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REFLECTION, EVALUATION, INTEGRATION

Interests, Power, Knowledge: The Study of International Regimes[1]

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How and why are international regimes formed? Which factors help determine their continuation once formed? This essay reviews the literature in political science and, specifically, in international relations on regime formation and stability. It identifies and discusses three schools of thought, each of which emphasizes a different variable to account for international regimes: interest-based neoliberalism, power-based realism, and knowledge-based cognitivism. The contributions of these schools to our understanding of regimes are compared and contrasted with the intention of examining how they might elaborate and complement, rather than compete, with one another.

Some twenty years after international relations scholars began asking questions about "international regimes" (Ruggie 1975; Keohane and Nye 1977; E. Haas 1980; Young 1980; Krasner 1983a), interest continues to be strong in the "principles, norms, rules, and procedures" that are seen as governing state behavior in specific issue-areas of international politics. Although some scholars have returned to the traditional language of "institution" (Milner 1993:494) or prefer such neologisms as "policy coordination" (P. Haas 1992c) or "governance system" (Young 1994), the substantive questions that define the regime-analytical research agenda remain among the major foci of international relations scholarship in both Europe and North America (Rittberger 1993a). What accounts for the emergence of rule-based cooperation in the international system? How do international institutions affect state behavior and collective outcomes in the issue-areas they address? Which factors determine the stability of international regimes? Do nonidiosyncratic explana-

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tions exist for the properties of particular institutional arrangements (such as the degree of formalization and centralization, or the degree and direction of distributional bias)?

Various theories have attempted to shed light on these questions. Depending on the explanatory variables they emphasize, these theories can be classified as interest-based, power-based, or knowledge-based, respectively (P. Haas 1993:174, 176; Young and Osherenko 1993a:8–20). In fact, we can talk of three *schools of thought* within the study of international regimes corresponding to these three approaches: neoliberalism, which bases its analysis on constellations of interests; realism, which focuses on power relationships; and cognitivism, which emphasizes knowledge dynamics, communication, and identities.[2] Notable differences exist within these three schools as well as among them, but the latter are more fundamental.

One major difference among the three schools is the degree of "institutionalism" they espouse. "Institutionalism" refers to the assumption that international institutions matter in world politics (Krasner 1983b, 1988; Powell 1994:340–342). Analytically, institutions can matter in two ways. They may, at any given time, be more or less *effective*, and they may be more or less *resilient* to external change (Rittberger and Zürn 1990:46–49; Young 1994:72–77). Regime *effectiveness* comprises two overlapping ideas. First, a regime is effective to the extent that its members abide by its norms and rules. Second, a regime is effective to the extent that it achieves the objectives or purposes for which it was intended. The most fundamental and most widely discussed among these purposes is to enhance the ability of states to cooperate in the issue-area (Underdal 1992; Young 1994:ch. 6). In contrast, regime *resilience* (robustness) refers to the staying power of international institutions in the face of exogenous challenges. By implication, it also comprises the extent to which prior institutional choices constrain collective decisions and behavior in later periods, that is, the extent to which "institutional history matters" (Powell 1994:341). Thus, whereas effectiveness involves a static perspective, resilience is a dynamic measure of the significance of regimes (Powell 1994:340).

None of the schools of thought reviewed here denies that international regimes have an impact on world politics, but they vary considerably in the degree of "institutionalism" assumed. This variance can, to a large measure, be attributed to the assumptions they make about the nature of state actors and their motivations (Young 1989a: 209–213). Although some of these differences are fundamental, others are less basic than might be supposed. Nonetheless, proponents of all three schools generally focus on proving the validity or superiority of their school's perspective vis-à-vis the others rather than on the complementarity among the schools' approaches.[3]

This essay review examines the core theoretical literature and selected empirical work from all three schools of thought. It explores their differences but, perhaps more important, the prospects for synthesis among them. First, the review looks at neoliberal or interest-based theories, which represent the mainstream approach to

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[2]In their review of regime theory, Stephan Haggard and Beth Simmons (1987) distinguished among structural, game-theoretic, functional, and cognitive approaches. The difference between their classification and the one adopted here is not as great as it might seem. The first and last of Haggard and Simmons's four theories are more or less identical to what we refer to as power-based and knowledge-based theories, respectively. The remaining two categories, functional and game-theoretic approaches, are collapsed into our category of interest-based theories. Robert Keohane (1988:382) suggested the term "reflective approaches" to denote the comparatively heterogeneous school of thought that is labeled "cognitivist" in this review following Haggard and Simmons.

[3]Although we have emphasized differences among the three schools in the degree of institutionalism espoused, it is important to note that these schools also have varying epistemologies (for example, positivism, social constructivism). These differences will be highlighted and discussed later in this article.

analyzing international regimes. Subsequent sections, in turn, examine realist or power-based approaches and cognitivist or knowledge-based perspectives. Special attention is paid to the points of agreement and disagreement between these latter two schools and neoliberalism. The concluding section draws these threads together by focusing on the extent to which syntheses among the three schools appear possible and desirable.

Before examining the different schools of thought, however, it is necessary to address two fundamental issues that cut across these paradigmatic divisions. What exactly is an "international regime"? And, is the concept precise enough to guide potentially cumulative empirical research?

Defining International Regimes

More than a decade ago, Susan Strange (1983) directed what has become a classic volley of criticisms against the study of international regimes. Chief among them was the assertion that regime analysis was doomed to failure because of the "imprecision" and "woolliness" of the concept. Scholars much more favorable to the study of regimes (Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986:763; Young 1989a:9) have conceded Strange's point. Oran Young (1986:106) went a step further at the time, criticizing the concept as "conceptually thin" in that it was not tied "into . . . [some] larger system of ideas that would help to solve the . . . ambiguities [inherent in the definition] . . . and that would offer guidance in formulating key questions and hypotheses regarding international regimes."

The Consensus Definition

Virtually all discussions of international regimes, even those works seeking to clarify or modify the concept, proceed from the so-called *consensus definition* first proposed by Stephen Krasner. According to Krasner (1983c:2, 1985:4), regimes are:

> implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations. Principles are beliefs of fact, causation, and rectitude. Norms are standards of behavior defined in terms of rights and obligations. Rules are specific prescriptions or proscriptions for action. Decision-making procedures are prevailing practices for making and implementing collective choice.

This definition has two noncontroversial, yet important, implications. First, international regimes are a special case of international institutions and should be studied as such (Keohane 1984:57, 1989a:3; Young 1986:107). Second, the terms "international regime" and "international organization" are neither synonymous nor coextensive, even though many regimes are accompanied by organizations (Young 1989a:25–27). Perhaps the most salient difference between regimes and organizations is that regimes—being sets of principles, norms, rules, and procedures—do not possess the capacity to act (Keohane 1988:384, n. 2). By the same token, the sphere of activity of an international organization need not be restricted to any one issue-area of international politics, as exemplified by the United Nations.

Two aspects of the consensus definition have been particularly troubling to those engaged in regime analysis, primarily because they produce an ambiguity that may inhibit the long-run cumulation of knowledge. The first concerns the precise meaning of, and relationship among, the four regime components. What distinguishes the "principles," "norms," "rules," and "procedures" of a regime from each other? The second, more fundamental, problem arises from the phrase

"around which actors' expectations converge." How we can know when a regime (or any of its components) *exists* in a given issue-area?

Conceptualizing the Components of Regimes

Young, in his 1986 review article, criticized Krasner's definition of the term "international regime" as "a list of elements that are hard to differentiate conceptually and that often overlap in real-world situations" (p. 106). Despite Krasner's careful explication, the consensus definition has not precluded fruitless disputes about the proper description of any given regime—that is, the contents of its principles, norms, and so on (Haggard and Simmons 1987:493).

Consequently, some scholars have suggested replacing the consensus definition with a more straightforward formulation that would be less amenable to divergent interpretations. Robert Keohane (1989a:4), for example, defined regimes as "institutions with explicit rules, agreed upon by governments, that pertain to particular sets of issues in international relations." Thus, the complex apparatus of principles, norms, rules, and procedures collapses into the single concept of rules. Scholars are relieved of the burden of justifying their decision to call a given injunction a "norm" rather than a "rule," or a "principle" rather than a "norm."

Although the pragmatic gains of adopting Keohane's approach are obvious, using it also involves costs. The consensus definition, by its very complexity, encourages analysts to reflect thoroughly upon the relationships among the various regime elements. It also forces a certain structure upon the descriptions of regimes, making comparison across issue-areas easier. Last, but not least, the hierarchy of regime components implied in the consensus definition enabled Krasner (1983c:3) to distinguish two levels of regime change. If principles or norms change, a *change of the regime* itself takes place—in other words, a new regime emerges. On the other hand, changes in rules and procedures are changes *within the regime.* No such strategy is available with Keohane's lean definition. This conceptual richness has led a variety of scholars to defend the consensus definition on theoretical grounds (Zacher 1987:175–177; Kohler-Koch 1989b:sec. 3; Müller 1993a:ch. 3, 1994:28) and as a guide for empirical studies (Kohler-Koch 1989a; Rittberger 1990b; List 1991; Wolf 1991; Zürn 1992:ch. 3; Müller 1993a; Schrogl 1993; Zacher and Sutton 1996:14). Even Vinod Aggarwal (1985:18–20), whose distinction between "metaregimes" and "regimes" appears to represent a fundamental break with the consensus definition, uses the four regime components as the basis for his distinction—metaregimes consist of principles and norms, whereas regimes refer to rules and procedures.

Behavioral, Cognitive, and Formal Approaches to Identifying Regimes

Whether international regimes are best conceptualized in complex or simple terms, the question remains as to how one can identify when they exist. The vague reference in Krasner's formulation to "actors' converging expectations" does not provide explicit criteria for identifying when regimes exist—or when they do not. Over time, three distinct positions have emerged arguing that regimes are best identified on the basis of behavioral, cognitive, or formal criteria, respectively.

The Behavioral Approach. Several regime analysts opt for a "behavioral approach to the empirical identification of regimes" (Young 1989a:13, n. 5), believing that actual behavior is essential for establishing the existence of any social institution. In essence, these analysts argue that only state behavior demonstrates that particu-

lar injunctions are accepted in a given issue-area, and that an international regime thus exists.

This is not to say that compliance must be perfect. A social practice can coexist with a considerable measure of deviation. Yet, as Mark Zacher (1987:174) observes:

> Occurrences of major or long-term noncompliance, particularly involving participation of or support by major actors in the system, bring into question the efficacy of regime injunctions. We must doubt the effectiveness of behavioral guidelines if glaring violations are allowed to persist or if states tend to violate norms and rules on those few occasions when they would benefit from doing so. This view of the *preconditions for regime injunction* reflects that of international legal scholars on the preconditions for the existence of international customary law. (emphasis added)

Thus, the effectiveness of behavioral guidelines is not merely a contingent (empirical) property of regimes but part of their very nature. Klaus Dieter Wolf and Michael Zürn (1986:204) have gone so far as to suggest that *rule effectiveness* be added as an attribute of regimes in the consensus definition (see also Rittberger 1990a:3; Rittberger and Zürn 1990:16).

However, some analysts have sharply criticized the behavioral approach. According to Keohane (1993a:27), this approach invites the logical fallacy of first identifying "regimes on the basis of observed behavior, and then . . . [using] them to 'explain' observed behavior" (see also Haggard and Simmons 1987:494). But, even though he is correct that the behavioral approach logically precludes the explanation of behavioral regularity in regime terms, it does not follow that it is useless. Given a behavioral approach, one can ask how (and when) regimes—understood as practices consistent with explicit rules—are formed. Moreover, with this approach a variety of other dependent variables and intriguing questions also remain on the agenda of regime analysis: the effectiveness of regimes in terms of the extent to which they attain the purposes for which they were established, their robustness or staying power in the face of exogenous challenges, their impact on the specific issue-area capabilities of regime members (and outsiders), and the civilizing effects they have on members' overall relationships (Krasner 1983b:359–367; Mayer, Rittberger, and Zürn 1993:424; Hasenclever, Mayer, and Rittberger 1996).

The Cognitive Approach. In their review of the study of international organization, Friedrich Kratochwil and John Ruggie (1986) adopt an approach that shifts emphasis away from "overt behavior" and toward intersubjective meaning and shared understandings—a cognitive approach. Kratochwil and Ruggie (1986:767) reject the behavioral approach's focus on compliance to establish the existence of norms, arguing that "norms are counterfactually valid." Thus, more significant than the frequency of prima facie violations are the interpretations that members of a community (this is, the members of a regime) give to such transgressions and the *communicative actions* (reproaches, excuses, justifications, and so on) that deviant behavior elicits.

Kratochwil and Ruggie (1986:766) recognize that this approach to identifying regimes requires an epistemology that is more open to the *Verstehen* school of social science than that favored by mainstream regime analysts (Weber 1949 [1904]; Hollis and Smith 1990:ch. 4). However, as they (Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986:764) argue, the consensus definition itself seems to make such an approach mandatory.

> International regimes are commonly defined as social institutions around which expectations converge in international issue-areas. The emphasis on convergent expectations as the constitutive basis of regimes gives regimes an inescapable intersubjective quality. It follows that we *know* regimes by their principled and shared

> understandings of desirable and acceptable forms of social behavior. Hence, the ontology of regimes rests upon a strong element of intersubjectivity.

Like the behavioral approach, however, cognitivists face some daunting criticisms. Again, Keohane (1993a:27) points to a methodological dilemma:

> [I]t is enormously difficult, indeed ultimately impossible, to determine "principled and shared understandings." To what extent principled, to what extent shared? How are we to enter into the minds of human beings to determine this? And which human beings will count? Even if we could devise a way to assess convergent expectations intersubjectively, what standard of convergence would we require to determine that a regime existed?

Keohane's criticism, however, may overstate the concomitant data problems. A focus on communicative action does not require the researcher to "enter into the minds of human beings" any more than successful communication does. Communication is based on the knowledge of public rules not on mutual access to private sensations or mental states (Kratochwil 1984:706). Similarly, the validity of such acts as promising or contracting is only loosely connected to the actors' "thoughts and feelings" while performing those acts (Austin 1975:ch. 2). Nonetheless, the phenomena to which Kratochwil and Ruggie draw attention are not readily investigated with the methodologies favored by most mainstream regime analysts. Thus, the debate ultimately centers on the question of how international regimes and, more generally, international norms are best studied.

The Formal Approach. Keohane's (1993a:26–29) rejection of both the behavioral and the cognitive approaches led him to develop a formal definition of regimes. In this approach, regimes are conceptualized primarily (although not exclusively) as explicit rules that are agreed upon by actors and embodied in treaties or other documents.

Largely for pragmatic reasons, most regime analysts, especially those whose work falls within the domains of the interest-based or power-based theories, tend to favor this formal approach, although the choice is not always explicit. The formal approach is not burdened with the problem of defining a threshold of compliance (or convergence of expectations) to distinguish regime from nonregime situations. Moreover, it directs research squarely to the question of what accounts for variation in the effectiveness of agreed-upon rules. Another implication is that the notion of "implicit" regimes, which are consistent with Krasner's (1983c:2) consensus definition, disappears—perhaps not too great a loss given the notorious difficulty of establishing their existence in concrete cases.

Nonetheless, a purely formal conceptualization has its own disadvantages. For example, the formal definition undermines the conceptual and theoretical linkage between regime analysis and the study of social institutions. Rules written down on a piece of paper do not constitute social "practices," and thus they do not comprise social institutions (Wendt and Duvall 1989:63). Although interstate agreements may frequently help bring about rule-governed practices and thus social institutions, there is no logically *necessary* connection between them. Yet, it has become almost commonplace to consider regimes as institutions.

It may be objected that, even though the formal definition implies that regimes per se are not social institutions, it does not preclude an institutionalist theoretical perspective altogether. The task simply becomes one of determining when and how regimes, as agreements, can form the basis for international institutions. Nevertheless, concerns like this may have led Keohane (1993a:28) to add a "thin" substantive content to his definition, proposing to define

> *agreements* in purely formal terms (explicit rules agreed upon by more than one state) and to consider *regimes* as arising when states recognize these agreements as having continuing validity. . . . [A] set of rules need not be "effective" to qualify as a regime, but it must be recognized as continuing to exist. Using this definition, regimes can be identified by the existence of explicit rules that are referred to in an affirmative manner by governments, even if they are not necessarily scrupulously observed.

