

## OVERVIEW

Study of international organizations has fluctuated throughout this century. In the recent decades, even though international organizations (IO) themselves have languished, the study of them has been thriving. The focus of the study has shifted from international institutions toward broader forms of international institutionalized behavior, in term of international regimes. This shift reflects a core concern over the problem of international governance (IG) a la Lakatos's "progressive problem shifts." However, the research program should resolve anomalies and link up informal devices of regimes with formal institutional mechanisms of IO.

## PROGRESSIVE ANALYTICAL SHIFTS

There have been identifiable shifts in how the phenomenon of IG has been conceived, especially since World War II, producing a field seemingly in permanent search of its own dependent variable. There are four major analytical foci.

### Formal Institutions

Implicit premise of 1) IG is whatever international organizations do and 2) the formal attributes of IO (charters, voting procedures, committee structures, etc.) account for what they do

### Institutional Processes

This focus concerns the actual decision-making processes within IO, since formal arrangements do not explain what they do. The perspective became generalized to explore overall patterns of influence shaping organizational outcomes, such as power and prestige of individual states, the formation and functioning of the group system, organizational leadership positions, and bureaucratic politics. Dependent variables have ranged from specific resolutions, programs, budgets to broader voting alignment.

### Organizational Role

The second assumption under formal institutions was abandoned. The focus shifted to the actual and potential roles of IO in a broad process of IG, subsuming three distinct clusters: 1) role of IO in the resolution of substantive international problems (preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping, IAEA, restructuring North-South relations, etc.) 2) long-term institutional consequences of the failures to solve substantive problems through the available institutional means (integrationist or neofunctionalist variety) 3) international institutions reflecting or modifying characteristics of the international system (IO as dispensers of collective legitimacy, agenda formation, forums for coalition building, policy coordination; global dominance structure enhanced or undermined).

### International Regimes

Current preoccupation in the field. International regimes broadly defined as governing arrangements constructed by states to coordinate their expectations and organize aspects of their international behavior in various issue-areas (comprise a normative element, state practice, and organizational roles). This conception reflects the attempt to return to the traditional analytical core: IG. Regimes express both the parameters and the perimeters of IG. Events of the 1970s and beyond brought about the approach, along with the approach to studying erosion of U.S. hegemony. Argument: regimes continued to constrain and condition the behavior of states toward one another, despite systemic change and institutional erosion.

### Conflict and Cooperation

Shifts in analytical foci accompanied by shifts in methodological approaches. Conflict and cooperation were seen to require two different approaches, but rational choice can explain both conflict and cooperation, focusing on situational determinants not structural determinants (This is analogous to neo-Marxist approach of world system framework). Regimes are useful focal points for these approaches.

## PROBLEMS IN THE PRACTICE OF REGIME ANALYSIS

Some critiques: Ambiguous boundaries among regimes, threshold between nonregime and regime. 1) regimes are conceptual creations not concrete entities, reflecting commonsense understandings and preferences; this is a "contestable concept" 2) regime analysis is wracked by epistemological anomalies, debilitating clarity and precision

### Ontology Versus Epistemology

International regimes defined as social institutions around which expectations converge in international issue-areas. The emphasis is on convergent expectations; we know regimes by their principled and shared understandings of desirable and acceptable forms of social behavior. The ontology of regimes rests upon a strong element of intersubjectivity. The prevailing epistemological position is entirely positivistic, focusing on "objective" forces. In many cases, actor behavior has failed to convey intersubjective meaning, while intersubjective meaning seems to have had considerable influence on behavior. In simulated world actors are condemned to communicate through behavior, which is not true in the real world. Options for dealing with the contradiction: 1) deny it somehow (no longer works; intersubjective epistemologies too well developed) 2) formulate a rendition of the intersubjective ontology compatible with positivist epistemology: use revealed preferences method to reveal meaning (this simply shifts the problem into the realm of assumption). Thus the third option...

## NORMS IN EXPLANATION

International regimes are distinguished from other international phenomena by their specifically normative element, which is in the Krasner definition of regimes. Implications: 1) norms do not "cause" behavior 2) norms are counterfactually valid (no single counterfactual refutes a norm). Variable (IV, DV, IntV) approach does not work. Rationales and justifications for behavior by actors are important. Such communicative dynamics may be influenced by extracontextual factors as state power.

### The Hierarchy of Analytical Components

How are the four elements of a regime (principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures) ordered? Two ideas: instrumentalism and coherence = strength. Instrumentalism presumes goals (norms) are separate from means (rules), which is not true. Norms such as reciprocity are neither means nor ends of a regime; they are the regime. The idea that coherence among the four

components indicate regime strength. This is wrong because actors not only reproduce normative structures but also change them by their practice (this is the structuration argument).

### **REGIMES AND ORGANIZATIONS**

To increase the research program’s contribution to ongoing policy concerns, the research program needs to be linked with formal IO. Approach such as “organizational-design” approach is useful (discerning what range of international policy problems can best be handled by different kinds of institutional arrangements, such as simple norms of coordination, reallocation of property rights, authoritative control through formal organizations). An interpretive epistemology emphasizes three additional dimensions of the organizational-design approach. 1) Transparency of actor behavior and expectations important 2) legitimation of regimes important 3) epistemic crucial (how knowledge become extensive or deepens in their international arena is intensely political)

### **CONCLUSION**

Analytical focus in the study of international organization has not floundered but progressively shifted, the underlying concern of which has always been how the modern society of nations governs itself. The currently ascendant regimes approach is internally inconsistent, due to the tension between its ontological posture and its prevailing epistemological practices. Thus, a more interpretive approach would open up regime analysis to the communicative rather than merely referential functions of norms in social interactions. International organizations can contribute to the effectiveness of informal ordering mechanisms, such as regimes, by their ability to enhance (or diminish) intersubjective expectations and normatively stabilized meanings. They do this through transparency creation, focusing the legitimation struggle, and devising future regime agendas via epistemic politics.