

Hasenclever, A., P. Mayer & V. Rittberger (1997) *Theories of International Regimes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Chapter 1

In international regimes study there are three schools of thought:

- (i) Power-based (realism)
- (ii) Interest-based (neoliberalism)
- (iii) Knowledge-based (cognitivism)

Institutionalism measures institutions in terms of:

- (a) Effectiveness (a static measure): an institution is effective if its members abide by the norms and values (regime strength), and if it achieves certain objectives and fulfils particular purposes.
- (b) Robustness/resilience (dynamic measure of regime resilience given changes in the environment): the robustness of an institution is its staying power in the face of external challenges. Institutional history is important; i.e. the way that prior institutional choices constrain collective decisions and behaviour later on.

The degree to which institutionalism dominates regime theories depends on assumptions about state actors and their motivations. Power-based theories assume that states want absolute and relative gains and thus attribute causal significance to international institutions. Interest-based institutions (dominant in the 1990s) emphasise the role of regimes in helping states to realise common interests, rather than power, and so to avoid suboptimal outcomes. Economic theories of information and transaction costs are important here. Knowledge-based theories, by contrast, see causal and normative ideas as having a significant role. States are role players, not utility-maximisers.

Chapter 2

The 1982 4-pronged consensus definition of international regimes was: 'principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures' (Krasner, 1983). (An expanded version of the definition is on p. 9 in this chapter.) This definition sees international regimes as comprising four components:

Hasenclever et al note that problems with this consensus definition are establishing meaning and mutual relationship of the four regime components (principles, rules, norms, procedure), and determining when a rule actually exists. Another critique of the consensus definition was that the list of elements is hard to differentiate and is conceptually thin (Young). Keohane produced his own definition: 'Regimes are institutions with explicit rules, agreed upon by governments, that pertain to particular sets of issues in international relations' (p. 12 of this chapter).

Conceptualising International Regimes

Regimes can be conceptualised in several ways. Power-, and interest-based theories tend to adopt the formal (and sometimes behavioural), and knowledge-based theories the cognitive, approach. The current dominance of interest-based theories means meaning and implicit regimes receive less focus.

- (i) Behavioural – the effectiveness of a regime's (not necessarily explicit) rules is measured by the extent to which the behaviour of those subject to the rule conforms to the rules. Compliance need not be perfect.
- (ii) Cognitive – this emphasises intersubjective meaning and shared understanding, not observed behaviour. For example, the way that others interpret the violation of a norm (and consequent actions) is more important than the behaviour itself. The Verstehen approach is important here. Keohane argues that this approach is limited by data-collection problems.
- (iii) Formal – Keohane returned to a more formal concept of regimes that consisted of explicit rules agreed on by actors. He argued that accepting implicit regimes can lead to the problem of identifying rules on the basis of observed behaviour and then using the rules thus identified to explain the observed behaviour. This approach has limits in its equation of regimes with institutions, as this would not be able to explain situations where rules continue to exist despite a social institution having changed.

They distinguish between regimes and organisations: regimes are sets of rules and procedures with no capacity to act, whereas organisations can act and respond. Whereas regimes are issue-specific institutions, organisations are not restricted to any particular issue-area.