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INTRODUCTION TO PRESIDENTIAL ISSUE:
The Politics of International Diffusion: A Symposium

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“The diffusion of power also goes beyond country relationships, extending to a whole host of networks and institutions that inhabit the fabric of global society.”

(Christine Lagarde, Managing Director, International Monetary Fund)¹

International and transnational diffusion have always been an important dimension of international studies but only recently has attention shifted from the nuts and bolts of whatever it is that diffuses (technology, policies, ideas, services, values, institutions, power, people, emotions and much more) to a more self-conscious effort to conceptualize diffusion itself. As the theme of the 2013 ISA Convention in San Francisco, a large number of panels addressed diffusion explicitly in novel and interesting ways. This symposium presents a very small subset of an intellectually impressive and multifaceted program that featured the association’s diversity.²

This symposium reflects the diversity of diffusion research, spanning wide-ranging thematic and methodological interests related to diffusion at the global and regional levels. Some eclecticism notwithstanding, all contributions addressed some dimension of a shared conceptualization of diffusion proposed in the presidential address as an organizing framework.³ The main building blocks for analyzing *the politics* of transnational diffusion—as a distinctively

1 London, February 3, 2014. International Monetary Fund website <https://www.imf.org> (accessed February 4, 2014).

political rather than mechanical phenomenon—including: (i) an initial stimulus, trigger, event, model, archetype, or innovation; (ii) a medium, context, structure, milieu, or environment through which information about the initial event may or may not travel to a given destination; (iii) political agents affected by the positive or negative externalities of the initial stimulus who aid or block the stimulus' journey to other destinations; and (iv) outcomes that enable adequate discrimination among different degrees of diffusion and resulting equilibria. We employ some of the common vocabulary in the original framework in the subtitles that follow, as a way of reporting on findings, areas of agreement and contention, and suggestions for future research. The objective of this symposium is to highlight rather than settle debates over the conceptualization and nature of the politics of international diffusion.

Models, Blueprints, Stimuli

The first moment in the diffusion process entails an initial stimulus, trigger, event, model,

² The program was the product of efforts by Program Chairs Tanja Börzel and Hermann Schwartz, their assistants Steven Liao and Sören Stapel, section program chairs, and presidential theme panels organized by Etel Solingen. As editors of this special issue we would like to acknowledge the Research College (Kolleg-Forscherguppe, KFG) “Transformative Power of Europe” at the Freie Universität Berlin, funded by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft), for hosting a workshop in July 2013 that brought authors and discussants together. Special thanks also go to Arthur Stein, the formal discussant for all nine initial drafts, and to Thomas Risse and Detlef Jahn and many others in the Kolleg-Forscherguppe who helped in the making of this special issue, as well as to three anonymous ISR referees for excellent comments. Finally, we thank ISR editor Janice Bially Mattern for help in steering the publication process to completion.

³ Solingen (2012). The address also includes an overview of the literature on diffusion across various subfields, obviating the need to replicate it in this introduction.

archetype, or innovation. Following March (1999), Klinger-Vidra and Schleifer differentiate between models of diffusion that assume the existence of a single initial source and those that involve multiple sources. This point of departure has implications for their respective diffusion paths and outcomes. Whereas their focus is on generic models or blueprints, Wan's article addresses several models specific to the non/diffusion of nuclear weapons: (i) The five nuclear weapons states arguably acted as a stimulus for others to acquire similar capabilities; (ii) The decisions by other states to abstain from acquiring such weapons provided a model for others to do likewise; (iii) the NPT was designed as a blueprint for spreading a set of norms and procedures that could help minimize the diffusion of nuclear weapons; (iv) Violations of international legal commitments by some NPT members provided a model for others but also became a strong stimulus for strengthening efforts to counter such diffusion. The bulk of the article centers on the latter two. Wan finds the nonproliferation regime a relatively successful model for preventing the diffusion of nuclear capabilities, but one that has gone through intermittent crises of adjustment.

Goldsmith distinguishes between first and second-order diffusion. The first-order diffusion of trade liberalization and export-led growth development strategies in the 1970s, he argues, had a second-order effect on international relations in East Asia, making the escalation of interstate conflicts less likely. Regional reductions in interstate conflict were not due to the rising value of peace for decision makers but were rather the indirect consequence of the regional diffusion of export-led growth developmental models. Although Japan is considered the original source for this model, the article considers the shift in Chinese economic orientation introduced by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 to be the key "stimulus." Economic models are also the stimulus of interest for Quiliconi, who discusses the diffusion of two alternative Preferential Trade

Agreements (PTAs) throughout Latin America. One is labeled “neoliberal” and it joins advanced industrialized as well as industrializing countries (North/South); it has taken root in a number of Central American and Pacific Basin South American countries (except Ecuador); and places emphasis on strong regulatory rules (WTO-plus) in investment, intellectual property rights, labor and environmental standards. The other is labeled “post-liberal”; it joins only industrializing states (South/South) around MERCOSUR; and seeks to retain strong prerogatives by states and, more broadly, regional autonomy vis-à-vis the US (Riggirozzi and Tussie, 2012). These two PTA models are vessels for the diffusion of particular models of regionalism or patterns of integration. Stalemates in the WTO and FTAA processes at the global level operated as more remote, antecedent stimuli for the diffusion of these two models.

The Rosecrance contribution is at heart about whether or not the West’s economic model—in its key organizational, technological, and cultural traits—can diffuse in its entirety to the rest of the world. His answer to this timely question, pregnant with implications for international power and the maintenance of international peace, is that the model can only diffuse partially, as is the case with most things that diffuse internationally. The directionality of diffusion from West to East is also discussed in Zweig and Yang, who explore the diffusion of Western academic, scientific, and business norms to China. Chinese leaders have sought to promote academic freedom and performance-based career opportunities in order to “bring back the best” and create world-class universities, scientific research centers, and modern private firms. Another form of cultural diffusion, embedded in film, is the subject of Hozic’s contribution. Films belong to the category of the most widely diffused and genuinely transnational cultural products, perfectly situated between the “national” and the “transnational.” The industrial complex known as “Hollywood” is in many respects the model of interest here, as a prominent example of

globalization and the diffusion of culture, norms, and identities. Films are rarely made in isolation. Yet, despite transnational “cross-fertilization” and the making of hybrid films such as Spaghetti or Dim Sum Westerns, the national cinema remains, in Hozic’s view, the most powerful organizing principle in global film production.

Rather than models, Forsberg and Mekouar focus on stimuli. Forsberg argues that the eruption of internal conflict in one location is better explained by previous internal conflict in another location than by the spatial clustering of factors related to conflict, such as poverty. Her review of large-N civil war research also points to the important distinction between direct and indirect diffusion. Whereas the former refers to the spillover of tangible factors, such as arms and refugees, the latter entails the intangible process of conflicts providing lessons or inspirations. The Tunisian revolution of 2011 is the stimulus of interest in Mekouar’s contribution, an example of indirect rather than direct diffusion. In its aftermath, all neighboring states experienced efforts to emulate the Tunisian experience. Yet, despite many shared socioeconomic and political grievances, and a common vocabulary yearning for political reform inspired by Tunisian events, diffusion followed significantly different paths, even within the adjacent North African context. Notably, the Tunisian stimulus itself was not predicted, as is often the case for many other triggers of diffusionary processes in international relations.

Mediums or Contexts of Diffusion

Efforts to understand the diffusion process also entail proper attention to another dimension: the *medium*, context, structure, milieu, or environment through which information about the initial event may or may not travel to a given destination. Some mediums may be more

permeable to some forms of diffusion than others; mediums can either lubricate or decelerate the motion of the stimulus. The medium's conductivity to diffusion is not always easy to read either by political agents or analysts of diffusion. Wan's analysis of the nonproliferation regime illustrates how regime architects encountered difficulties in gauging the conductivity of the medium. It is those imperfect readings, he argues, that were in fact responsible for the transformative moments of the regime. Mekouar addresses those imperfect readings as well. The medium of interest in his contribution are the politics of Algeria, Egypt, Libya, and Morocco in their varying responses to the initial stimulus emanating from Tunisia.

Although trade, technology, and production are now global, Rosecrance also reminds us that the medium within which diffusion takes place is far from homogeneous. Geographic closeness as well as shared institutions, languages, cultures, and educational attainment create more conducive mediums than dissimilar ones. Trade and exchange travel faster among states sharing currencies, customs unions, borders, or culture and are more crucial determinants of diffusion than the reduced transportation costs favored by classical economic theory. Gravity effects dictate geographical concentrations of production—small or large enclaves that lubricate diffusion of economic activity within them more than beyond them. Quiliconi's piece on PTA diffusion provides evidence that both geographical adjacency and political-ideological affinity can underlie the diffusion of trade and exchange in the Latin American medium under contemporary conditions. Forsberg points to the methodological risks of under- and overestimating occurrences of diffusion by drawing conclusions based on correlations regarding proximity in time and in space. She also draws attention to contexts or structures related to the sources of diffusion, making models more or less likely to spread, on the one hand, and those related to the targets of diffusion, making models more or less likely to be adopted, on the other.

All contributions are attentive to the temporal context or medium within which diffusion and counter-diffusion mechanisms operate (what the conceptual framework labeled “world-time”). For Wan, India’s 1974 nuclear test took place in a different “word-time” than its 1998 tests (or Pakistan’s), or North Korea’s in 2006, 2009, and 2013. The different temporal mediums modified the potential for diffusion and hence for international responses and countermeasures. The temporal context is also crucial for the diffusion of different forms of PTAs in the Latin American medium: the competition between models is significantly different today than it was in the 1990s. Immediate responses to Tunisia’s uprising were also colored by the unique temporal configurations of 2011 described by Mekouar. The diffusion of liberalization and export-led growth strategies and of Western academic, scientific, and business norms to China (analyzed by Goldsmith and Zweig and Yang, respectively) crucially depended on economic reconstruction introduced by Deng Xiaoping in 1978. Hozic is attentive to the temporal context of diffusion of film studios in the 1920s and 1930s. She also surveys how the medium for the diffusion of film has become truly global. Movies move through space and time and those moves are entwined with geopolitics as well as aesthetics, or their capacity to evoke similar and different emotions around the world.

Agents: Who Dunit?

Some work on diffusion in international relations tends to overlook the crucial role of agents in a process that is, at heart, a political one. Yet agents are the neural transmission belt in any medium, introducing dynamism as well as uncertainty in diffusionary and counter-diffusionary processes. Transnational diffusion takes place in a context of strategic interaction

among political agents that transcends the domestic-international divide. The preferences and identities of agents are affected differently by the positive or negative externalities of the initial stimulus. Even with sometimes imperfect (incomplete) readings of the medium's possibilities, agents work to advance or block the stimulus' voyage to other destinations. Strategic interaction among agents precipitates sudden adjustment of those strategies, multiplying the inherent difficulty in estimating a model's diffusionary potential a priori. That is as true for agents within the counter/diffusionary medium as it is for analysts of diffusion, sometimes embedded in the medium themselves.

Mekouar's emphasis on agents is clear from the title: "No Political Agents, No Diffusion." Local political agents in countries throughout North Africa actively nourished or hindered the process of revolutionary diffusion that followed the Tunisian revolution. The relevant local agents differed across the four cases under scrutiny. Upper-middle class youth traditionally close to the regime signaled to the general population the opportunity to challenge the long status-quo in Egypt. The defection of important senior members of Gadhafi's regime had a similar effect in mobilizing Libya's population. The refusal by local actors to mobilize against their respective regimes deprived initial mobilizations of the visibility and resources that could have incepted an informational cascade in Algeria and Morocco, dooming the possibility of regime change at that time.

Regional and international institutions can also be considered agents of counter/diffusion. Quiliconi focuses on regional PTAs as institutional agents, each advancing the interests and designs of their principals. The latter, at the state level of analysis, include primarily the US and Brazil as hegemonic actors able to cajole or coerce others—depending on one's perspective—into one of the two models. At the subnational level, Quiliconi regards strong executives

(presidents) as the crucial agents, able to implement their favored model at least partially as a function of the degree of opposition to their designs. On the one hand, there are strong executives backed by import-competing (inward-looking) business coalitions that oppose more trade liberalization and the “neoliberal” model. On the other hand, there are strong executives backed by constituencies advancing export-oriented (internationalizing) models that favor deep trade liberalization through North-South PTAs. Strategic interaction at the regional level among presidents and relevant constituencies play an important role in shaping agents’ responses.

Wan’s article also includes various categories of agents, institutional and otherwise. His more explicit focus is on the master firewall-agent: the international nonproliferation regime that responds to stimuli and externalities stemming primarily from crises, including prominent IAEA officials. Other political agents countering the diffusion of nuclear weapons are less legalized institutions such as the Proliferation Security Initiative and Nuclear Security Summits. He also considers, although more implicitly, political leaders bent on acquiring nuclear weapons, nonstate actors like the A.Q. Khan network, and potentially terrorist organizations as agents of diffusion of nuclear weapons capabilities.

Multinational corporations play a major role as agents of diffusion of technology, trade, and power in Rosecrance’s contribution. No less important, in his view, are political agents capable of redirecting diffusion pathways and speed, including the very operation of MNCs. For instance, whereas China’s post-Mao leadership has been open to trade and foreign direct investment, contributing to dramatic expansion of international trade and investment, Rosecrance ponders whether a new leadership could substitute this model for one where internal consumption becomes the pillar of the economy. Corporate actors in Hollywood—the studios—feature as prominent actors in the diffusion of film in Hozic’s contribution. She also draws

attention to migrant filmmakers, actors, and other creative talent that relocated from all around the world to contribute to earlier and contemporary hybridization of film. Major Hollywood distributors—not producers—play a special role in the global diffusion of film.

Goldstein and Zweig and Yang find Chinese top decision-makers equally important for the diffusion of economic strategies and academic and business norms. The communist party of Peking University (Beida) set the goal in 1994 to become a “world class university,” which was echoed by President Jiang Zemin in a 1998 speech. Ten years later, the Director of the Organization Department of the CCP, Li Yuanchao, launched his own campaign to “bring back the best” with a “1000 Talents Plan” targeting top Chinese academics and scientists living and working abroad. Goldstein also notes the role of senior leaders seeking to emulate the economic success of neighboring countries, as well as foreign policy decision-makers and firms concerned about the effect of interstate conflict on bilateral trade. Zweig and Yang highlight the key role of China’s diaspora. Chinese scientists, academics, and entrepreneurs either returning or refusing to return from abroad have been conduits for the however limited adoption of Western norms in small environments within larger institutions, such as the Chinese Center for Economic Research (CCER) or the Guanghua Business School (GHBS) at Beida. Locally educated academics and early returnees have prevented a general diffusion of these norms into China. Forsberg finds an equally ambivalent role of agency in fostering and impairing diffusion of civil war. States, for instance, can firewall the diffusion of interstate conflict by effectively controlling their borders against the transfer of arms and mercenaries. At the same time, they have the capacities for political repression that can result in transnational refugee flows upsetting the demographic balance or intensifying conflicts over scarce resources in neighboring countries.

