

INTERNATIONAL REGIMES

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Summary

Stephan Krasner defines international regimes as “sets of principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actor expectations converge in a given issue-area of international relations.” Even when rules and/or decision-making procedures change, it does not mean the change of international regime itself. Rather it is a change within an international regime. However, if principles and/or norms change, then it implies a change of international regime itself.

Liberals argue that the basic reason for states to create international regimes is to overcome the prisoner’s dilemma in international relations. Realists focus on power and distribution rather than information and joint gains in explaining the reason why international regimes are formulated. The hegemonic stability theory perceives international regimes as subsystem of a hegemonic system, and hegemons use its power to create international regimes. Peter Haas argues that international regimes would be created by the hegemon, but its substance would reflect epistemic consensus.

As the structure of international relations has been changed, the international regime theory has been criticized for further development. First, the international regime theory has been mainly applied to the study of international political economy in the US. However, the international regime theory was paid attention to by German scholars, to analyze a conflict process.

Second, the international regime theory is not applicable to the multidimensional issues where many issues are linked each other. Oran Young suggests that the concept of global governance may be able to improve this weakness of international regime theory. Third, the constructivism in international studies suggests that the practice of states and other actors is one of the most important sources to change international regimes.

1. Introduction: Why are Scholars Interested in International Regimes Being?

We often use the term of international regime like WTO regime, IMF regime, NPT regime, UN human right regimes and global environmental regimes. Since the 1970s, both liberals and realists have been concerned with international regimes, but they differ in their reasons.

Liberals proposed theories of international integration as European integration went on since the 1950s (see *International Politics*). They proposed several theoretical hypotheses and scenarios of how to restrict national sovereignty by promoting integration of nation-states. After the Marathon Crisis of 1965, when France refused to the introduction of majority voting in the European Commission, integration theories, particularly a functional approach to integration, came to be criticized because of its optimism for constraining national sovereignty. Many integration theorists shifted their concern to transnational actors and interdependence, after accepting the criticism to integration theories (see *Actors in World Politics*). They shared the idea that it was not so easy to restrict national sovereignty, but they did not accept the idea of realists that international relations are determined by power politics. They developed a theory of interdependence after analyzing the activities of transnational actors and transnational relations in the 1970s. They found there existed rules and/or patterned behavior in interdependent world. Thus, liberals proposed the concept of international regimes that constrain nation-states' behavior.

On the other hand, realists were also concerned with the concept of international regimes (see *Realism*). Why world economy has become borderless in spite of borderful nation-states system? The hegemonic stability theory was proposed to answer this question. It argues that international politics is basically ruled by power politics, therefore, hegemonic wars have been occurred between declining hegemons and rising challengers. And, when a new hegemon appears, then the hegemon provides a borderless economy system. International regimes can be seen as subsystems of hegemonic system.

2. Defining International Regimes

Stephan Krasner defines international regimes as “sets of principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actor expectations converge in a given issue-area of international relations.” He applied his international regime theory to North–South problems. His analysis of multinational enterprises and the New International Economic Order (NIEO) declared in 1974 clearly the meaning of principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures in real world (see *The New International Economic Order*).

Krasner argues that the prevailing international economic regime is based on the principles that see foreign direct investment benefit both investors and the countries being invested in. Therefore, national and multinational corporations are to be treated symmetrically as norms of the regime. In rules and decision-making procedures, the multinational corporations are allowed to appeal to home-country governments. The Developing World has demanded changes in the prevailing economic regime.

Thus, Krasner explains individual North–South negotiations in terms of the competing two international regimes. North–South negotiations were not just negotiations for increasing economic assistance or improving the trade conditions.

Rather, developed countries and developing countries struggled for what would be the desirable principles of international economic regimes. He clarifies why the South demanded for NIEO in the 1970s and requested the comprehensive Global Negotiations at the United Nations rather than separate negotiations on specific issues in the 1980s.

Volker Rittberger argues that just “paper regimes” cannot be seen as international regimes. Explicit norms and rules do not necessarily indicate the existence of an international regime. He emphasizes that norms and rules are required to be operative in order to indicate the impact of international regimes.

International regimes are close to international organizations and international treaties. However, international regimes are conceptually institutions, which are non-material phenomena unlike international organizations, which have a material existence with personnel staff and budgets. International regimes include not only explicit rules like international treaties but implicit customs.

3. Changes of International Regimes

Even when rules and/or decision-making procedures change, it does not mean the change of international regime itself. Rather it is a change within an international regime. However, if principles and/or norms change, then it implies a change of international regime itself.

Let’s take a problem of preferential duties as an example. It was demanded by developing countries to give them a kind of handicap for trade in the 1970s although the GATT trade regime had a principle of non-discrimination to all member states (see *GATT*).

When we see the policy of preferential duties means a change in rules or decision-making procedures, it is a change within the existing trade regime. The preferential duties are seen as an exception to the non-discrimination principle. However, if we recognize the preferential duties suggest a revision of principles or norms, then it implies the international trade regime has been changed.

Thus, all other rules and procedures should also be revised in consistent with the new principles/ norms of the idea of the preferential duties. Whether or not we see a change as principles/norms level change affect further policies to be taken.

It is not always easy to judge the change of international regime, in practice. For example, was the post-Second World War international monetary regime broken? As a matter of fact, the pegged-rate system based on the linkage between the US dollar and gold price was challenged in 1971. A few people see it as indicating the end of the Bretton Woods regime.

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Biographical Sketch

Ryo Oshiba is a professor of international relations at the Department of Law, Hitotsubashi University, Japan. He is interested in international theories, international organizations and development studies. He is the author of *Political Economy of International Organizations* (in Japanese), Yuhikaku Publishers, 1994.