

Hasenclever, Andreas, Peter Mayer, and Volker Rittberger, *Theories of International Regimes* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Chapters 1-5.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Hasenclever, Mayer, and Rittberger (hereinafter HMR) delineate three schools of regime theory – power-based “realism,” interest-based “neoliberalism,” and knowledge-based “cognitivism.” Realists, generally, posit relatively weak institutions in a world of rational relative-gains-maximizing units; neoliberals suppose somewhat stronger institutions, with the rational units maximizing absolute gains; and cognitivists have the strongest institutions of all operating in a world of sociologically-derived role-playing units.

Two of the most important characteristics in measuring the strength of a regime are its “effectiveness” – its ability to enact and enforce its own strictures – and its “robustness” or “resilience” – its ability to adapt and remain viable despite change.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Issues

Stephen Krasner’s 1983 “consensus definition” of international regimes (as “implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge” in a specific issue-area) has analytical value – and distinguishes nicely between regimes and organizations – but garners criticism for being nebulous and conceptually thin. Keohane (1989) offered a “leaner” definition relying only on explicit rules; this formulation surmounts the former problem – at some cost in explanatory power – but still lacks the theoretical underpinnings mandated by the latter.

Regimes are conceptualized in one of three main ways: behaviorally (regimes can be observed from state actions), cognitively (regimes are best examined via intersubjective reactions to noncompliance), or formally (regimes rely on explicit agreements). All three conceptualizations, though flawed (by tautology, data-collection difficulties, and theoretical confusion, respectively) find acceptance: realists and neoliberals favor formal and (to a lesser extent) behavioral conceptualizations; cognitivists prefer cognitive conceptions.

Chapter 3: Interest-Based Theories

The two rationalist schools of regime theory – the dominant interest-based as well as the power-based – differ in their formulation of actors’ preferences over outcomes: neoliberals envision actors as considering only their own benefits and costs (i.e., as “rational egoists”), while realists have actors preferring large benefits vis-à-vis other actors. HMR discuss four major regime theories as interest-based:

- 1) Keohane’s contractualism, which sees regimes as costly efforts to foster mutually-beneficial cooperation in circumstances wherein it might otherwise not occur (e.g., market failure or the prisoners’ dilemma). Actors will form regimes, according to contractualist models, when benefits outweigh costs of formation, and the resultant regimes will have resilience due to the costs of replacing one regime with another (and of eschewing all regimes).
- 2) Situation-structuralism, which extends contractualist tenets to assurance, coordination, and suasion games, implying that regimes form to increase the likelihood of Pareto-optimal outcomes in a variety of worlds. Further, Zürn gives the market for institutions in situation-structuralism a coherent supply-side: regimes form most often when they are least needed (and therefore least costly).
- 3) Problem-structuralism, which hypothesizes – with more empirical than theoretical justification – that different sorts of conflicts (about values, means to an end, or goods) differ

- in their degree of propitiousness to regime formation (very low, medium, and low-or-high-dependent-on-type-of-good, respectively).
- 4) Oran Young's institutional bargaining, wherein actors are uncertain about strategies, outcomes, and payoffs available, and hence try to reduce uncertainty by forming regimes with societal welfare gains (as well as strictly individual distributive welfare gains).

Chapter 4: Power-Based Theories

HMR outline three different approaches that fall generally into the realist camp:

- 1) Hegemonic stability theory, derived (somewhat questionably) from Olson's public goods analysis, in which individual actors (or groups of k countries, with k a small number) either have the power to coerce others into paying the costs of regime formation and maintenance, or derive sufficient benefits from a regime to benevolently endure all associated costs.
- 2) Stephen Krasner's approach, which considers the primary goal of regimes not to be achieving a Pareto optimum, but rather choosing which Pareto optimum. This produces a "Battle of the Sexes" type coordination game, which can be resolved because power determines who gets to play what when; only by accident, then, do the powerful cede power to regimes that do not act in their own interest.
- 3) Joe Grieco's realism, which argues that states, though rational, are not egoistic; i.e., their enthusiasm for absolute gains is tempered (especially in security-related issue-areas) to some extent by a craving for relative gains. Although the empirical evidence is not clear, this formulation does provide a theoretically-sound argument and the testable hypothesis that concern for relative gains and regime formation covary positively.

Chapter 5: Knowledge-Based Theories

Weak cognitivists share three assumptions: that knowledge and ideas matter, that collective understanding of a problem is prerequisite for a regime, and that decisionmakers seek "reliable knowledge" with which to reduce uncertainty. Weak cognitive theories – e.g., Peter Haas' epistemic communities – assert that ideas and normative constraints help determine the rationalist case, and generally seek to endogenize the role of knowledge in determining preferences. Weak cognitivism further assumes that regimes produce feedback, which can in turn affect knowledge.

Strong cognitivist theories, contrastingly, use a more sociological approach: actors are role-players, and regimes are the rules and norms established to direct and guide the actors. These theories draw the wrath of both post-modernists and rationalists. HRM explicate (and criticize) four approaches:

- 1) Power of legitimacy – most actors usually obey the laws of the "international society," even when inconvenient, because a society is necessary to ensure the existence of the actor.
- 2) Power of arguments – actors maintain a discourse of arguments, and thereby forge a "common interpretation" which defines convergent expectations and thus rules, norms, etc. Since the discourse is by definition maintained, the resultant regime is in a state of constant flux as new arguments are examined and implemented.
- 3) Power of identity – actors are (à la Wendtian constructivism) socialized through interaction into identities, which interact to form regimes. Identities also shape (but do not mechanistically determine) actions.
- 4) Power of history – economic processes, according to Robert Cox's quasi-Marxist theory, produce domestic interests which attempt to hegemonize and maintain their (implicitly immoral) dominance. A "historical structure" is thus formed based on a mix of power, ideas, and institutions, and can only be replaced by a competing mix of power and ideas.