Keohane's revised definition emerged from a process aimed explicitly at bridging the behavioral and the formal approaches (see also Rittberger 1993b:10). Ironically, it is also remarkably similar to Kratochwil and Ruggie's (1986) cognitive approach. Performative acts such as accusing a government of violating certain rules, justifying one's behavior in terms of higher-order rules, or even apologizing for a breach of certain rules—which are the primary material of the cognitive approach—all involve references made "in an affirmative manner" to rules. Thus, they are precisely the kind of data needed to identify regimes in terms of Keohane's modified formal definition.

A Concept Not Altogether Woolly

What then of Susan Strange's charge that the concept of regime is "woolly" and "imprecise"? Although Strange's caution remains relevant, the arbitrariness in the regime concept appears much smaller than she suggested. Moreover, as Kratochwil and Ruggie (1986:764) have reminded us, the contested nature of the regime concept is not unlike that of certain other social science concepts such as "power" and "state" that are fairly close to the hearts of many critics of regime analysis.

Ultimately, the best hope for overcoming the ambiguities in definitional matters is the development of strong theory. The regime concept emerged outside a rich theoretical formulation (Young 1986:106). Thus, the consensus definition and its alternatives should be thought of as *working definitions* that will grow more precise and more sophisticated as their surrounding theoretical edifice becomes elaborated.

Interest-Based Theories of International Regimes

Neoliberal or interest-based theories of regimes have been extraordinarily influential in the past decade and have come to represent the mainstream approach to analyzing international institutions. Although not insensitive to the effects of power differentials, these theories emphasize the role that international regimes play in helping states realize common interests. In so doing, they portray states as rational egoists who care only for their own absolute gains. Neoliberals have drawn heavily on economic theories of institutions that focus on information and transaction costs. Game-theoretic models have been applied to characterize the constellations of interests that underlie different types of regimes and that affect the likelihood of a regime being created in the first place.

In this section we begin by describing two approaches that are the purest representatives of neoliberal regime theory. The first, *contractualism,* studies the effects of international regimes on the ability of actors to cooperate in situations resembling the Prisoner's Dilemma. It develops a functional argument to explain the creation and maintenance of regimes. The second, *situation-structuralism,* builds on this perspective, taking into account the full spectrum of strategic situations in which actors might cooperate through regimes. It analyzes the implications of these different constellations of interests (or "games") for both regime formation and the institutional form of regimes.

We conclude the section with a consideration of two approaches that are best characterized as interest-based theories, but whose status as neoliberal theories is

less clear. The first, *problem-structuralism*, regards the nature of issues as an important variable affecting the likelihood and ease of regime formation. The second, Young's *model of institutional bargaining*, attempts to rectify the tendency of rationalistic theories to give structure priority over process. It echoes important concerns of the knowledge-based approaches.

The Contractualist or Functional Theory of International Regimes

Robert Keohane has authored the most elaborate and widely discussed theory of international regimes to date. This so-called functional or contractualist theory of regimes is the backbone of a somewhat broader perspective on world politics that focuses on the institutionalization of a growing sector of international behavior and has been given the label "neoliberal institutionalism" (Keohane 1989a).

Using Realist Assumptions to Derive Institutionalist Conclusions. The most conspicuous feature of the contractualist approach is its adoption of core realist assumptions about the nature of international actors and their social environment. Keohane (1984:25) acknowledges that states are "crucial actors" in world politics and that international "anarchy" has important repercussions on their interactions, in particular, on their ability to cooperate (see also Axelrod and Keohane 1986:226).

Keohane also accepts realism's assumption that states are rational and act only to further their own interests. Thus, foreign policies and international institutions result from the calculations of advantage made by states. These calculations are informed, although not exclusively determined, by the preferences (utility functions) of actors. Moreover, actors' relative preferences for outcomes, as opposed to policies, are presumed to be fairly stable over time (Harsanyi 1969:518–521; Snidal 1986:43; Powell 1994:318). Thus, interaction (including cooperation) does *not* affect actors' utility functions. This approach to rationality implies that states are basically atomistic actors and that it is misleading to talk about an "international society."

Following Kenneth Waltz (1979), Keohane also opts for a systemic approach, focusing on the external structural conditions under which governments make foreign policy decisions. More specifically, he agrees that the distribution of power and wealth in the international system exerts a predominant influence on state behavior. As a result, he consciously neglects the potential impact of actors' internal or domestic attributes. "The internal attributes of actors [including their preferences concerning outcomes] are given by assumption rather than treated as variables" (Keohane 1989b:40).

Realists have pointed out that Keohane's approach to rationality is not identical to theirs. For Keohane (1984:27), states are essentially *egoists*, which "means that their utility functions are independent of one another: they do not gain or lose utility simply because of the gains or losses of others." They are not envious, or what Michael Taylor (1976) termed "negative altruists." They are indifferent to how well others do. By contrast, realists assume that states are not only concerned with "absolute" gains or losses, but with "relative" gains or losses as well.

Common Interests, Cooperation, and Regimes. Contractualist theory operates under a specific situational precondition: the states active in a particular issue-area must share common interests that can be attained only through cooperation (Keohane 1984:6, 247, 1989a:2). For Keohane, a theory focusing on such situations is neither negligible (as traditional realists might conclude) nor trivial. States often have common interests, but the existence of such interests is only a necessary not a

sufficient condition for cooperation. To support the latter claim, Keohane (1984:68) points to the Prisoner's Dilemma, which in his view describes the essence of a wide range of situations in world politics.

Situations like the Prisoner's Dilemma represent collective action or cooperation problems in which the imperatives of individual rationality lead to collectively suboptimal or Pareto-inefficient outcomes.[4] In the single-play Prisoner's Dilemma, the best choice of each actor is to defect, because defection (that is, not acting cooperatively) is the more advantageous option no matter what the other actor does. Defection, in other words, is each player's dominant and, therefore, most rational strategy. Consequently, mutual defection is the natural outcome of the game. Ironically, however, both actors could do better in the Prisoner's Dilemma if both ignored their individual-rational strategy. In short, both prefer mutual cooperation to mutual defection. But even though the two actors have a common interest in overcoming this Pareto-inefficient outcome, they are unable to realize this interest because defection continues to be the dominant strategy of each. In particular, the dilemma cannot be solved through an agreement not to defect, for each actor knows that the other has an incentive to renege on such a promise. Only if the actors expect to meet again in the future (that is, if the game is iterated) and their uncertainty about one another's actions is not too pronounced does cooperation become possible (Axelrod 1984).

Contractualist theory sees international regimes as a key instrument that states use to overcome this dilemma and achieve joint gains. The theory's most general proposition is that regimes facilitate international cooperation, which would otherwise be difficult or impossible to achieve, not necessarily by changing actors' interests (preferences) or values but by altering their incentives for action. In effect, regimes change "the calculations of advantage that governments make" (Keohane 1984:26).

A theory such as contractualism, which regards international regimes as catalysts of international cooperation, needs to separate regimes (the cause) and cooperation (the effect) conceptually. Keohane (1984:61, 1993a:23) does this by distinguishing "regimes" from "agreements." Indeed, according to Keohane (1983:153):

> It is crucial to distinguish clearly between international regimes, on the one hand, and mere *ad hoc* substantive agreements, on the other. Regimes . . . facilitate the making of substantive agreements by providing a framework of rules, norms, principles, and procedures for negotiation.

Thus, within the conceptual framework of contractualism, international cooperation materializes in mutually beneficial agreements, not specifically in regimes. Regimes help bring about such agreements. (Note that this "crucial" distinction raises questions about Keohane's [1993a] more recent definition of regimes, which sees them as a kind of international agreement.)

How Regimes Make a Difference. How do regimes make cooperation possible? How do they help states overcome the uncertainty about their partner's objectives and commitment? In short, how do regimes overcome the barriers imposed by situations like the Prisoner's Dilemma?

Contractualist theory argues that regimes facilitate cooperation by providing states with information or by reducing their information costs (Keohane 1984:97, 245). For example, as long as regimes include monitoring arrangements (making information about others' compliance more readily available), they reduce fear of

[4]An outcome is Pareto-efficient if and only if there exists no other outcome that (1) leaves any actor better off and (2) leaves no actor worse off.

being cheated. Decisions to cooperate can be reversed, so the possible exploitation a state may suffer will not last long. More important, the likelihood of being deceived in the first place is smaller because the greater probability of being caught reduces the expected utility of cheating.

The impact of a regime is amplified because its principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures, by their very nature, do not apply to a single case. Moreover, individual regimes are often nested within larger, more encompassing frameworks of international principles and norms, creating linkages among issues. As a result, violating a particular agreement (or concluding an illegitimate one) has consequences beyond that issue and may affect one's ability to achieve goals elsewhere (Keohane 1984:89; Axelrod and Keohane 1986:234). This feature increases the perceived "iterativeness" of the situation. In a Prisoner's Dilemma played over and over again by the same egoistic players, cooperation can be induced and maintained purely through a reciprocal strategy ("tit-for-tat") as long as future gains and losses are not heavily discounted by the actors (Axelrod 1984).

Keohane (1984:94, 104–106), however, does not emphasize either the monitoring capacities of regimes or regime rules requiring states to retaliate against defectors. Instead, he focuses on their *reputational effects*:

> International regimes help to assess others' reputations by providing standards of behavior against which performance can be measured, by linking these standards to specific issues, and by providing forums, often through international organizations, in which these evaluations can be made.

Thus, regimes help shape the reputations of members, raising the costs associated with noncompliance. Actors with a reputation for trustworthiness are more readily accepted as partners in cooperative ventures. Even though potential reputational costs do not guarantee compliance, they raise the threshold of opportunism for rational egoists sensitive to their longer-term interests.

Explaining Both Regime Formation and Maintenance. For contractualists, a functional argument explains both the emergence and the persistence of regimes. More precisely, Keohane's (1984:80) explanation combines functional reasoning with a rational-choice perspective:

> Functional explanations in social theory are generally *post hoc* in nature. We observe such institutions and then rationalize their existence. Rational-choice theory, as applied to social institutions, assumes that institutions can be accounted for by examining the incentives facing the actors who created and maintain them. *Institutions exist because they could have reasonably been expected to increase the welfare of their creators.* (emphasis added)

Regimes are created by states as instruments to achieve certain selfish goals. They reduce the information costs associated with negotiating, monitoring, and enforcing agreements. Creating a regime, however, is not cost-free. After all, regimes usually result from multilateral negotiations. Consequently, creating and maintaining a regime involves transaction costs (Keohane 1988:386). From a functional perspective, this means that actors will offset the costs of establishing a regime with the advantages expected from it. Given that the central advantage of a regime is enabling actors to cooperate through agreements, states are more likely to create a regime if the set of potential mutually beneficial agreements in the issue-area is large (Keohane 1984:79, 90). This hypothesis explains why, with rising levels of interdependence between states and societies, the number of international regimes has grown (Keohane 1993a:34–38).

What we have described above is, however, only part of the story. For one thing, regimes do not emerge in a cognitive and institutional vacuum. Earlier experi-

ences with regimes and with one's prospective partners affect an actor's willingness to create new regimes. Even more important, the above argument considers only the demand side. As theories of collective action show, the fact that a group of states would benefit from a regime does not guarantee that they will "supply" it. In this connection, contractualist theory incorporates power considerations (Keohane 1984:78). Hegemons often play a crucial role in the formation of regimes. Keohane (1993a:43) acknowledges that regimes have ideational as well as material underpinnings (see also Young 1992), both of which are reflected in the content of a regime's principles, norms, and rules (Keohane 1984:70–73, 1988:387). Regime content is important because regimes do not reduce transaction costs across the board. Rather, they facilitate legitimate bargains, while raising the transaction costs of illegitimate ones (Keohane 1984:90). Legitimacy is determined by the content of the regime.

For contractualists, the cost of creating regimes also helps explain their maintenance. Quite commonly, the initial conditions under which a regime was formed change over time, making the regime increasingly less attractive for some or even all its members. Such external changes can lead to the regime's collapse or, at least, to far-reaching revisions of its principles and norms. Contractualism suggests that regimes will frequently persist under these conditions, that is, they will often prove robust. Part of the theoretical justification for this hypothesis lies in reputational concerns. Another argument, however, is that regimes persist precisely because creating a regime is so difficult (Keohane 1984:103). In many situations, the expected utility of maintaining the present, suboptimal (albeit still beneficial) regime is greater than the utility of letting it die, returning to unfettered self-help behavior, and then trying to build a more satisfactory regime.

Extending the Reach of Functional Regime Theory: Situation-Structuralism

Situation-structuralism, a term introduced by Michael Zürn (1992:151), is best understood as an attempt to extend the interest-based argument of contractualist theory. What situation-structuralists have in common is a conviction that any attempt to explain regimes theoretically must take into account the strategic nature of the situations in which states make choices about cooperation (Stein 1983; Snidal 1985a, 1986; Oye 1986; Zürn 1992, 1993b; Martin 1993). Their point of departure is Keohane's game-theoretic interpretation of the collective action problem that regimes help states overcome. Situation-structuralists argue that the Prisoners' Dilemma, which Keohane stresses, represents only one type of collective action problem. The fundamental differences among these cooperation problems create a demand for different regime structures. Thus, situation-structuralism extends the explanatory scope of contractualism to encompass the *form* of regimes as well as their emergence and maintenance.

Coordination versus Collaboration Regimes. Situation-structuralists agree with Keohane that collective action problems resembling the Prisoner's Dilemma are common in international politics. Both international trade issues and attempts at establishing collective-security systems are real-world examples of such *collaboration games* (Stein 1983:123; Lipson 1984). They also point out, however, that other situations of strategic interdependence exist in which individual and collective rationality can be at odds. Problems of weapons standardization within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and various issues in global communications, such as the distribution of radio frequencies (Krasner 1991), should be classified and analyzed as *coordination games.* In coordination situations several Pareto-efficient equilibria exist, and actors face the problem of picking one of

them collectively. If actors are indifferent about the best coordination point, their problem is not serious as long as they can communicate effectively. If they favor different coordination points, a genuine collective action problem arises.

Situation-structuralists argue that international regimes can facilitate international cooperation (helping states avoid Pareto-inefficient outcomes) in both collaboration and coordination situations. However, given that the two situations pose very different problems, their institutional solutions will be different (Stein 1983:127–132; Snidal 1985a:936–939). For example, collaboration situations, like the Prisoner's Dilemma, must have clear-cut injunctions that specify illegitimate behavior under the regime and well-defined procedures to discourage cheating. *Collaboration regimes,* therefore, can be expected to be relatively formalized. Often they will involve international organizations that collect and disseminate information to help the parties assess compliance with the regime's central provisions.

In contrast, *coordination regimes* can largely do without compliance mechanisms. Once found, the cooperative solution is self-enforcing. Any deliberate noncompliance will indicate dissatisfaction with the distributional consequences of the regime and will, therefore, be *public.* Because cheating will not be a problem, coordination regimes can be less formalized and less centralized. International organizations may be relevant, but only to collect and distribute information about actors' intentions—not about their current and prior behavior.

Assurance and Suasion Regimes. All situation-structuralists accept the relevance of coordination and collaboration regimes. Two other types of strategic situations, identified by Zürn (1992, 1993b) and Lisa Martin (1993), are less generally accepted. Martin refers to these as assurance and suasion games. (For a contrasting view regarding the relevance of assurance and suasion games for regime theory, see Stein 1983:119–120.)

Assurance situations are akin to coordination games in that they contain two equilibrium outcomes. The crucial difference is that only one of these equilibria (mutual cooperation) is Pareto-efficient and, consequently, is preferred by both actors. At first sight, this issue would not seem to pose a cooperation problem. However, failure to reach the Pareto frontier is possible if (1) at least one actor erroneously fears that the other's preference ordering is similar to a Prisoner's Dilemma game and, thus, will defect rather than cooperate, or (2) at least one actor doubts that the other can be trusted to act rationally on the given issue. In both situations, particularly if the stakes are high as in the security dilemma (Jervis 1978), it is not unreasonable for actors to play it safe and opt for defection. Such a choice is the only unilateral option that ensures that actors do not end up with their worst possible outcome. Regimes can help solve (or avoid) assurance problems by facilitating communication among states (Zürn 1992:174–184; Martin 1993:106–109). As an example of an assurance regime, Zürn (1992:177) points to the superpowers' regime for preventing inadvertent war. Transparency was not a feature of the superpower relationship. Thus, a regime was required to provide information that would assure each superpower that the other would not defect.

The second type of situation that Zürn and Martin analyze is less readily characterized as a collective action problem. Martin (1993:103–106) refers to this type of situation as *suasion games;* Zürn (1992:209–218) speaks of *Rambo games.* The characteristic feature of these games is that they have a single equilibrium outcome, which satisfies only one actor and leaves the other aggrieved. Unrequited cooperation is the only stable outcome of the game. In such a situation the privileged player has to be persuaded to cooperate. Within the confines of rationalist reasoning, all the dissatisfied actor can do is try to manipulate the other's preferences by making threats (decreasing the utility of defection) or promises

(increasing the utility of cooperation). Such threats and promises are attempts at tactical issue-linkage (E. Haas 1980). If successful, the situation changes to something more amenable to cooperation. Examples include the status of Berlin and the issue of intra-German trade, two inverse suasion games that were deliberately linked to create a more regime-conducive situation (Rittberger and Zürn 1990:41; Schwarzer 1990a:209; Zürn 1990:166–173). Martin (1993:103) suggests that suasion regimes are often sponsored by hegemons. She points to the case of East-West trade in high-technology goods as an example. Because the overall success of the embargo depended more or less exclusively on U.S. export policy, at least initially, the smaller partners could safely abstain from self-restraint. The United States, in turn, sought to ensure cooperation from these potential free riders by establishing a credible link between export control and Marshall Plan aid (see also Noehrenberg 1995).

What role can regimes play in suasion situations? For one thing, regimes may help states arrange the side-payments necessary to secure cooperation from the privileged actor(s). Likewise, through their principles and norms, they may foster and institutionalize the issue-linkage on which cooperation depends. Because incentives to defect continue to exist on the part of the persuaded actors, suasion regimes may display some features of collaboration regimes, especially with respect to the need for monitoring capacities.

Accounting for Success and Failure in Regime Building. Although the principal thrust of situation-structuralists has been to explain the differing forms that regimes can take, they have also used game-theoretic reasoning to derive hypotheses concerning the *likelihood of regime formation* in different strategic situations. They even suggest that the ambiguous results of some past empirical studies are a result of the failure to control for the structure of the situation (Snidal 1985a, 1985b).

Zürn (1992:165–220), for example, suggests that the four types of situation structures can be ordered by their propensity to give rise to international regimes. Specifically, the probability for an institution to emerge is highest in assurance situations and is progressively lower for coordination, collaboration, and suasion situations. Zürn's hypothesis is based on the assumption that the likelihood of successfully creating a regime rises as the difficulty of the cooperation problem declines. Bernhard Zangl (1994:282–295) reached a similar conclusion based on the variety and intensity of so-called *second-order problems* to which the different strategic situations give rise. These second-order problems—monitoring, sanctioning, and distribution—overlap with the obstacles subsumed under the contractualists' "sanctioning problem" (Axelrod and Keohane 1986:254). According to Zangl, suasion games are most adverse to cooperation because they involve all three of the second-order problems. Collaboration situations, like the Prisoner's Dilemma, are somewhat more conducive to cooperation because they produce less intense problems of distribution but suffer from monitoring and sanctioning problems. Coordination games pose fewer difficulties because only distribution problems have to be solved: agreeing on a specific set of rules if alternatives have different distributional consequences. Finally, assurance situations have none of the three second-order problems.

Zürn (1992) argues that this hypothesis can be refined by taking into account a set of *secondary variables* that allow for more subtle distinctions among the four types of problematic social situations. These secondary variables are: (1) the expected frequency of interaction through time, (2) the density of transactions, (3) the type of foreign policy practiced by the actors (for example, specific reciprocity) (see also Zürn 1993a), (4) the distribution of issue-specific resources, (5) the presence of salient solutions, (6) the number of actors in the issue-area, and (7)

the state of the overall relationship among the actors (more or less competitive/hostile). The precise effect of each secondary variable presumably varies across the types of situations. As an illustration, consider the distribution of resources among actors. It makes a difference in coordination, collaboration, and suasion situations but not in assurance situations. By contrast, competition can be expected to have a negative effect on regime formation in assurance and coordination situations but not in collaboration or suasion cases. Each of the variables Zürn considers is related to arguments discussed in various other strands of regime theory. Thus, relating situation-structure to these variables may help overcome the lack of integration among the different theoretical approaches (Efinger, Mayer, and Schwarzer 1993:272–278; Levy, Young, and Zürn 1995:286).

Empirical research suggests that the hypotheses of the situation-structuralists have considerable potential to account for *rule-based cooperation* among states. A Tübingen-based research team conducted in-depth studies of thirteen issue-areas, most involving pre-1989 East-West relations, that sooner or later saw the emergence of an international regime (Rittberger 1990b:part 2; Schrogl 1990; Schwarzer 1990b, 1994; List 1991, 1992; Efinger, Mayer, and Schwarzer 1993:255–260). Among the issue-areas examined were security (conventional forces in Europe), economics (intra-German trade), the environment (protection of the Baltic Sea), and human rights (constitutionalism in western Europe). The research probed various hypotheses about the likelihood of regime formation and found that type of situation structure figured prominently in the results, both in absolute terms and in comparison with rival variables (Efinger, Mayer, and Schwarzer 1993:260–266, 269). Despite the methodological limitations of the study, the results lend support to continuing efforts to explore situation-structural hypotheses empirically and, in the process, to refine them theoretically.

The Problem-Structural Approach

Unlike situation-structuralism, problem-structuralism fits less comfortably within the interest-based school of regime theory. Although proponents have distinguished their approach from both the power-based and the knowledge-based schools (Zürn, Wolf, and Efinger 1990:152, 156), they have not fully explicated a theory that would unequivocally establish their focus as an interest-based approach. Moreover, some problem-structuralist propositions are *not* easily subsumed under neoliberal theory. For example, one of problem-structuralism's core propositions distinguishes between conflicts over absolutely assessed goods and those over relatively assessed goods. Thus, problem-structuralists assume that, under certain conditions, states *are* concerned with relative gains, a position that contradicts the neoliberal notion of egoistical rationalism. In this respect, the problem-structural approach represents a bridge between interest- and power-based theories of regimes.

The underpinnings of the problem-structural approach lie in the empirical discontinuity of regime formation. By definition, international regimes are partial orders. They pertain to specific issue-areas, such as trade or money, rather than to the totality of their members' political relationships. Hence, the same set of actors can cooperate through regimes in some issue-areas while relying on self-help strategies in others. Thus, in the mid-1980s, the Eastern and Western blocs had established a regime regarding the peacetime movements of troops in certain areas (known as the regime defining "confidence- and security-building measures in Europe"), but they had yet to establish one specifying admissible levels of conventional forces in Europe despite years of negotiations. Similarly, in the mid-1990s, a global regime for the protection of the stratospheric ozone layer had been

in place for almost a decade, yet repeated attempts to create a regulatory regime for climate change continued to be problematic.

If neither the attributes of actors nor the characteristics of the international system as a whole can account for all the variation in regime formation, then perhaps the nature of the issue-areas themselves (or of the issues that compose them) plays a role (Zürn, Wolf, and Efinger 1990). Proponents of the problem-structural approach, especially German scholars (Rittberger 1993b:13–16), have elaborated on this basic idea. First, they have sought to clarify the concept of issue-area. Second, they have partially reconceptualized "international regimes" to build directly on this clarification. Finally, they have categorized issue-areas and generated hypotheses linking these categories to the likelihood of regime formation (Efinger, Rittberger, and Zürn 1988:chs. 3–5).

Defining Issue-Area Properties. Although international relations scholars have long used the concept of issue-area (Mansbach and Vasquez 1981:ch. 2), and issue-areas are integral to most definitions of regimes (Krasner 1983c:2; Keohane 1989a:4, 1993a:28; Young 1989a:13; Rittberger and Zürn 1990:11, 1991:166), regime analysts have paid surprisingly little attention to this concept.

The neglect has had negative consequences on theory building (Kratochwil 1993a:75–83) and empirical research. One of the presumed advantages of regime analysis is that it goes beyond individual treaties to envisage a "functional whole" composed of a potentially heterogeneous set of formal and informal agreements, practices, and institutions. For instance, the normative content of the nuclear nonproliferation regime is *not* defined by the 1968 Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), but consists, in addition, of the London Suppliers' Guidelines, the International Atomic Energy Agency Statute, the Tlatelolco and Rarotonga Treaties, and so on (Müller 1989, 1993b:362). Moreover, it is critical to look into "nonregime" cases when studying regime formation, that is, issue-areas in which actors have failed to establish an institution. Such research is not possible if issue-areas cannot be adequately delineated.

Building on an earlier formulation by Keohane and Nye (1977:64), problem-structuralists have proposed the following definition: "Issue-areas . . . consist of one or more . . . inseparably connected objects of contention and of the behavior directed to them. The boundaries of issue-areas are determined by the perceptions of the participating actors" (Efinger and Zürn 1990:68; see also Efinger, Rittberger, and Zürn 1988:68; Zürn, Wolf, and Efinger 1990:153). Because the boundaries of issue-areas depend on perception, they can change without any corresponding change in the objective facts to which policymakers are responding. Analysis is complicated because perceptions of which issues are "inseparably connected" can diverge. Thus, delineating an issue-area is itself a highly political process.

Reconceptualizing Regimes. By highlighting issue-areas as objects of contention, problem-structuralists emphasize their conflictual nature. International regimes, then, become a particular mode of regulated *conflict management* (Rittberger 1993b:11–13). "Conflict," as used by these authors, is not defined in terms of behavior (for example, violence) or attitudes (for example, hostility) but in terms of incompatible preferences or "differences in issue position" (*Positionsdifferenzen*) (Czempiel 1981:198–203). Anything actors do to handle such "positional differences"—literally ranging from total war to stable peace—can be considered "conflict management." Cooperation—whether sustained by agreed-upon rules or ad hoc agreements—is, thus, a form of conflict management (Efinger and Zürn 1990:67; Rittberger and Zürn 1990:13–19, 1991:166). This conception clashes with a large body of international relations literature in which cooperation and conflict

are treated as opposites along a single dimension (Vasquez and Mansbach 1984:413). It is compatible, however, with Axelrod and Keohane's (1986:226) conceptualization of cooperation as a form of collective behavior that does *not* take place under conditions of harmony.

Categorizations and Hypotheses. According to Manfred Efinger and Michael Zürn (1990:67), "the characteristics of the issue-area in which a conflict occurs . . . predict, to a large extent, whether the conflict is dealt with cooperatively or by using unilateral self-help strategies." To investigate the relationship between issue-areas and conflict management strategies, including regime formation, problem-structuralists have designed and explored various issue-area and conflict typologies.

Ernst-Otto Czempiel (1981:198) has provided a simple typology that classifies international issue-areas into three broad *policy domains* (*Sachbereiche der Politik*): security ("the protection of physical existence against internal and external threats"), economic well-being ("the allocation of economic gains as well as opportunities for achieving such gains"), and rule (*Herrschaft*) ("the allocation of opportunities for exercising freedom and for political participation"). Problem-structuralists have hypothesized that issue-areas in which the allocation of economic values is contested will be most regime-conducive because divisible "gain" rather than indivisible "power" is at stake (Czempiel 1981:196, 213). By the same reasoning, issue-areas within the domain of rule (best exemplified by human rights issues) will be least amenable to cooperative treatment (Efinger and Zürn 1990:75). Security issues, by implication, occupy a middle position.

In contrast to issue-area typologies, *conflict typologies* classify "conflicts," the abstract differences in the positions taken by actors, or "objects of contention," the material or immaterial entities around which conflicts revolve (Rittberger and Zürn 1990:15). As Efinger and Zürn (1990:68) put it, conflict typologies go "a step further in the disaggregation of a relationship between actors" than issue-area typologies. Based on ideas introduced by Vilhelm Aubert (1963) and Louis Kriesberg (1982:30–42), problem-structuralists distinguish four types of conflicts: conflicts about values, conflicts about means, and two types of conflicts about interests (Rittberger and Zürn 1990:31, 1991:168). In a conflict about values, actors hold incompatible principled beliefs regarding the legitimacy of a given action or practice. In a conflict about means, actors share a common goal but disagree about how best to pursue it. Both of these conflicts are *dissensual* in that actors disagree on what is desirable. By contrast, and seemingly paradoxically, conflicts of interest presuppose a degree of *consensus*: the actors value the same scarce good. This overlap of interests is precisely what makes them parties to a conflict. Conflicts of interest are subdivided in terms of the nature of the good sought. Some goods (that is, "guns") tend to be *assessed relatively*, such that an actor's satisfaction from a given amount is dependent on the amount accruing to his competitors. Other goods (that is, "butter") tend to be *assessed absolutely*, such that an actor's enjoyment of its share neither increases nor decreases as a result of changes in the quantity held by others (Hirsch 1976:ch. 3; Efinger and Zürn 1990:82). It is hypothesized that conflicts over values and over goods assessed relatively will be the least conducive to regime formation. Conflicts over goods that are assessed in absolute terms are considered the most amenable to cooperative arrangements with conflicts over means moderately conducive to the formation of an international regime.

The hypotheses derived from the issue-area and conflict typologies were tested empirically using the Tübingen Data Bank of Conflicts in East-West Relations (Efinger and Zürn 1990:68–70). The focus of the study was on the number of times agreements were reached in settings with the varying issue-areas and kinds of conflict. Both sets of hypotheses received support in the data. Indeed, issue domain and type of conflict accounted "for a great deal of variance in conflict man-

agement in East-West relations" (Efinger and Zürn 1990:83, 75–81).

Institutional Bargaining and Regime Formation

Oran Young (1977, 1980, 1982), a pioneer in regime analysis, has also been one of the field's most innovative and productive scholars. Although his work spans all aspects of the study of international regimes, perhaps the most original and ambitious of his many contributions has been a *model of regime formation* referred to as "institutional bargaining" (Young 1989b, 1991:282–285, 1994:ch. 4).

The institutional bargaining model is clearly interest-based in that it treats states as selfish actors confronted with both the *possibility* of achieving joint gains through cooperation and the *difficulty* of settling on specific norms and rules. At the same time, Young's approach does not fall squarely into the neoliberal mold. His views about the significance and pervasiveness of international institutions come closer to those held by cognitivists. He also sees considerable merit in portraying states as role players rather than pure utility maximizers (Young 1989a:chs. 3, 8). Finally, Young (1989b:352, 359; Young and Osherenko 1993a:11–13) is critical of neoliberal accounts of regime formation (in particular, the situation-structural), finding their explanations of "the actual record of success and failure in efforts to form international regimes" rather limited.

Assumptions of the Model. Although both functional and situation-structural analyses of regime formation deal almost exclusively with negotiated regimes (Keohane 1989a:17), they pay little if any attention to the bargaining process itself. By contrast, Young's model of regime formation centers on precisely those processes that result in the "constitutional contracts" that specify the contents of regimes (Young 1991:282). (Institutional bargaining is actually shorthand for "bargaining with the objective to create an institution.") The point of departure for Young's model is rational choice theory as reflected in game theory and economics. However, Young does not accept this approach completely. Indeed, his concerns about this literature lead to the distinguishing features of his own model.

According to Young (1989b:358), rational choice models rest on a number of assumptions that "abstract away a great many considerations that are major preoccupations of negotiators under real-world circumstances." In particular, these theories make heroic assumptions regarding the knowledge that participants have about the identities of other parties, the strategies that are available to them, and the payoffs that would result from these strategies. Moreover, they usually assume that none of these parameters change in the course of negotiations. Each of these assumptions, Young argues, is problematic.

For Young, it is precisely the initial *absence* of a specified and commonly known "zone of agreement" that allows negotiating parties to come to a final agreement. In real-world situations actors are usually uncertain as to what strategies are available and what the outcomes of those strategies might be. They can even be uncertain about how these outcomes relate to their core interests. This uncertainty produces a disposition to engage in *integrative rather than distributive bargaining.* In other words, the primary concern of the parties shifts from "the distribution of fixed payoffs" (which are not known) to the cooperative "production of expanded benefits" (Young 1994:126). Even though elements of distributive bargaining are always present, "regime formation in international society typically centers on integrative (or productive) bargaining" (Young 1989b:361).

Similarly, borrowing a concept introduced by Geoffrey Brennan and James Buchanan (1985:28–31) into constitutional theory, Young points out that the parties to institutional bargaining regularly act under a *veil of uncertainty* regarding

their own future positions and interests. Because institutions, once they are put in place, are not easily changed (Young 1989a:ch. 3), this "veil" creates incentives to agree to institutional arrangements whose results are acceptable to states with varying resources, interests, and so on. Given that international regime formation involves multiple actors, in varying situations, and is generally subject to a *unanimity rule*, this impact of uncertainty is crucial.[5]

Explaining the Success and Failure of Institutional Bargaining. Young's model of institutional bargaining has both a "descriptive" and an "analytical" aspect. Descriptively, it presumably outlines the essential circumstances under which collective efforts to form regimes *regularly* take place. Analytically, the model points to a number of factors that are theoretically critical for the *success* of such efforts.

One set of hypotheses developed to test this model treats core features of the model as variables. For example, integrative bargaining presumably requires a veil of uncertainty and a problem-solving approach on the part of negotiators. Thus Young (1989b:366) hypothesizes that institutional bargaining can succeed only when the *issues at stake* "lend themselves to contractarian interactions . . . [and] the presence of imperfect information ensures that a veil of uncertainty prevails." Similarly, Young (1989b:371) expects *exogenous shocks or crises* to "increase the probability of success in efforts to negotiate the terms of international regimes." As exemplified by the discovery of the "ozone hole" over Antarctica in 1985, such events help the negotiating parties refocus attention on common interests (that is, return to integrative bargaining) and overcome stalemates that commonly occur in institutional bargaining.

A second set of hypotheses takes the assumed features of institutional bargaining for granted and derives additional variables from them that may tip the balance for or against reaching an agreement. For instance, the unanimity rule suggests that institutional bargaining can only succeed if there exists, among the available alternatives, an option that is regarded as *equitable* by all participants (Young 1989b:368). The unanimity rule and assumed limits on the knowledge of negotiators further suggest that the probability of reaching a bargain increases if there exists a *salient solution* (in terms either of simplicity and clarity or familiarity) (Young 1989b:369; Young and Osherenko 1993a:14). Young holds that the simplicity and clarity that characterize salient solutions are not incompatible with the presence of a veil of uncertainty. By formulating an option "in a simple manner that is easy for everyone to grasp and remember . . . [negotiators] may also cause it to be ambiguous and uncertain, leaving much to be resolved after the regime is in place" (Young and Osherenko 1993a:15). He also hypothesizes that the availability of "clear-cut and effective" *compliance mechanisms* enhances the success of negotiations among self-interested, autonomous actors by decreasing the fear that prospective regime partners may cheat (Young 1989b:370).

Finally, Young (1989b:373) derives the hypothesis that "institutional bargaining is likely to succeed when effective leadership emerges" and that "it will fail in the absence of such leadership." In the original formulation of the model, he characterized leaders as "entrepreneurs" or "brokers" who use negotiation skill and inge-

[5]These features are not the only defining characteristics of institutional bargaining, but they are of central importance in deriving specific hypotheses. The other defining properties of institutional bargaining are: (1) the problem-oriented approach that actors tend to adopt, (2) the existence of intrastate divisions, which create scope for the formation of transnational alliances supporting international cooperation, and (3) the embeddedness of the negotiation process in a broader political and socioeconomic context, which generates opportunities for linkages that may either advance or undermine negotiators' efforts to come to agreement.

nuity, rather than power, to present issues and to come up with new institutional options. Subsequent modifications added "structural leaders," who can skillfully convert power based on material resources into bargaining leverage, and "intellectual leaders," who can use "the power of ideas to shape the way in which participants in institutional bargaining understand the issues at stake and to orient their thinking about options available" (Young 1991:288). In sharp contrast to mainstream international relations theory, all three types of leaders are assumed to be individuals. At least two of these types of leadership must exist for attempts at regime formation to succeed (Young 1991:303–305).

These hypotheses, along with several others, have been tested empirically through a multinational research project initiated and directed by Young and Gail Osherenko (1993c). Methodologically, the project relied on six "structured or focused case studies" (Young and Osherenko 1993c:ix) involving environmental or resource issues in the Arctic region. One of the cases was concerned with an issue-area (Arctic haze) for which no regime was instituted during the period of inquiry. The overall results of the studies were quite encouraging. Disconfirming evidence was found for only two of the hypotheses. Moreover, for both hypotheses the disconfirming evidence was found in only one case, not across the board (Young and Osherenko 1993b:232).

An Impressive but Incomplete Foundation

Overall the interest-based school provides a rich and imposing foundation for regime theory. Contractualists, especially Keohane, have set forth an impressive argument about the origins, functions, and effects of international regimes that combines parsimony and sophistication. In particular, it shows that we can attribute causal significance to regimes without resorting to assumptions about the motivations of states that many observers view as too optimistic. Situation-structuralism and institutional bargaining have filled important gaps in interest-based theory. Young has provided a rich process model of regime formation; situation-structuralists have responded to Ruggie's (1993:35) critique that regime analysis has not provided explanations for the differing institutional forms that regimes take. Furthermore, institutional bargaining, problem-structuralism, and situation-structuralism have all received encouraging, albeit limited, empirical support.

For all its virtues, however, the interest-based school, and each of its varieties, still suffer from conceptual ambiguities and a disquieting gap in systematic research. As Underdal (1995:115) notes, the rationalizations that problem-structuralists use to explain the relationship between conflict type and conflict management strategy have been ad hoc and theoretically incomplete. Similarly, although interest-based theories such as contractualism and situation-structuralism tell us when and why regimes are desirable, they say little about the "supply side," that is, when and how the demand is likely to be met (Milner 1992; Müller 1994). Institutional bargaining and problem-structuralism respond only imperfectly to this gap. Perhaps most important, the *functional nature* of contractualism—the cornerstone of the interest-based theories of regimes—runs the risk of all post hoc arguments. As Keohane (1984:81) recognizes:

> the most important danger lurking behind functional explanations is the *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy: institutions may be interpreted as having arisen because of the functions they must have served, when they in fact appeared for purely adventitious reasons.

Ultimately, the only way to avoid this fallacy is to ask very different questions than

contractualists have thus far. Perhaps we must be concerned not with the effects of regimes but with the *beliefs* that actors hold about them.

Although these theoretical questions raise daunting issues, the need to conduct the empirical studies required to test the core assertions of interest-based theories could pose a greater challenge. Thus far, relatively few contractualist conjectures have been investigated empirically, and, to the extent they have, the results have been mixed (Keohane 1993a:37). Although hypotheses based on situation-structuralism, problem-structuralism, and the institutional bargaining approach have generally been corroborated, the limitations inherent in the studies conducted to date are clear. Young and Osherenko (1993c:vii) themselves refer to their project as a beginning rather than a conclusion. In this regard, an international regimes database being constructed as part of the International Environmental Commitments project of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) at Laxenburg, Austria is propitious (Levy, Young, and Zürn 1995). The database should help researchers overcome the limitations in sample size, in variation across issue-areas, and so on that have hindered past studies. It is particularly important, however, that future tests aim at a better overall balance between regime and nonregime cases. As long as the cases studied display little or no variation on the dependent variable, causal hypotheses explaining variation in regime formation cannot be adequately evaluated (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994:129).

Power-Based Theories of International Regimes

Neoliberal theories of regimes can be characterized as a synthesis of realism and its traditional antithesis, liberalism. Even though neoliberals adhere to certain realist tenets, they do so without renouncing the liberal insights that states can realize common interests through cooperation and that institutions can facilitate cooperation. Thus, the conceptual frameworks that interest-based approaches establish for the study of regimes constitute problematic approaches for realists.

Not surprisingly, realists have taken up the challenge by outlining alternative conceptual frameworks that emphasize relative power capabilities and states' sensitivity to the distributional aspects of cooperation. In essence, whereas realists and neoliberals agree that states are the most important actors on the world scene and that states act out of self-interest in an anarchical environment, realists tend to specify the utility functions of state actors differently. Unlike the neoliberal state, which feels no envy, the realist state cares about benefits accruing to its competitors. As a consequence, rule-based cooperation is less easily established. Such cooperation also unravels more readily if the distribution of power shifts or if negative distributional consequences of regimes become apparent.

This section examines three realist approaches to international regimes. All three view international cooperation and regimes as significant phenomena to be accounted for by international relations theory. The first, hegemonic-stability theory, predates the interest-based approaches. It links the existence of effective international institutions to a unipolar configuration of power in a particular issue-area. Although superseded by subsequent approaches, hegemonic-stability theory played a catalytic role for neoliberal arguments (Keohane 1984) and has relevance to attempts at synthesis. The two other realist approaches—associated with Stephen Krasner and Joseph Grieco, respectively—emerged as critiques of Keohane's contractualist theory of regimes.

Hegemonic-Stability Theory

The theory of hegemonic stability and the study of international regimes are intimately, but not always happily, bound together. Some regime analysts would deny that hegemonic-stability theory (or more appropriately the hegemonic-stability hypothesis) is a genuine theory of regimes. Yet, even neoliberal scholars rely almost as much on the theory of hegemonic stability as they criticize it. Keohane (1984), for example, admits that hegemony often plays an important (although not essential) role in the formation of international regimes. What is more, he bases his argument for the robustness of regimes in part on the difficulties of "regime-creation in the absence of hegemony" (Keohane 1984:100). Indeed, Keohane (1980) was one of the first to introduce into the study of regimes arguments about the stabilizing effects of power concentration.

Collective Goods, Hegemons, and Regimes. In essence, hegemonic-stability theory asserts: (1) that regimes are established and maintained by actors who hold a preponderance of power resources relevant to a particular issue-area, and (2) that regimes decline (that is, decrease in strength or effectiveness) when power becomes more equally distributed among their members (Keohane 1980).

The theory of hegemonic stability originated in economist Charles Kindleberger's work on the Great Depression. Kindleberger (1973:305) argued that "for the world economy to be stabilized, there has to be a stabilizer, *one* stabilizer" (emphasis added). What concerned Kindleberger was not the institutionalization of international politics or the strength of regimes, but the creation and maintenance of what David Lake (1993:462) has aptly termed "the international economic infrastructure." Kindleberger observed that the stability of this infrastructure is an international public (or collective) good. States cannot be effectively excluded from enjoying the benefits of such stability, and enjoyment of it by one state does not affect its availability to others. This observation allowed Kindleberger to locate his arguments within Mancur Olson's (1965) overall theory of groups (with the set of states participating in the world economy as the relevant group). In short, the theory of hegemonic stability purports to be a special case of Olson's theory of collective action.

In his theory, Olson sought to explain why groups of rational actors often do not act on behalf of their common interest, which amounts to a failure to provide the group with a public good. According to Olson, the *impossibility of exclusion* inherent in such goods adversely affects the incentives that would otherwise motivate rational group members to pay for them. In a nutshell, he argued that, in the absence of coercion or additional inducements beyond the potential benefits of the public good itself, large groups will fail to produce collective goods. The prospects for smaller groups are much brighter. Some small groups are "privileged" by the fact that at least one group member will have a sufficiently strong interest in the good to provide at least some amount of it even if no one else shares the costs (Olson 1965:49).

Applying these ideas to the international economy, Kindleberger argued that only an outstanding economic and political power, with the capacity and the willingness to lead, will supply and support the infrastructure that permits international exchange to take place. At different times in modern economic history, Great Britain and the United States have played this essential role. Moreover, when the strength of the stabilizer wanes, the stability of the system is at risk as well. At the end of the day, great-power cooperation will simply not be able to substitute for one state shouldering the burden of leadership. Consequently, Kindleberger regards the relative decline of the United States since about 1960 as a development that hurts the system as a whole.

"[T]he danger we face is not too much power, but too little, not an excess of domination, but a superfluity of would-be free riders, unwilling to mind the store, and waiting for a storekeeper to appear" (Kindleberger 1981:253).

Hegemonic-stability theory applies this reasoning to *international regimes.* In its crudest form, regimes are supplied by hegemons, and they are likely to disappear if the hegemon's power wanes. Thus, the ultimate explanation for the formation and persistence of regimes lies in there being a highly unequal distribution of power in a given issue-area. Kindleberger himself would probably not endorse this extended interpretation of his argument. His own theory was not concerned primarily with cooperation but with unilateral actions taken by the stabilizing power (for example, providing a "market for distress goods") (Kindleberger 1981:247). "Regimes" are mentioned by Kindleberger (1981:252) only as an unpromising alternative to unilateral leadership.

The Nature of Cooperation. Hegemonic-stability theory implicitly denies that states have the ability to engage in large-scale collective action. No regime emerges in an issue-area unless the group is privileged—that is, unless the collective good can be supplied by *independent* action. This skepticism, along with its reliance on the distribution of power as the central explanatory variable, places hegemonic-stability theory squarely in the realist tradition (Snidal 1985b:593). As a theory of regimes, however, hegemonic-stability theory cannot and does not claim that states are unable to cooperate. This apparent contradiction can be understood with a distinction between the two levels at which states can presumably cooperate in a regime context.

First-order cooperation takes place whenever states adjust their policies with regard to certain substantive issues in a mutually beneficial way. Usually such cooperation is aided or structured by agreed-upon rules of conduct, although cooperation may also be spontaneous and tacit. By way of illustration, in the issue-area of international trade, states may adopt and comply with common rules that prescribe the dismantling of such barriers to trade as tariffs, thus reaping joint benefits in the form of greater efficiency and higher growth rates. The theory of hegemonic stability *does not* rule out this kind of cooperation.

The theory does, however, reject the possibility of states engaging in *second-order cooperation.* How are the rules of cooperation made, and how are they enforced? Rule making and rule enforcement both involve costs. If these costs are shared by several actors, they become forms of second-order cooperation (Axelrod and Keohane 1986:254; Ostrom 1990:42; Zangl 1994:284–287). Hegemonic-stability theory denies that states are likely to share these costs. Thus, in essence, it claims that states cannot be expected to join forces to secure the *preconditions*—a set of sufficiently clear and constraining rules and reliable means of enforcement—for mutually beneficial cooperation to occur.

Hegemonic Stability—Within Limits? As a general theory of regimes, the hegemonic-stability hypothesis has had little empirical support. Both Young and Osherenko's (1993b:230) study of Arctic issue-areas and the Tübingen-based studies of East-West relations (Rittberger and Zürn 1991:176; Efinger, Mayer, and Schwarzer 1993:269), for example, have identified a number of regimes that formed in the unambiguous absence of hegemony. At the same time, the theoretical limits of hegemonic-stability theory to which critics have pointed may themselves suggest a narrower range of situations in which the theory could have validity and value.

A critical weakness with hegemonic-stability theory is that it applies Olson's theory of groups in too limited a fashion. Although Olson framed his conclusions

in terms of large versus small groups, his analysis suggested a much more differentiated picture. Most important, he introduced and briefly discussed a category of "intermediate" groups that could succeed in achieving their common good even though they were not privileged. These groups do "not have so many members that no one member will notice whether any other member is or is not helping to provide the collective good" (Olson 1965:50). As a result, bargaining and strategic interaction can result in the group achieving collective action. Building on this point, Russell Hardin (1982:41) has observed that it is not the overall size of the group that matters but the minimum number of members who would benefit from cooperation. If this number (commonly referred to as "k" following Schelling 1973), which represents an oligopolistic coalition, is small enough, even nominally large groups can provide collective goods. Other things being equal, this group will be smaller if group members are unequal in size. Larger actors receive greater benefits from the collective good; thus inequality means that fewer members need to have an interest in jointly providing the good.

Duncan Snidal (1985b:598–612) effectively uses this reasoning to explain post-hegemonic cooperation among the United States, Japan, and Germany. He found that an oligopolistic group can substitute for unilateral hegemonic leadership as long as states think and act strategically (that is, take into account the likely reactions of others). Indeed, the very fact that the group is no longer privileged because of hegemonic decline helps explain the emergence of stable coalitions designed to create or maintain international regimes. Successful collective action becomes more likely, not less, because each member of the coalition knows that the decision to free ride can cause the collapse of the coalition and the end to whatever benefits come from defection. Moreover, preexisting regimes, even hegemonic ones, create ongoing relationships among states that provide negotiation fora and intellectual focal points, both of which reduce transaction costs and facilitate the formation of effective coalitions.

Thus, unequal size distribution within a group may be beneficial for regime formation, even if a hegemon is not required. Likewise, as hegemonic-stability theory implicitly claims, privileged groups (issue-areas with a hegemon) may have clear advantages in regime formation vis-à-vis intermediate groups (issue-areas with a suitably small oligopolistic coalition) (Gowa 1989b:316–322). Moreover, Snidal (1985b:596) has argued that relatively few issue-areas in international politics really constitute public goods (that is, exhibit jointness of supply and nonexcludability). If so, hegemonic-stability theory's range of legitimate applications would be much smaller than has been assumed in past empirical studies. Ironically, this limitation could mean that the theory's value in explaining those cases to which it does apply is much greater than the studies suggest (Lake 1993:479–483). Students of regimes would be ill-advised to discard hegemonic-stability theory completely.

Krasner's Case for a Power-Oriented Research Program

Contractualism describes the problem of international cooperation in terms of "market failure." Even when states share substantial common interests, they may fail to cooperate for fear of being cheated by their partners. Thus, in the absence of appropriate international institutions, a suboptimal (Pareto-inefficient) collective behavior may result. According to Stephen Krasner (1991, 1993), however, this account is misleading. The "basic issue [in the politics of regime formation] is where states will end up on the Pareto frontier, not how to reach the frontier in the first place" (Krasner 1993:140). This basic fact—that politics is about who gets what—is veiled by the Prisoners' Dilemma with its single Pareto-optimal outcome.

It is nicely, though, captured by another, far less popular, game: Battle of the Sexes (see also Scharpf 1989:162).

Battle of the Sexes, a coordination game that has been analyzed by situation-structuralists as well, has two Pareto-efficient equilibria representing the possible cooperative outcomes of the game. Unlike players in pure coordination games, however, players in Battle of the Sexes have conflicting preferences for these two outcomes. For example, two people want to spend the evening together rather than alone, but they disagree on what to do (attend the theater or go dancing). According to Krasner, it often happens that states have an unambiguous preference for avoiding some "common aversion" by coordinating their activities, but they clash over the different possible ways to do so.

The Problem of Cooperation. As situation-structuralists have argued, interpreting international relations in terms of a Battle-type game has several implications for understanding the cooperation problem. For instance, cheating is no longer the main barrier. In fact, surreptitious deviation from the agreed-upon convention is irrational because (in game theory terms) any unilateral change of mind results in a loss of utility for the actor. Thus, the cooperation problem is *not* one of ensuring adequate information to identify or dissuade cheaters (that is, to provide effective compliance mechanisms) (Axelrod and Keohane 1986:231; Krasner 1991:336, 362), but one revolving around *distributional conflicts* (who gets what) and the use of *power* as a means to resolve them. This argument is forcefully put forward in Geoffrey Garrett's study of the completion of the European Community's (EC) internal market. Garrett (1993:366) points out that functional (neoliberal) accounts of the internal market agreements are inadequate because they assume that only one Pareto-efficient solution existed. In fact, a variety of potential regimes, virtually indistinguishable in terms of their *aggregate* welfare effects, were possible. The different EC members favored different proposals because of their varying distributional effects.

Krasner (1991:340) specifies three ways in which state power can be exercised to produce cooperation in Battle-type situations:

1. Power can be used to determine who is allowed to play the game in the first place. In international relations less powerful actors are often not invited to the table.
2. Power can be used to dictate the rules of the game, for instance, who gets to move first. In [Battle-type games] the player who moves first can dictate the outcome, as long as the other player believes that the first player's strategy is irrevocable.
3. Power can also be used to change the payoff matrix. [A state with more abundant resources (military, economic, and so on) can use threats or promises to manipulate the other's preference ordering so that only one Pareto-efficient equilibrium remains: the one favored by the more powerful actor.]

Bargaining leverage can also be derived from unequal opportunity costs. The actor that needs cooperation less (usually the one with the greater overall capabilities) can get its way by credibly threatening to walk away from the table (Hirschman 1945; Krasner 1976:320, 1991:363).

The Limited Significance of Institutions. If overcoming asymmetrical information is not critical for helping states cooperate, then what role is left for institutions? Krasner (1991:362) notes that a power-oriented "analysis seeks to explain outcomes in terms of interests and relative capabilities rather than in terms of institu-

tions designed to promote Pareto optimality" (see also Strange 1983:345). Nonetheless, regimes are not insignificant. Indeed, they are necessary to help states avoid uncoordinated action (the common aversion) and "establish stability" (Krasner 1991:337; Snidal 1985a:937). Consider the case of global communications: "[s]tates wanted some set of rules for the allocation of the electromagnetic spectrum and international communications including satellites, because the failure to coordinate policies on interference and on the compatibility of national networks would have left everyone worse off" (Krasner 1991:362). In effect, regimes may exhibit little autonomy and robustness, but they are often essential mediators between the distribution of power and concomitant interests on the one hand and outcomes in the issue-area on the other. After all, if regimes did not have significant distributional consequences, actors would not bargain hard to determine their contents.

Moreover, although the power-based theories attribute less autonomy to regimes than the interest- or knowledge-based theories, they do acknowledge that regimes themselves can be a source of power (Krasner 1985:7–9, 1991:363). Even structurally weak states can sometimes influence collective policies as a result of the membership and voting rules of a regime. For example, in the case of the allocation of the electromagnetic spectrum (including the distribution of slots on the Geo-Stationary Orbit), the demands of Third World states could not be completely ignored by technologically advanced countries. Third World states could participate in collective decision making through their membership in the International Telecommunications Union, an organization that was open to all states and that operated on a "one-state-one-vote" rule (Krasner 1991:351–353).

Most of Krasner's somewhat casual, empirical observations are confirmed in Kai-Uwe Schrogl's (1993) book-length study of the satellite-based communications issue-area. Schrogl finds that substantive regime principles (as opposed to procedural rules regarding access) helped initially disadvantaged actors to bring about regime change by providing those states with a "rallying point" (Schrogl 1993:14). This role that principles played was ironic because the dominant actors had accepted their egalitarian content on the assumption that only norms and rules would be consequential in practice. At the same time, Schrogl stresses that principles only *facilitated* change. Reforms would not have taken place had the material power position of the initially weaker actors not improved over time.

The Meaning of Anarchy: Grieco's "Modern Realist" Perspective

Among those realists who have subjected the neoliberal theory of regimes to critical analysis, Joseph Grieco (1988a, 1990, 1993b) has done the most to construct an integrated realist alternative. In the process, Grieco has *qualified, although not altogether rejected,* neoliberalism's claim that international institutions play an important role in states' cooperative ventures. Indeed, although his position is often regarded as anti-institutionalist, Grieco's interpretation has intriguingly positive implications for international institutions (Grieco 1995).

Anarchy and the Concern for Relative Gains. Grieco's core criticism of neoliberalism holds that, in reinterpreting realist assumptions, Keohane and others have failed to grasp the full meaning of international anarchy. This failure, in turn, has led them to misconstrue the basic motivation of states. Grieco (1988a:497) points out that in the neoliberal perspective *anarchy* boils down to a condition in which no central agency enforces promises. In the absence of appropriate institutions, therefore, states find it difficult to cooperate for fear of being cheated. But, according to realism, this is only part of the story. More important, the lack of common

government means that no central agency guarantees states their *survival as independent units of the system.* The international system, therefore, is one in which self-help is the order of the day (Waltz 1979). As Grieco emphasizes, this does not rule out cooperation among states to further common objectives. Many situations in international politics are not zero-sum. However, cooperation among states is more difficult to achieve and harder to maintain than neoliberal theories suggest because anarchy, properly understood, creates a structurally induced *intolerance for relative losses.*

Thus, even though realists agree with neoliberals that states are utility maximizers, they sharply disagree about the nature of their utility functions. In international politics the gains of a competitor do detract from a state's level of satisfaction. The reasoning behind this proposition has been laid out succinctly by Waltz (1979:105).

> When faced with the possibility of cooperating for mutual gain, states that feel insecure must ask how the gain will be divided. They are compelled to ask not "Will both of us gain?" but "Who will gain more?" If an expected gain is to be divided, say, in the ratio of two to one, one state may use its disproportionate gain to implement a policy intended to damage or destroy the other. Even the prospect of large absolute gains for both parties does not elicit their cooperation as long as each fears how the other will use its increased capabilities. Notice that the impediments to collaboration may not lie in the character and the immediate intention of either party. Instead, the condition of insecurity—at the least, the uncertainty of each about the other's future intentions and actions—works against their cooperation.

Concerns about relative gains can keep states from embarking on, or continuing to support, cooperative ventures with others, *even when* cheating is not or is no longer a problem.

This point is echoed by Joanne Gowa's (1989b:307) research on the "political correlates of a stable world market economy." Gowa (1989b:323) concludes that "the anarchic international system . . . makes two facts common knowledge among states: (1) each seeks to exploit the wealth of others to enhance its own power, and (2) trade is instrumental to this end. The structure of international politics, in short, may lead a state to prefer the status quo ante because it fears that any change may benefit others more than itself."

For relative gains concerns to be aroused, a state's survival need not be in immediate danger. Given that "[m]inds can be changed, new leaders can come to power, values can shift, new dangers and opportunities can arise" (Jervis 1978:168), states cannot be certain about their partners' future intentions. As a result, they are likely to keep an eye on the development of the relative capabilities even of those states with which they are on friendly terms. Moreover, states also fear that their partners may turn relative advantages into greater (nonmilitary) bargaining power in the issue-area and beyond. This behavior would enable them to drive ever better bargains, ultimately hampering the disadvantaged partner's capacity for autonomous choice—at least in the particular issue-area (Grieco 1990:29, 1993a:734). States seek to avoid relative losses, because survival is their fundamental goal *and* because they value their independence and autonomy.

In contrast to realists like John Mearsheimer (1995:11), Grieco stresses that states are not necessarily relative gains *seekers.* According to Grieco (1990:37–40), states are *"defensive positionalists."* Absolute gains enter into their utility calculations as well. As a consequence, suffering a relative loss in some relationship will not necessarily keep states from cooperation if the relative losses seem outweighed by the absolute gains. Likewise, a state's *sensitivity to relative losses* will vary. "In general, [sensitivity] is likely to increase as a state transits from relationships in what Deutsch terms a 'pluralistic security community' to those approximating

a state of war" (Grieco 1990:45). More specifically, relative gains concerns tend to be suppressed when states share a common adversary (see also Gowa 1989a) or when the power difference between them is so large that no conceivable gap in payoffs could affect their relative positions. States whose power base is generally shrinking also tend to be more sensitive to relative losses than rising hegemons. The nature of the issue even makes a difference. Cooperation in economic issue-areas is less likely to be inhibited by relative gains concerns than security cooperation (Lipson 1984). Similarly, issue-areas in which gains are less likely to be transformed into capabilities (military strength or bargaining power) will be less inhibited.

Balancing the Gains from Cooperation. This realist analysis of the cooperation problem suggests several hypotheses about the conditions under which cooperative ventures among states can occur and the *forms* they are likely to take. Defensive positionalism proposes that states will cooperate only if a *balanced (or equitable) distribution of gains* results, that is, only if the agreement "roughly maintains pre-cooperation balances of capabilities" (Grieco 1990:47). Given that a number of Pareto-efficient solutions to a collective action problem frequently exist, such a distribution of benefits does not result automatically. Thus, states regularly offer side-payments or other concessions to dissipate the distributional concerns of otherwise disadvantaged partners. Conversely, if gains are unbalanced and attempts to redress this problem are either not made or fail to take effect, ongoing cooperative ventures are likely to come under stress and even break down altogether.

To test these assertions, and the relative explanatory power of neorealism vis-à-vis neoliberalism, Grieco (1990) analyzed collective attempts to remove nontariff barriers to trade as part of the Tokyo Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) (1973–1979). He selected this case as a "crucial experiment" (Stinchcombe 1968:24–28; Eckstein 1975:113–123). Given that it fell within the economic rather than security issue-area and all the central actors were not only highly interdependent but in most cases military allies, Grieco (1990:12–14) argued that neoliberalism should have little difficulty explaining the case, whereas realism would presumably be less well equipped to do so.

The Tokyo Round produced a regime consisting of six codes covering customs-valuation methods, import-licensing procedures, technical barriers, antidumping practices, government procurement, and subsidies and countervailing measures. The effectiveness of these subagreements varied considerably during the 1980s, depending largely on the positions taken by the European Community and the United States. Grieco (1990:ch. 6) found that neither concerns about cheating nor the variables that neoliberals consider important (the number of participants, the level of development of the partners, the degree of iteration, and the size of the benefits from cooperation) could account for this variation. The pattern of success and failure among the codes, however, was consistent with realist expectations regarding relative losses (Grieco 1990:ch. 7). The most important in this connection were the subagreements concerning government procurement and technical barriers. Members of the EC feared that they might lose ground to the United States and Japan in technologically critical sectors (Grieco 1990:182–209). Thus, although the agreements were beneficial to the Europeans in absolute terms, they failed because they were *even more* beneficial to Europe's overseas competitors. The other four codes turned out to be far less relevant for Grieco's argument (see also Keck 1993:55). The results for these codes were more or less consistent with both realism and neoliberalism. Those that achieved the highest level of success generated absolute gains for all parties with no significant relative losses for any. The one agreement that failed completely (subsidies) came to be seen by the EC as not

beneficial in either relative or absolute terms.

The Role of International Institutions. The realist view of cooperation among states would seem to leave little room for international institutions to play a meaningful role. Indeed, according to Grieco (1988a:488, 494), international institutions "affect the prospects for cooperation only marginally" and are not "an independent force facilitating cooperation." Yet, Grieco (1990:233) also asserts that:

> [I]nternational institutions *do* matter for states as they attempt to cooperate. Indeed realists would argue that the problem with neoliberal institutionalism is not that it stresses the importance of institutions but that it *understates* the range of functions that institutions must perform to help states work together.

Thus, as suggested by neoliberals, institutions can be critical if informational asymmetries raise concerns about cheating—as long as collaboration will not produce unbalanced gains. Moreover, international regimes can be instrumental in directly mitigating concerns about relative gains (Grieco 1988b:614–20, 1990:234). Regimes such as the GATT, for example, provide for differential treatment of weaker partners who are less able to exploit the opportunities resulting from the regime. Regimes may also serve as institutional frameworks to facilitate side-payments to otherwise dissatisfied actors. In fact, the regular review conferences prescribed as part of many regimes allow relatively disadvantaged states to voice their concerns about the distribution of gains and to push for corrections (Grieco 1995). Likewise, formal opting-out clauses in some regimes (for example, whaling) lower exit costs and work as additional "insurance against the development of otherwise politically unacceptable gaps in jointly produced gains" (Grieco 1988b:620). Finally, institutions may even promote a *norm* of reciprocity (again the GATT is a case in point) that, if seen as effective, makes it easier for states to accept relative losses now because they expect to be compensated later (Grieco 1988b:620; see also Keohane 1986:19–24).

These additional regime functions, however, seem to suggest a need to revise the original realist tenet that "international institutions affect the prospects for cooperation only marginally." Theoretical and empirical investigations aimed at establishing how *effectively* regimes do perform these functions under varying conditions are needed. What does it take for an institution to be capable of actually fulfilling these tasks? Do the conditions under which regimes facilitate cooperation differ from those under which cooperation is likely to take place anyway? If so, why do states invest so much effort in establishing institutions in the first place?

The Implications of Realist Ideas for Regime Theory

Power-based theories of regimes—whether in the form of hegemonic-stability theory, Krasner's power-oriented research program, or Grieco's modern realist perspective—seem at first to offer clear alternatives to interest-based theories. Both hegemonic-stability theory and Krasner's theory, for example, hinge on quite different characterizations of the collective-action problem than are assumed by contractualism. In hegemonic-stability theory regimes are public goods, but for Krasner the collective-action problem is reflected in coordination games with multiple possible equilibria. Grieco's critique of neoliberalism asserts that even the neoliberal effort to adopt realist assumptions has been flawed. To focus exclusively on this aspect of the debate, however, does an injustice to the larger question that power-based theories raise: how does the exercise of power affect regime formation and maintenance, especially in the context of distributional conflicts?

In this context, Krasner's theory has at least two critical implications for regime

theory. First, the constellation of actors and interests cannot be considered a nonproblematic starting point for analysis as neoliberals have done. Power can be used not only to prevail in distributional conflicts but to determine who is allowed to play the game initially. It may even be employed to change an opponent's preference orderings. Thus, the basic unit of analysis of situation-structuralism—the distribution of interests—is not strictly prior to power politics but is, in part, a function of the distribution of capabilities.

Second, power-oriented analysis is also relevant for situations that are completely outside the purview of neoliberalism, such as zero-sum games in which one actor's gains are the other's losses (Krasner 1991:364). Even situation-structuralists do not consider such situations because they do not pose collective-action problems (which by definition pit individual against collective rationality). In zero-sum games, conflict of interest is absolute. There is no possibility of reaping joint gains through cooperation. Nonetheless, such situations can give rise to "imposed regimes" (Young 1983:100; Krasner 1993:140). An implication of power-based theories is that regimes are not intrinsically linked to interstate cooperation within mixed-motive situations; rather they are broader phenomena that require a broader theory.

Similarly, the controversy sparked by Grieco's criticism of neoliberal regime theory (Baldwin 1993b; Keck 1993; Powell 1994) has focused on the question of whether relative gains concerns diminish the likelihood of cooperation among states. Some opportunities for synthesis can be found in these critiques. For example, neoliberal Otto Keck (1993:47–53) has shown that if relative gains concerns are not pure, they do not decrease the prospects of cooperation unless "very restrictive" conditions are met: (1) that the gains from cooperation are indivisible, (2) that side-payments cannot be made, and (3) that appropriate issue-linkages are not possible. Keck's argument can be criticized for assuming that cheating is not a problem (Snidal 1993:739) and for overemphasizing the restrictiveness of these conditions. But what is much more important is the similarity between Keck's analysis and Grieco's reflections about the prerequisites for cooperation. Keck implies that institutions can facilitate cooperation through the redistribution of gains, side payments, and issue-linkage. Not surprisingly, his conclusion strongly resembles that of Grieco (1990:233): "with increasing emphasis on relative gains the need for international institutions and their potential contribution increases rather than decreases" (Keck 1993:52, 58).

In the end, continuing to focus on what divides neoliberals and realists may not be the most fruitful approach for advancing regime theory in the future. Taking states' concerns about relative gains more seriously does not preclude a positive role for international institutions. Indeed, the relative gains problem highlights possible functions of regimes that hitherto have gone unnoticed. Thus, neorealists and neoliberals can no longer be easily distinguished by the significance they attribute to international institutions. What is needed now are steps designed to build "a contextually richer theory that is able to explain international politics better than either vulgar realism or vulgar liberalism in isolation" (Snidal 1993:741).

Knowledge-Based Theories of International Regimes

Like realists, members of the third school of regime analysis, cognitivism, have been very critical of interest-based theories. But the thrust of their criticism has been concern over neoliberalism's realist heritage. From the cognitivist point of view, neoliberalism's problems can be traced directly to three of its assumptions that were derived from realism: (1) its conception of states as rational actors whose

identities, powers, and fundamental interests are prior to international society and its institutions; (2) its basically static approach to the study of international relations, which is ill-equipped to account for learning at the unit level and history at the system level; and (3) its positivist methodology, which impedes understanding of how international social norms work.

Knowledge-based theories of regimes have focused on the origins of interests as perceived by states, accentuating the role of the normative and causal beliefs of decision makers. Part of their contribution is, thus, complementary to the interest-based theories of regimes. They fill an important theoretical gap by explaining preference and interest formation. This strand of knowledge-based theorizing can be called "weak cognitivism" because it does not represent a fundamental attack on rationalist theory (neoliberalism and realism). The criticisms of other cognitivists, however, run deeper. These "strong cognitivists" argue that interest-based theories provide a truncated picture of regimes by failing to understand the nature of institutionalized practices or their repercussions on the identities of international actors. These particular cognitivists embrace an institutionalism that is far more pronounced than that of either neoliberalism or realism.

Weak Cognitivism: Ideas, Learning, and the Role of Epistemic Communities

Three assumptions form the foundation of weak cognitivism and differentiate it from neoliberalism and realism. All three respond to a question that is central to the study of regimes: where do the convergent expectations that are the bases of regimes come from (Haggard and Simmons 1987:509–513; E. Haas 1990:20–28, 164; Adler and Haas 1992:371; Jönsson 1993:219)?

The first assumption of the weak cognitivists holds that "between international structures and human volition lies interpretation. Before choices involving cooperation can be made, circumstances must be assessed and interests identified" (Adler and Haas 1992:367; see also P. Haas 1992b:2). Interpretation, in turn, depends on the body of knowledge that actors hold at a given time. Knowledge shapes the perception of reality and informs decision makers about linkages between means and ends. Without at least implicit theories, genuine choices would be impossible. As a consequence, weak cognitivists argue, it is misleading to regard actors' interests as "given." Rather, interests should be *treated analytically,* as contingent on how actors understand the natural and social world and the nature of their preferences.

The second assumption builds on the first. It refers to the importance of intersubjectively shared meanings for both regime formation and performance. As Peter Haas (1992b:29) puts it: "Before states can agree on whether and how to deal collectively with a specific problem, they must reach some consensus about the nature and the scope of the problem and also about the manner in which the problem relates to other concerns in the same and additional issue-areas." A minimum of collective understanding is a necessary condition for choosing a substantive body of rules. Otherwise, convergent expectations among independent actors in an international issue-area would be impossible and cooperation would be doomed to failure.

The third assumption points to decision makers' growing demand for scientific or other supposedly reliable information. Given complex patterns of interdependence among states and the increasingly technical nature of international issues, decision makers experience uncertainty about their interests and how to realize them (Adler and Haas 1992:369; P. Haas 1992b:14; Goldstein and Keohane 1993a:16). Technological innovations devalue traditional policy strategies, and social changes alter the landscape of international relations. State actors, therefore,

become "uncertainty reducers" (P. Haas 1992b:4) as well as power and wealth pursuers. This notion of uncertainty and its consequences, however, differs from that of interest-based theorists. Whereas contractualists see uncertainty as the lack of reliable information about the behavior and intentions of other states, weak cognitivists emphasize the inability of politicians to assess the likely consequences of their own decisions (or non-decisions). Likewise, even though the weak cognitivist notion bears a resemblance to Young's (1989b:358–362) "veil of uncertainty," he argues that uncertainty *improves* the prospects for regime formation. Weak cognitivists associate the *reduction* of uncertainty with higher levels of cooperation. In unfamiliar situations, decision makers often demand high-quality information and expert advice. As a result, those who can supply it can exert considerable influence on policy.

Ideas As Road Maps and Focal Points. Although research on the role of ideas and cognition has a long history in foreign policy analysis (Rosati 1995), for most students of regimes the cognitive revolution was only recently brought home by Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane (1993b). Their aim was to gather evidence for the need to go beyond the rationalist analysis that had taken such firm root in the study of international regimes. Analyzing a number of cases involving important historical changes, the contributors to this volume found that rationalist theories could not provide convincing explanations on their own. For example, John Ikenberry (1993) argues that the policy ideas inspired by Keynes cannot be ignored in explaining the construction of the open world economy after World War II. Although underlying power realities and fundamental economic interests affected negotiations, "the 'new thinking' of these experts transformed the way people thought of or framed the issue of postwar economic order and, as a consequence, changed the outcome" (Ikenberry 1993:59). Likewise, Robert Jackson (1993:128) points to the "fundamental shift of normative ideas" that facilitated the collapse of colonialism. "Decolonization was above all an international change of ideas about legitimate and illegitimate rule and not a change in the balance of power or the economic utilities of imperialism" (Jackson 1993:130). In sum, the case studies showed that behavior cannot be explained solely on the basis of egoistic interests and power realities without reference to ideas. They also indicated that perceived interests can change as a result of actors' changing beliefs.

For weak cognitivists, ideas are assumed to influence behavior through one of three "causal pathways" (Goldstein and Keohane 1993a:8–24). First, ideas may serve as *road maps.* Out of the universe of possible actions, decision makers select those that best fit their normative and analytic understandings. Principled beliefs help define actors' goals (preferences); causal beliefs strongly influence the choice of means to achieve these ends. Different choices under apparently similar circumstances can, thus, be explained by differences in the belief systems of actors. Second, widely shared ideas may facilitate cooperation in the absence of a unique equilibrium, serving as *focal points* that help define acceptable solutions to collective action problems. This causal pathway is similar to Young's (1989b:369) notion of the "salient solution." Third, the impact of ideas is often mediated and enhanced by international rules and norms that are created under the influence of widely shared beliefs. Once ideas have become *embodied in institutional frameworks,* they constrain public policy as long as they are not undermined by new scientific discoveries or normative change.

The last two causal pathways have particular relevance for regimes. The coordinating function of ideas helps explain the content of specific regimes. It suggests that, when there are several Pareto-optimal equilibria about which actors have divergent preferences, attempts at regime creation may be doomed to failure

unless some compelling coordinating device (idea) serves as a focal point (Garrett and Weingast 1993). The third pathway sheds light on an important implication of institutional robustness. As Goldstein and Keohane (1993a:20) observe, through the intervention of institutions "the impact of ideas may be prolonged for decades or even generations . . . [such that they] can have an influence even when no one genuinely believes in them as principled or causal statements." In short, through institutions ideas can assume a life of their own. Intriguingly, a similar proposition is advanced by some versions of hegemonic stability theory that allow for a substantial "leadership lag" to occur after the decline in hegemonic power (Krasner 1983b:356–358).

Learning Cooperation. Changes in beliefs may or may not induce behavioral change. If they do, this process can be referred to as learning (Nye 1987:378–382; E. Haas 1990:2–6; P. Haas 1993:175). Learning can take one of two forms. First, new understandings of the social and political environment can prompt decision makers to alter their strategies for achieving goals, the latter remaining basically unchanged. Alternatively, new understandings can redefine the very content of the national interest, requiring the selection of new goals and a search for more appropriate strategies to achieve them. Joseph Nye (1987:380) captures this difference by referring to "simple" and "complex" learning respectively. Ernst Haas (1990:23, 34) makes a similar distinction between "adaptation" (Nye's simple learning) and "learning" (Nye's complex learning) in relation to the policies of international organizations.

Complex learning is, of course, particularly important for cognitivists because even conventional rationalist theories note that states sometimes alter the strategies they use to achieve their interests (Nye 1987:372; Levy 1994:297). A compelling demonstration that states can redefine their interests without any shift in the distribution of power and wealth would pose a major challenge to rationalism (Smith 1987:280; P. Haas 1992b:21). Nye (1987), for example, finds instances of complex learning in the bilateral relationship among the postwar superpowers. According to his interpretation, U.S.-Soviet cooperation in such highly sensitive issue-areas as strategic arms control and nuclear non-proliferation became possible only after the United States and the Soviet Union had changed their initial beliefs about the usability of atomic weapons and the mechanics of nuclear deterrence. New information created a commonly shared *conception of national security* that rested on the paradox of mutually assured destruction and the need for efforts to minimize the danger of escalation (Smith 1987:277). This consensual knowledge transformed a sharply competitive zero-sum game into a mixed-motive game, in which both sides could gain considerably from cooperation. The new understanding led to the development of international institutions designed to solve the remaining collective action problems.

Regimes themselves also help to "lock in" and enhance the learning that prompted their creation (Nye 1987:385; Goldstein and Keohane 1993a:20–22), an example of Krasner's (1983b:361) more general notion of institutional "feed-back." As rule-conforming behavior becomes taken for granted, states can re-allocate their resources according to their changed expectations. Regimes, thus, become part of the political environment and affect the way states define their interests in the issue-area (Krasner 1983a:362–364). Of course, learning can serve to destabilize existing patterns of cooperation too (Nye 1987:379; P. Haas 1992b:30) and even undermine the foundation of regime-based cooperation altogether. But this fact only underscores the importance of knowing more about the conditions underlying evolutionary regime change and the role played by new knowledge in such processes.

Consensual Knowledge and Epistemic Communities. For knowledge or ideas to have an impact on regime formation, they must be widely shared by key policymakers (Krasner 1983c:19). Building on this basic insight, a group of scholars brought together by Peter Haas (1992c) focused on the process through which the views of specialists gain acceptance among and are used by decision makers. They argue that *epistemic communities* are crucial "channels through which new ideas circulate from societies to governments as well as from country to country" (P. Haas 1992b:27).

Epistemic communities are defined as "network[s] of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain" (P. Haas 1992b:3; see also Ruggie 1975:569; P. Haas 1989:384, 1992b:16–20; E. Haas 1990:40–46). Members of such a community share a common understanding of particular problems in their field of research *as well as* an awareness of, and a preference for, a set of technical solutions to these problems. They are not content to provide information passively, at the request of decision makers. Rather, they actively strive to bring about "better policy" by seeking access to governing institutions. Moreover, given the speed of modern communication and the relatively free flow of information internationally, these networks of specialists often operate transnationally. New findings are conveyed and discussed across national borders. As long as the members of an epistemic community can reach consensus on important issues in their field of study, they establish a relatively independent source of scientific evidence and authority. As a result, a transnationally interacting epistemic community can serve as a central vehicle for international learning.

According to Peter Haas (1992b:3), there are three conditions that determine whether scientists or other experts will have an impact on international policy coordination. First, a high degree of uncertainty must exist among policymakers. Decision makers do not always realize that they have an insufficient understanding of complex issues and causal linkages. It often takes a crisis or a shock "to overcome institutional inertia and habit to spur them to seek help from an epistemic community" (P. Haas 1992b:14; 1993:187). Second, no coherent policy advice can be given unless a high degree of consensual knowledge exists among the experts (P. Haas 1989:384, 1992b:23; Adler and Haas 1992:371). When "scientific evidence is ambiguous and the experts themselves are split into contending factions, issues have tended to be resolved less on their technical merits than on their political ones" (P. Haas 1992b:11). Third, the members of the epistemic community must gain political power (Adler and Haas 1992:374; P. Haas 1992b:27, 1993:179). In order to influence regime formation and implementation, an epistemic community must become part of the bureaucratic apparatus. Consider as an illustration the regime for protecting the Mediterranean Sea. Peter Haas (1989:398) has observed: "Persuasion did account for a small amount of the regime's broadened scope to include more sources and forms of pollution, but national compliance came from the *power* acquired by a new group of actors," that is, by the epistemic community [emphasis added].

Drawing on a number of case studies, Emanuel Adler and Haas (1992:372–385) argue that epistemic communities can influence the creation and maintenance of international regimes at four stages of the policy process. First, epistemic communities can influence the framing of issues at the *policy innovation* stage. Subsequent negotiations are then conditioned by the information initially provided by the epistemic community. This framing function has been explored in case studies on trade in services (Drake and Nicolaïdis 1992), nuclear arms control (Adler 1992), management of whaling (Peterson 1992), protection of the stratospheric ozone layer (P. Haas 1992a; Breitmeier 1996), and protection of the

Mediterranean Sea (P. Haas 1989, 1990, 1993). In situations of pronounced uncertainty, as when policymakers are largely unfamiliar with the subject, epistemic communities can even help states identify their interests by clarifying the precise nature of the stakes involved in the issue (Drake and Nicolaïdis 1992). Second, epistemic communities can be important agents for *policy diffusion.* Due to their transnational links, experts can communicate new ideas and policy innovations to their colleagues in other countries who, in turn, influence their governments. Adler (1992) has found that an American epistemic community played a key role in creating an internationally shared understanding of the dynamics of nuclear arms control that led to the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. Similarly, Thomas Risse-Kappen (1994:186) has recently pointed to a transnational network linking Western and Soviet experts supportive of common security and non-offensive defense whose ideas helped frame the reconceptualization of Soviet security interests in the late 1980s. Third, epistemic communities can even exert influence at the highly politicized stage of *policy selection* if they are able to provide integrative formulas to resolve complex negotiations (Adler and Haas 1992:383). Fourth, epistemic communities can play a key role in *regime persistence* by defending established regimes as the best-suited means to eliminate or alleviate the problems they were meant to resolve. By the same token, if an epistemic community loses its consensus, disagreements may not only result in a loss of influence but even in the collapse of the regimes they have defended (P. Haas 1993:189).

Strong Cognitivism: The Importance of International Society

Whereas *weak cognitivists* can be seen as filling theoretical lacunae in mainstream rationalistic regime theory, *strong cognitivists* have undertaken a radical critique of that theory. Although differing in their specific approaches, these scholars are united in seeing international regimes as embedded in the broader normative structures of international society. As a result, states are seen as significantly less free to ignore institutional commitments than mainstream approaches suggest. Consequently, international regimes exhibit considerably more stability, and self-interest (even broadly defined) becomes an unreliable basis for understanding regime maintenance. Better insights into regimes, these authors argue, will come from focusing on the legitimacy of normative injunctions, the role of communication in forming intersubjective meaning, and the process of identity formation. In one way or another, all of these concepts refer to the operation of "social facts" that are not only beyond the reach of individual manipulation but are necessary conditions for individuality and autonomy in international politics.

Norms as Constitutive Elements. The point of departure for strong cognitivists is their critique of rationalist assumptions about the nature of the international system. Mainstream regime analysis takes the interests and powers of state actors as the starting points for explaining rule-governed cooperation. Their world is populated by sovereign states facing numerous collective action problems, some of which they solve by creating and maintaining regimes.

Strong cognitivists favor a more "institution-centric approach" (Wendt and Duvall 1989:67), arguing that the behavior of states, like any social behavior, presupposes normative structures that must be analyzed in their own right (Ashley 1984:242–248; Wendt 1987:361–369; Dessler 1989:451–458; Behnke 1993:33). Such fundamental institutions as sovereignty, diplomacy, and international law "constitute state actors as subjects of international life in the sense that they make meaningful interaction by the latter possible" (Wendt and Duvall 1989:53). Without these rules and norms it would make no sense to speak of either illegal interven-

tion or legitimate self-defense. Indeed, the reciprocal recognition of sovereignty is a necessary precondition for issue-area specific arrangements (Dessler 1989:469; Behnke 1993). In Korea, for example, as long as the North and South were not prepared to recognize the legitimacy of the other, no sustained policy coordination could emerge despite the considerable possibility of joint gains (Behnke 1993:53–57). Thus, international norms cannot be reduced to mere devices for problem-solving (Krasner 1988:89; Wendt and Duvall 1989; Buzan 1993:350).

As "principled and shared understandings of desirable and acceptable forms of social behavior" (Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986:764), regimes have both a regulative and a constitutive dimension (see also Gehring 1994:321). As rationalists correctly observe, regimes operate as imperatives, requiring states to behave in accordance with their norms and rules, but they also help create a common social world for interpreting the meaning of behavior—a dimension that is downplayed or even ignored by rationalists. To clarify the notion of constitutive rules, strong cognitivists point to the rules of games like chess or football as an analogy. Such rules cannot be interpreted as *causing* particular moves within the play. Yet, by defining acceptable behavior and by explicating the consequences of individual moves, they enable the actors to play the game (Dessler 1989:455–458; Kratochwil 1993b:449) and provide the actors with the knowledge necessary to respond to each other's moves in a meaningful way. Thus, in analyzing security cooperation between the Soviet Union and the United States, Harald Müller (1993b:384) found that: "For the Soviets, the amount of learning [initiated by interaction within the regime context] was gigantic. Security cooperation with the United States had convinced a considerable part of the Soviet foreign policy élite and the security apparatus that their Manichaean image of the world was wrong. . . . They now could interpret hostile steps by the United States as responses to Soviet actions."

Many students of regimes who take rationalist approaches readily admit that certain overarching normative features of international life are important. Snidal (1986:45), for instance, asserts that "the international system, with its established patterns of practice and rules, is significant for defining the individual game model and for deriving conclusions from it." The understanding of regimes as constitutive, however, is problematic for rationalists because it blurs the distinction between cause and effect. Although regulative rules can be thought of as causing state behavior in a sense that is consistent with modern, empiricist philosophy of science, the constitutive dimension of regimes cannot. Rather, constitutive rules can be likened to what philosophers, following Aristotle, have traditionally called "material causes" (Dessler 1989). They do not *make* states act in a particular way; they make it *possible* for them to pursue whatever purpose they choose. Consequently, the rationalists' focus on causes, which is actually a focus on *efficient* causes, leads to a truncated picture of the "effectiveness" or, more broadly speaking, the significance of international rules. To correct this shortcoming, strong cognitivists advocate opening "the positivist epistemology to more interpretive strains, more closely attuned to the reality of regimes" (Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986:766, see also Hurrell 1993:64). They argue that scholars should not concentrate solely on the effects of regulative rules on state behavior but also study the emergence and dynamics of the common understandings that are intrinsic to international institutions.

Compliance Pull and Legitimacy. Strong cognitivists have been particularly concerned with explaining the resilience of international regimes. In search of a more adequate understanding than interest-based theories provide, a number of scholars have rediscovered the works of Louis Henkin (1968:36, 42) who advocated that states feel compelled to comply with agreed-upon norms and rules, even when they have both the incentive and the capacity to break them. At least in highly institu-

tionalized issue-areas, states respond to a "logic of appropriateness" rather than a "logic of consequentiality" (March and Olsen 1989:160–162), and norms and rules have a "*compliance pull of their own*" (Franck 1990). Among other things, then, cheating and free riding are not the critical barriers to cooperation that neoliberals suggest (Chayes and Chayes 1993:201). This is not to say that devising effective compliance mechanisms is pointless. Obligation need not always triumph over temptation. However, it does suggest that rationalist models, if taken at face value, are misleading and may even cause the disease they purport to cure.

To explain the compliance pull of norms and rules, strong cognitivists point to the embeddedness of states in international society. According to Henkin (1968:32), governments recognize their dependence on a normatively organized international system. Given that no society can exist without the generalized confidence that obligations incurred by its members will be honored (Bull 1977), nations and those who govern them have "a common interest in keeping the society running and keeping international relations orderly" (Henkin 1968:48, see also Franck 1990:37; Hurrell 1993:59). As a result, states tend to comply even with inconvenient norms and rules because acting opportunistically would risk undermining their own existence in the long run.

Not all norms and rules are equally compelling. To explain variation, strong cognitivists argue that the degree of a norm's binding force depends on how legitimate it is considered to be (Franck 1990; Hurrell 1993). According to Thomas Franck (1990:49), legitimacy is dependent on four characteristics: "determinacy," "symbolic validation," "coherence," and "adherence." Of the four, coherence is especially important. "Coherence" expresses how closely a rule is related to the "underlying rule-skein which connects disparate ad hoc arrangements into a network of rules 'governing' a community of states" (Franck 1990:181). It is the correspondence between individual rules and the underlying normative structure of international society that determines the tendency of governments to observe specific injunctions. Breaking legitimate arrangements can threaten the normative foundations of the society of states. A corollary of this "sense of obligation" is that governments are not indifferent to the rule-breaking of third parties. They care because they have a "transcendental interest" in the existence of an intact international society. Transcendental interest is a concept introduced by political theorist Otfried Höffe (1987:391) to denote those interests that are necessary in the sense that they are not a matter of choice to an actor but must be pursued and protected if the actor is to pursue any interests at all.

Their stance brings strong cognitivists into sharp opposition with realists. If states are conceptualized as strictly self-regarding units, then the system is only the unintended consequence of their interaction. Thus, according to Waltz (1979:195–199), a congruence between individual interests and the "interests of the system" is only possible under the very restrictive conditions of bipolarity.

Neoliberals point to the supposed reputational concerns of governments to explain rule-conforming behavior (Keohane 1984:99–107; Stein 1983:139). Strong cognitivists regard such reputational concerns as insufficient because they only apply under very limited conditions. Specifically, "any violation must be known; it must be known by a party whose reaction to the violations are important to the violator; and the expected cost to the violator must exceed the benefits of giving in to the conflicting temptation" (Philip Heymann, quoted in Kratochwil 1989:109). Although neoliberals may respond that regimes are created specifically to ensure that these conditions exist, the validity of the contrasting interpretations is an empirical question. Given that rules are not always complied with, the conditions under which reputational concerns take effect need further specification. Strong cognitivists face a similar problem; their "sense of obligation" will remain just as

arbitrary and problematic unless its nature and the conditions under which it occurs are further specified.

The Power of Arguments. For scholars like Friedrich Kratochwil (1989:12) and Harald Müller (1994:24–30), neoliberals place too much emphasis on strategic action in their explanations of regime effectiveness and robustness. Strategic action can be defined as the use of external incentives to control the social environment so that a rational actor is induced to respect a normative arrangement (Habermas 1987). According to both Kratochwil and Müller, the success of regimes in coordinating social behavior depends far more on communicative action, or the use of persuasive arguments. In building and maintaining regimes, parties enter into a debate in which they try to agree on the relevant features of the social situation and then advance reasons why certain behaviors should be chosen. These reasons—insofar as they are convincing—internally motivate the parties to behave in accordance with the mutually arrived at interpretations.

As neoliberal scholars themselves point out, rising levels of interdependence have devalued military power as a means of social control in international politics. Moreover, the dramatically increased complexities of international problems make it more difficult for political decision makers to assess national interests and to identify the appropriate means to further them (Young 1989b:357–359; Sebenius 1992:349). Faced with this complexity, divergent understandings of reality are inevitable. However, this diversity can make rule-governed cooperation impossible if agreed-upon norms and rules are applied inconsistently. For regimes to succeed, this diversity must be overcome through communicative action. In situations of power-inefficiency and when complex issues are at stake, persuasion tends to become the medium of policy coordination (Müller 1994:28).

This reasoning sheds new light on the "sanctioning problem" of regimes (Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986:765; Chayes and Chayes 1993:187–197). When confronted with violations of agreed-upon rules and norms, states rarely "do nothing," even if they do not retaliate. Rather, they habitually ask offenders to give reasons for their failure to live up to commitments. They, then, evaluate the reasons advanced in light of principled and shared understandings of what the regime requires. In the end, states might accept that the particular injunction is unduly hard and should not be applied *in this particular situation* (Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986:765). On other occasions, states might conclude that the rule itself needs to be reformulated (Kratochwil 1988:277). On still other occasions, they might reject the proffered justifications and engage in some sort of sanctioning. Thus, according to Kratochwil and Ruggie (1986:774), "what constitutes a breach of an obligation undertaken within a regime is not simply an 'objective description' of a fact but an intersubjective appraisal."

Indeed, from this point of view, regimes themselves are not objectively given sets of principles, norms, rules, and procedures. Rather, they are "the product of an on-going process of community self-interpretation and self-definition in response to changing context" (Neufeld 1993:55, n. 55; see also Kratochwil 1989:101). Normative arrangements become dynamic phenomena that depend on evolving international debates (Smith 1989; Gehring 1994; see also Schimmelfennig 1995).

To explain the successes and failures of such international debates, strong cognitivists emphasize two factors. First, to engage in communicative action implies that the parties accept certain basic norms of social interaction. They must recognize each other as equal, accept the principle of no-harm, and respect the binding nature of agreements based on good reasons. Second, convincing arguments cannot be built on idiosyncratic grounds. They must be based on general principles and common understandings (Kratochwil 1989:212–248) that can be used convinc-

ingly to justify one's interpretation of the nature and legitimacy of particular actions. Although such "universal principles" are not immune to self-interested manipulation, strong cognitivists maintain that they do restrict the range of arguments that can be convincingly used in international debates (Kratochwil 1989:241–243, 1993a:92; Hurrell 1993:61; Koslowski and Kratochwil 1994:225).

Though primarily concerned with the domestic side of regime-oriented debates, Müller (1993a, 1993b) has applied this reasoning in studying three security-related cases: (1) the challenges to the ABM Treaty posed by the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative, (2) the implications of the Soviet Union's early-warning radar in Krasnoyarsk for that same treaty, and (3) the challenge posed to the non-proliferation regime by West Germany's nuclear export control policy. Three of Müller's results are particularly noteworthy. First, he shows that the principles of the regimes, by virtue of their connection to both international and domestic law, were portrayed by their domestic defenders as barriers to non-compliance. Second, he shows that neither the regime defenders nor advocates of policy change denied the obligation to keep treaties in general. The public debate centered on the correct interpretation of the regimes' stipulations, not on their binding force. Finally, Müller's results suggest that breaches of particular agreements will be regarded as acceptable by the community of states if they can be justified with reference to higher shared principles. When the West German government finally decided to suspend trade agreements violating the non-proliferation regime (Müller 1993b:379), it clearly broke commitments it had formally undertaken vis-à-vis another state. However, the community of states did not criticize this breach of a treaty obligation because the nuclear non-proliferation regime was seen as more important.

Strong cognitivists are right in pointing to a growing demand for communication in international relations. Few, however, would deny that some communicative action is needed to uphold international regimes. There is a certain tension, though, between the basic function of international regimes—to stabilize mutual expectations—and the thesis that international reality is constantly renegotiated (Kratochwil 1989:101; Neufeld 1993:55, n. 59). If the latter is valid, then normative injunctions are permanently challengeable, which implies that actors cannot rely on them. Conversely, if arguments for rule-obedience are sufficiently robust to ensure that justifiable exemptions are rare, then the theoretical expectations of rationalists and strong cognitivists with regard to regime effectiveness would seem to converge.

The Power of Identity. A final argument of strong cognitivists involves the rationalist practice of treating the egoistic identities and interests of state actors as nonproblematic starting points for explaining regime formation and robustness. Alexander Wendt (1994:385–386), in particular, has suggested that actors' conceptions of self, others, and goals are in a constant process of formation. Therefore, these conceptions should be treated as dependent variables rather than pretheoretic givens.

Wendt does not deny that rationalists have a lot to say about "cooperation among egoists." However, once established, rule-governed cooperation can presumably "lead to an evolution of community" (Wendt 1994:390) in which actors at least partially identify with and respect the legitimate interests of each other. Thus, even though egoistic motivations might have played an important role in the early stages of regime-building, over time the proliferation of cooperative institutions in world politics has encouraged states to acquire more collective identities. These identities "discourage free-riding by increasing diffuse reciprocity and the willingness to bear costs without selective incentives" (Wendt 1994:386).

To illustrate this *self-stabilization hypothesis*, Wendt refers to the ongoing discussion about the future of the European security institutions. Prominent realists like Mearsheimer (1990) and Waltz (1993) warn that the post–Cold War world will propel Europe "back to a future" overshadowed by traditional balance-of-power politics. Wendt (1992a:417) does not agree:

> Even if egoistic reasons were its starting point, the process of cooperating tends to redefine those reasons by reconstituting identities and interests. . . . Changes in the distribution of power during the late twentieth century are undoubtedly a challenge to these new understandings, but it is not as if West European states have some inherent, exogenously given interest in abandoning collective security if the price is right.

In short, after decades of cooperation, West European states now form a "pluralistic security community," making it highly unlikely that the future will look like the past.

Wendt (1992a:393, 1994:384) derives his self-stabilization hypothesis from a more encompassing theoretical framework that he calls "constructivism" (see also Koslowski and Kratochwil 1994:225; Onuf 1989). In essence, constructivism focuses on the social construction of world politics and state identities (Wendt 1992a:393, 1995:71). Foreign policy decisions are presumed to depend on what the world appears to be and how individual states conceive of their role in it. These perceived meanings, in turn, are derived from overarching intersubjective structures that consist of the "shared understandings, expectations, and social knowledge embedded in international institutions" (Wendt 1994:389). Similarly, identities, which are defined as "relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about the self," are "grounded in the theories which actors collectively hold about themselves and one another and which constitute the structure of the social world" (Wendt 1992a:397, 398). These intersubjective structures enable states to calculate benefits and costs of different behavioral options and to make rational choices in light of their individual goals (Dessler 1989:454; Wendt 1992a:396).

The roles that define social identities, however, "are not played in mechanical fashion according to precise scripts . . . but are 'taken' and adapted in idiosyncratic ways by each actor" (Wendt 1992a:419). Because of this phenomenon, microbehavior can change macrostructures. Indeed, collective understandings of self and others can emerge from repeated cooperation. Thus, rule-governed cooperation initiated by egoistic actors within a state of nature can gradually lead those actors to change their beliefs about who they are. They get habitualized to cooperation and, as a result, develop more collective identities (Wendt 1994:390). The emergence of collective identities, in turn, strengthens the readiness of these actors to cooperate even if the dominant strategy of a self-interested actor would be to defect. In the end, the interplay of cooperation and identity formation can trigger a sort of "positive echo-effect" that can culminate in structural transformation given the assumption that the deeper structures of the international system and the identities acquired through interaction must be compatible in the long run (Dessler 1989:469; Wendt and Duvall 1989:64–66; Wendt 1994:391–393).

In this way, constructivism claims to account for both regime change and regime stability. But it is not entirely clear when one can expect change rather than stability, and vice versa. Therefore, it would be helpful to distinguish among social identities in the international system. These different identities could be related to different behavioral regularities, suggesting the kinds of identities, or the conditions under which various identities, would be prone to initiate regime change.

