

Goldstein and Keohane:

Thesis: ideas influence policy when the principled or causal beliefs they embody provide road maps that increase actors' clarity about goals or ends-means relationships, when they affect outcomes of strategic situations in which there is no unique equilibrium, and when they become embedded in political institutions.

NOT arguing that ideas matter INSTEAD of interests, but rather than both have causal weight in explanation of human actions

Liberal institutionalism and realism view interests as logically prior to ideas. Both assumes that constraints on actions are key, not ideas; purpose of article is to show that even if rationality is true, ideas help coordinate individual behavior.

Null hypothesis: variation in policy across countries, or over time, is entirely accounted for by changes in factors other than ideas.

Different from psychological approaches because it does not focus on the interpretation of reality but on the impact of particular beliefs about the nature of worlds that have implications for human action. They do not seek to explain the sources of ideas, but to focus on their effects.

3 types of beliefs:

1. world views: conceptions of possibility, embedded in the symbolism of a culture; entwined with people's conceptions of their identities, evoking deep emotions and loyalties; religion and science promote world views.
2. principled beliefs: normative ideas that specify criteria for distinguishing right from wrong and just from unjust; often justified in terms of world views, but world views are so expansive they can encompass contradictory beliefs
3. causal beliefs: beliefs about cause-effect relationship which derive authority from the shared consensus of recognized elites; they provide guides for individuals on how to achieve their objectives.

3 causal pathways through which ideas can impact policy outcomes:

1. ideas serve as road maps; once an idea is accepted it limits choice by logically excluding other interpretations of reality
2. ideas contribute to outcomes in the absence of a unique equilibrium: ideas service as focal points that define cooperative solutions or facilitates group cohesion
3. ideas embedded in institutions specify policy in the absence of innovation: once a policy choice -> structures, that idea can affect the incentives of political actors long after interests have changed

key question is the extent to which variation in beliefs, or the manner in which ideas are institutionalized in societies, affect political action under circumstances that are otherwise similar.

Method for research:

1. evidentiary inference: making inferences about what happened and attaching probabilities to inferences
2. descriptive inference: 2 components- 1. distinction between random and systematic aspects of behavior 2. assessment of the extent to which self-reported and observed behavior reflect beliefs; think in terms of counterfactuals