Causal Mechanisms

The causal mechanisms underlying diffusion are varied, from learning to emulation, persuasion, coercion, signaling, competition, socialization, shaming, bargaining, manipulation of utility calculations, and others.⁴ The crucial mechanism under scrutiny in the Quiliconi article is competition, understood as the quest for relative advantages vis-à-vis peers to maximize market access and investments through economic, political, and legal means (Solis et al., 2009). This competitive process, in Quiliconi's view, was unleashed by US efforts to sign bilateral PTAs with several Latin American countries that led to the creation of the Pacific Alliance along "neoliberal" lines. Brazil sought to compete with this model by organizing its MERCOSUR partners around a "post-liberal" model of integration, one that has fallen short of completing a customs union and triggered resentment among smaller partners like Paraguay and Uruguay. Hegemonic states, she notes, arguably rely on PTAs partly to stem negative security and other externalities from competing models. Brazil led the opposition and eventually won that battle that "decomposed" the continent-wide alternative (FTAA); bore the costs of constituting a competing block around Mercosur; and organized the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) to contain US influence. Both a mix of hegemonic coercion and persuasion (for instance by Brazil over Uruguay) and individual states' impulses for convergence were relevant mechanisms underlying the competitive diffusion of the two models.

Competition and hegemony also feature prominently in the contributions by Hozic, Zweig and Yang, and Goldsmith, but not always as the dominant mechanisms. Hozic discusses marketplaces, film festivals, and new technologies as three different mechanisms through which

⁴ For an overview, see Börzel and Risse (2012).

films diffuse, influencing the reception, interpretations, and ultimate success of films. The commercial distribution of films is driven by the dominance of Hollywood in the global marketplace, with its coproductions, complex transnational financing arrangements, marketing and distribution budgets that severely impair the market entry of potential competitors. The increasing internationalization of distribution mechanisms has affected the type of movies produced. Animation, science fiction, horror, and action movies sell better abroad than at home. The diffusion of cultural films through film festivals is ultimately also based on competition among national cinemas. Film festivals are branding opportunities for cities, vehicles for promotion of national film industries, incubators of new talent, and building blocks of regional identities. They act as multipliers and amplifiers and have helped urban economies to remarket themselves through cultural industries. Cities also compete with each other by organizing cultural events in what Thomas Elsaesser (2005) has called “Bridget Jones economies” that cater to young urban single professionals who value cultural goods. Other, less visible mechanisms of diffusion are licit and illicit new technologies, from Netflix to piracy.

Zweig and Yang illustrate how top Chinese leaders endorsed or emulated Western academic and scientific norms to “bring back the best from the West” and used state authority to impose Western norms on local officials. By returning to China, or refusing to do so, the academic and scientific diaspora became an agent of diffusion, helping to create islands of academic freedom and performance-based career opportunities within larger Chinese institutions. Returned oversea entrepreneurs, in contrast to academics and scientists, felt that the adoption of Western business norms proved to be a competitive disadvantage in a home market that demanded conformity with the prevailing culture. For Goldsmith, it was the competition between China and other less-developed states in the region that drove the diffusion of open economic

policies in East Asia post-1978. The resulting increase in intra-regional trade flows, in turn, had a “pacifist effect” on interstate conflicts through a second-order causal mechanism: a greater volume of trade that allowed states to signal their unwillingness to escalate conflicts to avoid the high costs of militarized crises.

Signaling also features prominently in Mekouar’s argument about “informational cascades” as a causal mechanism explaining non/diffusion. Relying on Schelling (1978), he elaborates on signaling mechanisms that turn an initial “critical mass” of participants into increasing numbers or thresholds that force either very high levels of repression or a successful overthrow of the regime. Initial symbolic actions by early mobilizers may not threaten the regime directly, but help raise awareness of the possibilities by signaling the existence of shared anti-regime sentiment to the rest of the population. Large-scale mobilization triggered other causal mechanisms inspired by Tunisia’s events, including reliance on new digital means of communication to coordinate leaderless protests, political slogans explicitly linking their own activities to Tunisian precedents, and borrowing a similar vocabulary calling for political reform.

Wan identifies causal mechanisms specific to the diffusion of nuclear weapons including diversion, deception, concealment, circumvention and defiance of international legal firewalls. The key causal mechanisms designed to forestall diffusion in his account include the legalized nonproliferation regime as a whole and the development of progressively more intrusive inspections including the Additional Protocol and interdictions. Whereas some view this as a primarily coercive mechanism allowing nuclear-weapons states to retain their monopoly, others consider it a product of effective persuasion and voluntary accession to perhaps the only international legal instrument that could provide a path to a nuclear-free world. Wan also calls attention to the role of critical junctures, often in the form of crisis, as mechanisms that trigger

change and alter the path of counter/diffusion. Several authors discuss the important implications of the causal mechanisms at work for outcomes of diffusion. Klinger-Vidra and Schleifer address the role of causal mechanisms in explaining how much convergence takes place as the outcome of diffusion. They find coercion, competition, and emulation to be mechanisms more likely to lead to high degrees of convergence amongst adopters whereas learning is expected to lead to lower levels of convergence. The relative “efficiency” of different causal mechanisms in aiding diffusion is also discussed by Rosecrance, who notes the relevance of reduced transportation and communications costs as causal mechanisms through which trade flows and economic capabilities diffuse globally. Yet technical innovations and global production chains tend to diffuse only partially due to their built-in firewalls—strong economies of scale effects—that prevent complete diffusion.

Firewalls

Firewalls are defined by their ability to “increase or decrease a medium’s conductivity along the diffusion path” (Solingen, 2012:632). Political agents seek to strengthen or dismantle firewalls through formal or informal institutions, normative frameworks, coercive apparatuses, and other means. Several articles dwell on institutional firewalls at the domestic, regional, and global levels. Rosecrance notes the checkered diffusion of democracy and liberalism even within Europe as firewalls erected in the aftermath of 1848—from Prussia to Eastern Europe—blocked their diffusion. Quiliconi focuses on MERCOSUR as an arrangement that evolved from a more “neoliberal” design in its early years (1990s) into a firewall against the newest “neoliberal” arrangement on the block: the Pacific Alliance. Presidential prerogatives and the nature of

domestic constituencies—internationalizing versus inward-looking—acted as additional firewalls against diffusion of competing models of regionalism.⁵ Mekouar’s account of North Africa’s 2011 uprisings also refers to several types of firewalls. Fearing potential diffusion from Tunisia, regimes in Algeria and Morocco erected firewalls capable of defusing mobilization in their own countries. In Egypt and Libya, however, early signaling by critical agents helped individual citizens overcome a “double firewall”: their fear of the authorities and their lack of information about other citizens’ intentions and preferences.

Zweig and Yang analyze how the diffusion of Western norms was firewalled by administrators, locally educated academics, earlier returnees, and domestic entrepreneurs who incurred loss of career opportunities, status, or wealth and defended existing norms and values more or less successfully. Thus, though Li Yuanchao could mobilize substantial resources as a member of the Political Bureau of the CCP, his “1000 Talents Plan” remained largely ineffective. On the one hand, it hit a firewall of local administrators who feared a loss of decision power over the allocation of funds and academic promotion and argued that Western norms of merit-based career opportunities were incompatible with Chinese values such as interpersonal relations and respect for authority. On the other hand, envisioned reforms were resisted by locally educated academics and scientists and earlier returnees, who sought to defend their privileges, such as hiring their own PhDs after graduation. Large parts of the diaspora thus refused to return to China despite the promised adoption of Western norms. The diffusion of Western business values, such as protecting the environment and controlling corruption, has been even more cumbersome. Rather than a facilitator, China’s market has proven to be quite an effective

⁵ See also Malnight and Solingen (2014) and Solingen (2014).

firewall; returnees favoring Western business norms feel that their firms' performance is poorer relative to those run by locals.

While the role of (trans)national agents such as ethnic groups or refugees in driving the diffusion of civil war is well researched, Forsberg notes that the literature has paid much less attention to the extent to which incumbent regimes, and the diplomacy, sanctions or military intervention of third parties can firewall diffusion. Peacekeeping operations, for instance, can reduce the risk of diffusion. Strong states are better able to establish firewalls than fragile or failed ones by effectively controlling cross-border flows of weapons, armed groups, and refugees. Goldsmith develops an argument regarding the role of first-order diffusion of open trading strategies as a firewall against diffusion of interstate violent conflict in East Asia. High intra-regional trade flows prevent the escalation of militarized confrontation to war by allowing state leaders to signal their willingness to resolve conflicts without warfare and reduce tensions. Removing trade barriers or offering trade expansion can be such a signal, which Thailand used in 2008 to de-escalate its conflict with Cambodia. Not only do high-value or high-volume trade work as economic firewalls; they can also have symbolic value in negotiations aimed at resolving militarized conflicts.

Hozic explores structural and ideational firewalls built by various actors to limit global diffusion of films. Marketplaces, film festivals, and new technologies come with their own structural and ideational firewalls. First, states seek to protect domestic markets by providing subsidies to local filmmakers and imposing quotas. Authoritarian regimes in particular tend to resort to censorship. Second, market structures and corporate power limit commercial distribution of films. The size of the US market, for instance, significantly disadvantages non-English language films. Third, for cultural films, critics often act as makers and breakers (and

their aesthetic criteria tend to reproduce rather than counteract the political, ethnic, and gender biases of state and market structures). Fourth, intellectual property rights, national and international, have been used as firewalls against the diffusion of films through new technologies, such as the Internet and digital duplication. Yet, while denounced and criminalized as movie piracy, distribution through the informal sector provides access to films for those who, for political or economic reasons, are excluded from the (global) market. As with Rosecrance's barriers to diffusion of Western technology, economies of scale can also raise firewalls to competition in film production. Marketing and distribution costs constitute extremely high barriers to entry, explaining Hollywood's enduring oligarchic structure. Cultural and linguistic differences affecting demand for cultural products ("cultural discount") also endow Hollywood with advantages.

Wan's contribution is dedicated to understanding maintenance and change in a particularly enduring institutional firewall. "Firewalling Nuclear Diffusion" depicts the construction of this firewall, brick by brick, codified in international law and ratified by over 189 states. The NPT was explicitly tasked with "firewalling" the diffusion of nuclear weapons by regulating transfers of relevant technologies and knowledge. Wan differentiates between this exogenous firewall—the NPT—and endogenous firewalls or political agents blocking nuclearization within their own states. It portrays firewalls as potentially dynamic entities that can be reinvented during critical junctures. While the NPT regime was generally limited to preventing diversion of materials and regulating state-to-state transfers, separate but reinforcing firewalls were erected over the last decade to combat new pathways for the diffusion of nuclear materials. These include UN Security Council Resolution 1540, impressing nonproliferation obligations on national governments, and the Proliferation Security Initiative. A fundamental

weakness of the NPT—with the IAEA at its heart—has been its dual purpose, acting as a conduit for diffusion of peaceful nuclear energy and firewall against weapons at once. This tension stemmed from the basic NPT bargain: non-nuclear weapon states were to relinquish weapons in exchange for access to complete fuel cycle technology for peaceful purposes.

Outcomes

The initial workshop in Berlin reflected sharp differences regarding whether or not diffusion implies the adoption of some variant of the original model. For many, including more classical approaches, the ultimate non-adoption implied non-diffusion. For others, the very operation of causal mechanisms that led to the *consideration* of a particular model *is* diffusion, regardless of whether or not the model was ultimately adopted.⁶ In this view, robust firewalls and other considerations in the medium may block adoption of the stimulus but this very response is evidence for diffusion. Presumably, where there is no consideration of the model, there is no diffusion, circumstances that come close to the “Vegas counterfactuals” where models and stimulus simply “stay there,” where they happen (Solingen, 2012). These competing views on non/diffusion raise additional methodological and epistemological difficulties because it is not always possible to ascertain whether or not consideration of models and stimuli indeed took place.

Beyond these different conceptualizations, there seems to be significant agreement in the literature on policy diffusion—a subset of the broader literature on diffusion—that diffusion in

⁶ We thank Detlef Jahn for raising awareness of this approach at the workshop.

the sense of interdependent decision-making does not invariably lead to policy convergence.⁷ Goldsmith does find convergence with regard to both first and second-order diffusion. Export-oriented models diffused from Japan after the Second World War to Asian “tigers” and later China. Only the latter’s 1978 adoption, however, resulted in increases of regional trade flows that inhibited escalation of interstate conflicts. While East Asia has seen rising tensions and militarized confrontations, none has escalated into war. Goldsmith’s quantitative study suggests that the rise in dyadic trade volume significantly decreases the likelihood of conflict escalation. The diffusion of positive security externalities generated by the diffusion of trade provides a powerful account for the “East Asian Peace.” Zweig and Yang find only limited adoption of Western academic, scientific, and business norms due to powerful firewalls. As noted, administrators, locally educated scientists, and early returnees blocked the adoption of merit-based hiring, promotion, and allocation of funds at Chinese universities. The diffusion of Western academic norms has thus been confined to “world class programs” within larger institutions that have overall resisted those norms. Even more limited has been the diffusion of Western business norms by entrepreneurs who view them as disadvantages vis-à-vis local competitors.

Convergence is less relevant when dealing with the spillover of civil war from one country to another. Forsberg’s contribution discusses findings in the civil war literature on the scope conditions under which the eruption of internal conflict in one location increases the probability of civil war in another. Given the importance of context, agents, and firewalls, spillover effects are far from a given. In a similar vein, Hozic argues that the global diffusion of films is truncated by structural and ideological firewalls erected by states. Instead of global or

⁷ Simmons et al. (2008). John Meyer, comments at Presidential Theme Roundtable on “The Transnational Diffusion of Institutions”, International Studies Association Annual Convention, San Francisco, April 4, 2013.

transnational movies, we find geographically fragmented distribution and regional localization of genres. Convergence of beliefs and values as a political effect of the global distribution of films is, hence, unlikely. Whether this testifies to the effectiveness of firewalls raised by states to protect themselves against circulatory power (Seybert et al., 2013) or renders such firewalls obsolete remains an open question.

Klinger-Vidra and Schleifer examine specifically the outcomes of diffusion, pointing to the fact that much of the international diffusion literature: (i) Focuses on explaining patterns of convergence; (ii) Finds that full or complete convergence is not necessary or even a likely outcome of diffusion; and (iii) Does not provide generalizable tools for explaining “how much” convergence takes place. To address this gap, they seek to map the mechanisms that may explain degrees of convergence as it is treated in the literature on national policy characteristics. High convergence points to very similar designs in the source model and the adopter’s version; low convergence implies that only core characteristics of the source model are partially adopted. The authors trace variation in outcomes to differences in (i) the nature of the underlying diffusion model; (ii) the specificity of the diffusion item; (iii) the type of diffusion mechanism in operation; and (iv) the institutional context at the adoption point. Thus they associate high convergence with: a single source model; a well specified diffusion item; mechanisms of competition and coercion; and high contextual similarity between the model’s origin and adoption points. By contrast, they relate lower convergence to: chain mode or multiple source models; less specified diffusion items; learning mechanisms; and low contextual similarity between the model’s origin and adoption points. Each of these relationships can be subjected to empirical tests.

As Quiliconi suggests, the multiple source model of PTAs accounts for lack of convergence in Latin America's bimodal pattern of regional integration. The competition between the two models is far from over, pointing to the difficulty in detecting the end-game in diffusionary processes. Even so, Mekouar seeks to capture interim outcomes where "advanced diffusion" leads to the successful overthrow of the regime or very high levels of repression. Variation in outcomes in Middle East uprisings stemmed from the differential role played by what Mekouar labels "locally respected political agents" whose involvement can signal opportunity for contestation to the population. The inevitable question is why those agents in Algeria and Morocco "remained stubbornly silent" or were unable to concatenate further mobilization. Lack of credibility of opposition protesters, the Moroccan king's popularity, and his regime's relatively restrained reaction to initial demonstrations are invoked as explanations. Mekouar suggests that the vocal unions, popular Islamist opposition party (PJD), business elite, francophone bourgeoisie, urban middle class, and traditional religious and tribal notables stood firmly behind Morocco's king, a rather broad firewall transcending the state-society divide. His findings for the four cases are largely compatible with work on democratic non/diffusion in other regions (Bunce, 2003). His cases also suggest that multiple source models—if one considers Tunisia and Egypt as distinct models—have thus far led to significant variance rather than convergence.

Nor does a single-source model guarantee convergence either, as Rosecrance's analysis of incomplete diffusion of the Western economic model suggests. His essay is primarily concerned with the outcome of diffusion, both descriptively and normatively. Diffusion of key economic, political, technological, or cultural traits from the West to the rest is only partial, he claims, and remains skewed. Notwithstanding revolutions in transportation and communication, distance still

matters. Contemporary interdependence reveals not the irrelevance of distance but “the triumph of place,” by which Rosecrance means not only geographical closeness but also similar institutions, languages, cultures, and educational attainment. All these have proven much more important than the economist’s “transport costs” in determining ultimate industrial location and success. Transportation and communications costs may continue to decline without leveling cultural, technological, and geographic playing fields, shaped largely by “economies of scale.” A crucial point here is the insight that modern interdependence differs from that of the past and is less susceptible to diffusion, flattening, and decoupling than past interdependence. Counter to predictions popularized in metaphors of a flat world, key dimensions of economic production—and hence economic power—will not diffuse in his view.

Furthermore, incomplete or partial diffusion is normatively preferable. Continued differentiation is desirable for continued economic exchange and interdependence, which in turn enables political cooperation. Complete diffusion would imply multipolarity, an unstable outcome for international peace, whereas incomplete diffusion and continued clustering are conducive to “overbalancing” (agglomeration of power), stability and world peace. Hence, a China that attains complete diffusion of economic capabilities from research to development, design, financing, marketing, and full economies of scale would reduce interdependence and raise the likelihood of conflict. Rosecrance deems this outcome unlikely if Europe, the United States, and Japan create an overbalance or preponderance of power through mega-regional trade agreements.

Normative considerations regarding outcomes are also clear in Wan’s contribution, which states that there are few arenas in which the politics of diffusion are as straightforward as that of nuclear weapons, given virtual universal agreement that their diffusion should be swiftly

condemned. Wan also explores outcomes as a function of critical junctures pushing agents to bolster failing firewalls. However, he also provides controls by pointing to critical junctures that do not produce systemic change in the direction of strengthening firewalls. All in all, outcomes of critical junctures have made the main nonproliferation firewall more robust but it nonetheless remains vulnerable to future instances of deception, violations, and failures of collective action.

Concluding Remarks

Despite wide-ranging substantive and methodological foci, contributions to this symposium rely on a common vocabulary to address the politics of international and transnational diffusion. They highlight a multiplicity of models and stimuli in different subfields from ethnic war, Middle East uprisings, Latin American regional economic agreements, East Asian economic models, and international security institutions to Western economic models, higher education norms, and global movie production. They also specify the relevant geographical, political, economic, and cultural mediums through which particular diffusion processes travel (or don't) and the significance of temporal context, sequences, and world-time in the diffusion of particular phenomena. The contributions also drive home the centrality of political agents that react to stimuli—and to others' reactions to those same stimuli—and how they organize themselves politically to advance the diffusion of particular phenomena. These efforts call for greater attention to why and how agents develop preferences for advancing or blocking diffusion. The articles are also attentive to the causal mechanisms at work (ranging from generic ones such as competition, coercion, learning, emulation, signaling, and persuasion to specific ones relevant to the different realms under scrutiny). They thus contribute to ongoing

empirical efforts to understand when different mechanisms matter most, how and why. They also point, however, to the need for further research on whether and why specific actors may rely more frequently on some diffusion mechanisms over others. All in all, the symposium's attention to interaction among "intervening variables" between stimulus and outcome helps map diffusion trajectories more systematically whether through case studies, econometrics, process tracing, or other methods.

Whereas an emphasis on what does diffuse has largely been the main focus in many studies on diffusion, this symposium—sensitive to selection effects—approaches the nature and effect of firewalls as an analytical category far more explicitly than typical studies of diffusion. Collectively, the contributions make clear that no study of diffusion outcomes can be complete without proper attention to the nature and variation in firewalls. Understanding whether non/diffusion can be traced—to effective political agents that circumscribe a stimulus (economic crisis, for instance) or to specific conditions in the milieu or efficient firewalls—has important analytical and policy implications. The different contributions dwell on firewalls at different levels of analysis, from those operating at the level of international institutions (Wan) to those straddling state-societal divides to stem diffusion of protest movements (Mekouar), to those populating educational institutions resistant to Western norms (Zweig and Yang). Whereas authoritarianism provides a ubiquitous example of institutional firewalls blocking diffusion of genuine political participation (Forsberg, Mekouar, Zweig and Yang, Hozic), shared liberal-democratic institutions facilitate diffusion within their homologous medium or peer reference group (Rosecrance, Quiliconi). At the level of international institutions, Wan's analysis of change in the nonproliferation regime casts light on the broader phenomenon of international institutions as evolving firewalls against diffusion of public bads, from genocide to environmental

destruction. As products of international bargains, international institutions may help diffuse norms and capabilities but hardly amount to unfailing firewalls blocking proscribed activities. The United Nations' inability to prevent the tragic diffusion of violence that has claimed the lives of over 100,000 Syrians is but one recent instance of that limitation. Goldsmith provides some evidence for diffusing trade policies as firewalls against militarized conflicts in East Asia. Convergence towards export-led development strategies increased intra-regional trade which, in turn, allows leaders to signal willingness to avoid warfare.

Contributors agree that diffusion does necessarily imply complete convergence, although even low convergence implies the adoption of some core characteristics of the source model by adopters, according to Klinger-Vidra and Schleifer. Symposium participants held different views on whether mere consideration of a model or stimulus amounts to diffusion, even if the outcome entails complete rejection of the model/stimulus. When authoritarian leaders and supportive constituencies respond to uprisings in neighboring states by erecting successful firewalls, as in Mekouar's account, the outcome is non-diffusion. When movie studios overseas emulate at least some features of Hollywood even as they reject most others, as in Hozic's account, some diffusion may be considered to have taken place. Returning academics and scientists in China helped establish "small environments of reform" with institutionalized Western norms. As Zweig and Yang suggest, however, local firewalls make the diffusion of such norms to Chinese academic institutions limited and selective. This is even more the case for Western business norms, whose adoption appears to undermine performance within China. Taken together, the contributions suggest that the world is not flat, that diffusion can be selective, truncated, and limited; Hozic specifies "Vegas counterfactuals" or things that don't diffuse, including commercial non-Hollywood films (Bollywood or Nollywood) and comedies, often

comprehensible only to local audiences. In a world of migration and interdependence, however, even those categories can travel through diasporic communities or large internet providers of local products and flavors.

This last point highlights another commonality across the different contributions: an emphasis on the need to move the analysis of diffusion beyond the recognition that political decision-making is interdependent. In an increasingly globalized world, decision making is almost by definition interdependent, highly attentive to global context, agents, firewalls, and mechanisms operating in the adjacent neighborhood but also far beyond. The case for causal independence from regional or global diffusion is harder to make (Solingen, 2012). Protests in the Ukraine's Maidan found inspiration in Tahrir Square. Western, East Asian, and other models are subjects of emulation worldwide. Yet diffusionary effects may not always be the dominant mechanism of political change and their interaction with domestic politics remains both an important and challenging research frontier. Studies of diffusion may also incorporate more fully the effect of boomerangs traversing the domestic-international divide, back and forth (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). Protest movements in Eastern Europe that may have at least partially inspired Middle East uprisings were subsequently inspired by them. As Forsberg notes, neighborhood effects are often present in the diffusion of civil war across states, fueling cross-border war spirals.

Several contributions also point to the need for further specification of direct and indirect, first and second-order diffusionary effects, a differentiation raised in the original conceptual framework. For Rosecrance, continued economic differentiation—the result of first-order but incomplete diffusion—enables second-order diffusion of political cooperation. Incomplete diffusion is thus desirable for continued economic exchange and peace. For Goldsmith, the first-

order diffusion of export-led growth models had a beneficial second-order effect on international relations in East Asia, making the escalation of interstate conflicts less likely. For Quiliconi, the first-order diffusion of “neoliberal” models, by contrast, triggered a second-order firewalling of the latter’s implicit model of regionalism. Contributors note the distinct analytic and normative dimensions of non/diffusion rather explicitly. As the International Monetary Fund’s managing director, Christine Lagarde, expressed: “the channels that bring convergence can also bring contagion.”⁸

Finally, this special issue reaches publication just as events in the Ukraine introduce a healthy dose of caution regarding the ability to predict the outbreak of initial stimuli, its further diffusion, or outcomes. As Mekouar notes, not only was the 2011 Tunisian stimulus not anticipated at all but most experts wrongly predicted its non-diffusion to the rest of the region. Events since suggest that, firewalls notwithstanding, the reverberation of Arab uprisings was evident not only within the region but even in the Maidan, where local protesters brought Tahrir Square to Kiev in many ways, including in the form of an Oscar-nominated Egyptian film. As the Hozic contribution highlights, festivals featuring the same movie around the world remain a crucial mechanism of diffusion of film-as-politics. The studies in this symposium advance our understanding of particular instances of non/diffusion but do not foreclose continued debate regarding future trajectories. Whether the trade-related inhibitions noted by Goldsmith will continue to overwhelm rising tensions in East Asia, blocking diffusion of militarized conflict, remains a topic of utmost concern for security studies. So does the debate over whether or not international power will largely remain anchored in the Western world, as Rosecrance argues, or instead diffuse inexorably to the global East and South.

⁸ Quoted in Lagarde (footnote 1).

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