Cognitivism and International Regime Theory

Weak cognitivists have clearly had an impact on regime theory in general. Most students of regimes acknowledge the importance of consensual knowledge and ideas for international cooperation (Krasner 1983a:368; Keohane 1984:131; Goldstein and Keohane 1993a:11; Young 1994:39–42, 125). Furthermore, no fundamental objection has been raised regarding the need to integrate epistemic communities into the theoretical framework of regime analysis.

Nevertheless, more research is clearly needed to demonstrate *when and how* epistemic communities and consensual knowledge affect policy coordination (Sebenius 1992). As Young and Osherenko (1993d:237) point out, consensual knowledge is not a guarantee of international cooperation. Conversely, Peter Haas (1993) observes that knowledge need not be shared by all actors to have an impact on regime formation, if a hegemon exists in the issue-area. Moreover, in an increasingly complex world, a proliferation of competing epistemic communities, all claiming to provide scientifically sound policy advice, is likely. As Adler (1992:124) has noted, it is not necessarily scientific ideas that are selected and implemented. More often than not, it is ideas that best tie in with the interests of policymakers and conform to the constraints of domestic politics that are turned into policy. To assess the independent impact of learning and new knowledge, we must understand the factors that give a specific epistemic community the upper hand, including whether success can be traced to historically contingent factors (Adler 1992:106) or to the dynamics of knowledge evolution itself.

Strong cognitivists have attracted substantial and conflicting criticism from both rationalists and non-rationalists. Whereas the latter group of critics, sometimes referred to as "post-positivists," holds that strong cognitivists do not take their own basic insights seriously enough, the first group questions the value of those insights themselves or, at least, their relevance for international politics. Many strong cognitivists admit that, *under certain conditions*, positivist approaches can yield valuable insights into the dynamics of international cooperation (Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986:774; Kratochwil 1989:261; Wendt 1992a:423, 1994:387). These concessions to positivism, however, are seen as problematic by non-rationalist critics. Moreover, such critics point out that strong cognitivists are themselves at odds with "the main insights of interpretive social science" (Neufeld 1993:55) because they still try to *explain* international behavior. As Richard Price (1994:204) puts it:

> [T]heir interpretivist ontological convictions are wedded to a commitment to causal explanation, which leaves them with one foot in interpretivism (understanding) and the other in the legacy of positivism (explanation).

How "pure" interpretivism can avoid the pitfalls of positivism is central to "the third debate" in international relations (Lapid 1989; see also Haussmann 1991; Wendt 1991:391). Yet, leaving aside these metatheoretical quarrels, post-positivists seem to agree that: (1) intersubjective meanings are crucial for analyzing international relations, (2) social institutions matter in a far more fundamental way than rationalist assumptions lead us to believe, and (3) interpretive approaches are needed to cope with this phenomenon.

It is precisely this set of core beliefs with which the rationalist critics of strong cognitivism take issue. These critics argue that the level of institutionalization of international politics is still far too low to affect the identities and interests of states significantly (Stein 1990:26, n. 1). They believe that strong cognitivists exaggerate the autonomous impact of international institutions on state policy (see also Hollis and Smith 1990:184). Although these critics recognize that constitutive institutions, such as sovereignty, do enable state actors to play the international game, the game itself includes rule violation as well as rule compliance. The issue is not

states' interpretations of one another's actions but their calculation of when costs and benefits induce them to play the game in one way rather than the other. Indeed, domestic interests have a far greater constitutive impact on state identities than international institutions (Keohane 1989a:6). Even though most strong cognitivists would probably concede that international institutions are comparatively underdeveloped (Kratochwil 1989:68), they would still insist on the irreducible impact of the existing institutional web on state policy.

The Prospects for Synthesis

This review has shown that three schools of thought coexist in the study of international regimes. Each school focuses on a specific variable. *Neoliberals* stress *self-interest* as a motive for cooperation among states and for the creation of, and compliance with, international regimes. *Realists* emphasize that *considerations of relative power* affect the substance of international regimes and circumscribe their effectiveness and robustness. *Cognitivists* point out that both the perceptions of interests and the meanings of power capabilities are dependent on actors' *causal and social knowledge.*

The reality of paradigmatic pluralism, however, does not imply its desirability. To the extent that power, interests, and knowledge *interact* in the production of international regimes, investing intellectual resources into sharpening the differences and demonstrating a school's superiority may hamper rather than further our understanding of international institutions. Kenneth Boulding (1978), for example, argued that at any level of societal aggregation, including the international system, order results from the interplay of three social mechanisms: exchange relations, threat systems, and image integration. Given the strong resemblance among these mechanisms and the explanatory variables that guide neoliberals, realists, and cognitivists, respectively (Baldwin 1993a:15), Boulding's thesis suggests that none of these schools alone can capture all the essential dimensions of regimes. If the present school-based competition were replaced by a division of labor or an attempt at synthesis, they might well do so together.

Even if everyone agreed with the desirability of synthesis, such an inter-paradigmatic division of labor may not be feasible. There is no a priori guarantee that the specific perspectives of power-, interest-, and knowledge-based theories really add up to a coherent whole. The ontological assumptions about the nature of actors and the international system and the epistemological orientations of the three schools may simply be too disparate to permit a meaningful combination. What then, based on the elements of agreement and conflict revealed in the preceding sections, are the prospects for synthesis?

Realism and Neoliberalism: Synthesis Through Contextualization?

Realists and neoliberals have recently been engaged in an intense, at times almost bitter, dispute about which school is better equipped to analyze and explain international regimes. At the same time, contributors to this debate have always been aware of the close relationship between these two variants of *rationalist* theory. This intellectual kinship permits both realists and neoliberals to suggest that the other's theoretical propositions can, in effect, be subsumed within their own account of international politics (Grieco 1988a:503; Keohane 1989a:15; Keck 1991, 1993; Keohane and Martin 1995:41; Mearsheimer 1995:24). At heart, these claims reveal a notable common denominator. Both neoliberals and realists concede that the other side's arguments and predictions are valid *provided* that certain conditions hold. Theoretical and empirical research aimed at establishing these conditions or

contexts might not only further our understanding of international regimes but also reveal a broader zone of agreement between these two schools than has been perceived thus far (Keohane 1993b:293, 297; Snidal 1993:741).

Much of the recent debate between realists and neoliberals has centered on the significance of relative gains. There are two issues. First, what impact, if any, does relative gains-seeking have for international interaction (including cooperation) and for the nature and efficacy of international regimes? Second, when are states concerned with relative gains? With regard to the *first issue* we have seen a remarkable convergence between the views of modern realists like Grieco (1990) and neoliberals like Keck (1993). Both these scholars suggest that when states are unwilling to accept distributions of gains from cooperation that favor their partners, international regimes may still be important. Indeed, regimes may assume additional functions, for example, facilitating side payments or providing "voice opportunities" for disadvantaged states (Grieco 1995; Keohane and Martin 1995:45). Due to the competitive approach that has dominated the scholarly discussion so far, insufficient attention has been paid to this somewhat surprising convergence. Empirical research has yet to establish whether (and when) regimes may serve the purpose of helping states manage concerns about relative gains and how this function is reflected in their normative and procedural content. Yet, for the time being, this convergence can be regarded as an excellent example of "how the different arguments [provided by neoliberals and realists] work together" (Snidal 1993:741) to produce interesting new hypotheses about international institutions.

Although several of his critics have been slow to recognize it, Grieco (1988a:501, 1988b:610–613) has from the outset taken the position that concerns about relative gains vary across relationships, even though they never completely disappear. The second issue, therefore, is under what conditions concerns about relative gains are severe. Knowing these conditions might provide an important clue as to when realist or neoliberal hypotheses are in force, and, thus, how *both* theoretical perspectives might offer valid insights into the nature and efficacy of international regimes. An approach in this spirit has been suggested by Robert Powell (1991) who focuses on the *constraints* on action. Constructing a game-theoretic model that mirrors both realist and neoliberal concerns, Powell shows that under certain external conditions (for example, when the efficiency of force is high) states will act *as if* they were concerned with relative gains such that realist expectations are warranted. By contrast, other constraints induce (or permit) the sort of behavior that liberals describe: that states try to maximize their absolute gains with no apparent concern for how well others do.

In sum, the possibility of a unified but contextualized rationalist theory of international regimes seems to be emerging. Presumably, this theory will be built on a distinction between three types of contexts: (1) nonproblematic social situations, including constant sum and harmony situations, in which rationalists expect regimes to be either absent or ineffective; (2) mixed-motive situations characterized by weak concerns about relative gains (the standard case of neoliberals); and (3) mixed-motive situations characterized by strong concerns about relative gains (the standard case of realists). Future theoretical and empirical research should focus on two questions. First, what determines whether a mixed-motive situation (in terms of absolute gains) will exhibit weak or strong concerns about relative gains? Second, how does the difference in concerns about relative gains affect international regimes, including their propensity to emerge in the first place, their content, their effectiveness, and their robustness? For example, Powell (1994:338–343) argues that the main difference between realist and neoliberal accounts of regimes is found in their divergent assessments of the robustness of regimes. Based on

arguments about sunk costs and reputational concerns, neoliberals claim that institutional history matters. Realists remain skeptical. A synthetic perspective would suggest the hypothesis that regime robustness will be lower if member states' sensitivity to relative gains is higher.

Rationalism and Weak Cognitivism: Complementary Explanations?

A synthesis or fruitful division of labor should also be possible between rationalist explanations and weak cognitivism. The form of this synthesis, however, is likely to be different. Whereas power- and interest-based approaches to international regimes can be made compatible by specifying the conditions when each will be more valid, rationalistic and weakly cognitivist arguments work best together when seen as addressing subsequent links in a causal chain.

Weak cognitivist theories supplement rationalist accounts of international regimes in at least two ways. The first is straightforward, at least in principle. Whereas rationalist theories of regimes treat actors' preferences as exogenously given, cognitivists, by studying such phenomena as complex learning and normative change, illuminate precisely how actors come to choose certain *goals*. Moreover, studies of the role of epistemic communities, which supply decision makers with new policy-relevant causal knowledge, promise to yield important new insights into the origins of the options that actors perceive.

Rationalists have acknowledged the potential value of a division of labor between game theory and theories of the payoffs such as weak cognitivism advocates. Snidal (1986:42) has noted that such theories "enable game theory to be constructively and complementarily linked to other approaches to international politics—even, in some cases, to theories that may be viewed as alternatives to rational models" (see also Oye 1986:5). He also emphasizes the methodological advantages of theory-based derivations of payoffs over inductive procedures that not only yield incomplete results but are highly vulnerable to circular reasoning (Snidal 1986:40–44). A cognitivist theory of payoffs can usefully complement the game-theoretic analyses upon which the mainstream approach to regimes has drawn. Much work remains to be done, however, to realize this possibility. Moreover, the resulting mixed theories are not likely to be as neat, transparent, or well specified as the current rational-choice models (Simon 1985).

A second possible synthesis between rationalist and weak cognitivist approaches would change the sequence of causality. Rather than explaining actors' preferences and perceived options and, in turn, outcomes, ideas would *intervene* between preferences and outcomes. This approach to a rationalist-cognitivist synthesis is exemplified by Geoffrey Garrett and Barry Weingast's (1993) study of the European Community's internal market. They show that attention to institutionally constructed common belief systems or focal points (such as the principle of "mutual recognition" of national standards in the EC case) can remedy an important deficiency in the functional argument. Specifically, because of their post-hoc character, functional explanations of cooperation are ill-equipped to explain the form that cooperation takes when there are several efficient and valued solutions to a collective action problem. Although power distributions can explain outcomes in cases involving distributional conflicts, deliberately propagated ideas, used to create convergent expectations, might well explain the specific content of regimes in many others. Indeed, Garrett and Weingast (1993:186) hypothesize that:

> The lesser the distributional asymmetries between contending cooperative equilibria and the smaller the disparities in the power resources of actors, the more important will be ideational factors. Similarly, the effects of focal points will increase with the actors' uncertainty about the consequences of agreements or about relative capabili-

> ties. Thus, both power and ideas can be expected significantly to influence the resolution of multiple-equilibria problems, *but the relative explanatory power of each is likely to vary significantly with the context.* (emphasis added)

This approach to specifying the interrelationship between power, interests, and knowledge in the emergence and continuation of rule-based cooperation holds considerable promise and should be further developed.

Rationalism and Strong Cognitivism: No Synthesis but a Fruitful Dialogue?

The apparent possibility of syntheses between neoliberalism and realism and between these two rationalist approaches and weak cognitivism does not suggest that all differences between these schools are illusory. Neoliberals, realists, and cognitivists stress different variables in their respective attempts to explain international regimes. Nor does the possibility of synthesis imply that the more complex multivariate theories that could result are *necessarily* better than the component theories that currently have a certain degree of parsimony and coherence. At the same time, as we have proposed in this essay review, such a synthesis has the capability of providing students of regimes with considerably greater explanatory leverage than they command at present.

The prospects for a productive synthesis between the mainstream rationalist approaches and the strong cognitivist approach to international regimes, however, appears less bright. For one thing, the methodological tools required to study seriously the convincing force of arguments or the ways in which intersubjective knowledge can affect state identities do not yet exist—at least tools do not exist that would satisfy both the interpretivist preferences of strong cognitivists and the positivist demands of rationalists. Perhaps more important, rationalists and strong cognitivists make fundamentally different heuristic assumptions concerning the "logic" that shapes the behavior of the actors they study (Risse-Kappen 1995). Rationalists scrutinize a "system" composed of interacting utility maximizers. Constructivists illuminate a "society" forming and formed by a community of role players (Wendt and Duvall 1989).

Even if synthesis is not on the horizon, prospects for an open and fruitful scholarly dialogue between rationalists and strong cognitivists do exist. Such an interparadigmatic dialogue would, however, remain a debate between competitors, and such a competition requires a suitable arena for discussion to take place. Two such arenas exist. The first is the issue of *regime robustness.* Both rationalists and strong cognitivists agree that international regimes do not collapse as a result of, or adapt smoothly to, changes in those aspects of the external environment that prompted their creation. Their agreement breaks down, though, when it comes to explaining this robustness. Whereas rationalists point to the cost of regime failure, strong cognitivists emphasize the sense of community that presumably operates at the international level. Testing these divergent explanations will require solutions to numerous problems of research design and operationalization. But given the importance of this issue for the study of international regimes, the investment in such methodological tools seems justified.

At least two research strategies suggest themselves. The first is to look directly at actual decision-making processes. When the structural coordinates of a regime change and compliance becomes more inconvenient, what considerations inform the choices of governments? Do they consciously trade off long-term gains against short-term sacrifices? Conversely, does the range of options that actors consider progressively diminish during the life cycle of a given regime, as we would expect if socialization occurs? Can we find evidence that communicative action and argu-

mentation alter the collective understanding of the situation at hand? Given the obvious methodological uncertainties of this strategy, indirect approaches would also be appropriate. For example, if the resilience of international institutions is treated as a variable, it should be possible to derive noncongruent hypotheses, based on rationalist explanations and strong cognitivism respectively, about the determinants of regime robustness. Comparative tests based upon a carefully selected set of cases could, then, help us assess the relative explanatory power of the two accounts (Hasenclever, Mayer, and Rittberger 1996).

The second arena for fruitfully comparing the explanatory validity of rationalist and strong cognitivist approaches lies in the *impact of domestic factors on international cooperation* in regimes. Such studies would also fill a frequently acknowledged and potentially significant gap in existing regime theory (Haggard and Simmons 1987; Junne 1990; Milner 1992). Thus far both rationalists and cognitivists have been rather silent on the role of domestic factors. Strong cognitivists, however, argue that states' interests and identities are essentially the products of international interaction (Wendt 1992a:395, 425, 1992b:183, 1994:391); they should *expect* domestic factors to matter little. By contrast, some situation-structuralists have emphasized the variability of state preferences, suggesting that at least part of this variation is a result of unit-level structural factors. Similarly, neoliberals argue that regimes do their work and are maintained through the reciprocal strategies (such as tit-for-tat) that states employ within them. The ease and the effectiveness with which states implement these strategies are likely to be influenced by state attributes (Lipson 1984; Oye 1986; Zürn 1993a). If domestic variables are shown to exert a major influence on state behavior, it would be a fundamental challenge to the strong cognitivist position (Wendt 1992a:425, 1994:387). Whatever the specific outcome of these explorations, the dialogue between rationalist and strongly cognitivist approaches has the potential of providing the impetus for a significant extension of regime theory.

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