should all be grateful to Hale, Held, and Young for helping to frame them and for delivering a significant down payment on some answers.

Sustaining Human Rights in the Twenty-First Century: Strategies from Latin America. Edited by Katherine Hite and Mark Ungar. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. 424p. \$60.00.

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As a region, Latin America has been a proving ground for the scholarly understanding of human rights change at various levels of analysis, including the transnational level. Contributors to this edited volume address the domestic, regional, and global politics of how democratized states reckon with a recent historical legacy of human rights violations, as well as new problems. The subtitle of *Sustaining Human Rights in the Twenty-First Century*: