Research Seminar

Making Global Governance Accountable
States, Society, and the Politics of Reform

Ranjit Lall
London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)

Recent decades have witnessed the adoption of far-reaching accountability mechanisms by many major international institutions, from access-to-information policies to grievance redress systems. What explains the establishment of these mechanisms – and why have only some institutions embraced them? This paper argues that mechanism adoption is more likely when states, in particular the most powerful, face stronger "bottom-up" pressures to enhance institutional accountability from transnational civil society – which typically instigates demands and builds coalitions for such reform – and when institutions perform governance tasks that are costly to monitor. Analysis of a rich new dataset shows that adoption is positively related to the density of international nongovernmental organizations in an institution's issue area – including solely those organizations based in powerful nations – and that this relationship is stronger when governance tasks entail high monitoring costs. Statistical tests are complemented by illustrative qualitative evidence from interviews and other original sources.

Prof. Dr. Ranjit Lall is an Assistant Professor of International Political Economy at the London School of Economics. His research on international institutions, global governance, financial regulation, and empirical methods has been published in Political Analysis, the American Journal of Political Science, International Organization, Regulation & Governance, International Studies Quarterly, and other leading journals and books. Ranjit Lall holds a BA from the University of Oxford and a PhD in political science from Harvard University based on a dissertation for which he received the Merze Tate Award from the American Political Science Association and the Leamer-Rosenthal Prize for Open Social Science from the Berkeley Initiative for Transparency in the Social Sciences. Before beginning his graduate studies, he worked as an economist at the Bank of England and an editorial writer at the Financial Times.

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