

International Regimes and Systemic Stability in International Relations

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ABSTRACT: *Considering the limitations of the various approaches for explaining a progressively complex and interdependent world, and the urgent necessity to ensure stability in the contemporary international relations, a search for new models is in the increase, one of which is international Regimes; governance without government, implying obligations without hierarchical norms and rule setting process but voluntary agreements to play by a set of rules which are binding because they create convergence expectations and governed behaviour. The aim of this research therefore is to establish the relationship between international regimes and systemic stability in international relations. The study adopted the Survey research design. The main instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The Spearman rank order correlation coefficient was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that, there is a significant relationship between International regimes and the making of substantive agreements in world politics, and also that there is a significant relationship between International Regimes and social institutions which regulate conflict thereby ensuring systemic stability in international relations. The study recommends that International regimes constitute an increasingly significant element in ensuring systemic stability in international relations, and therefore, remains an important component of envisioned world governance without a world state that makes it easier for the attainment of world peace.*

KEYWORDS: international, regimes, systemic stability, international relations

INTRODUCTION

...The similar forces of autonomously calculated self-interest that lie at the top of the anarchic international system also lay the basis for international regimes as a form of international order. The similar forces that lead individuals to join themselves together to escape the state of nature also lead states to organize their actions even to cooperate with one another... there are times when rational self-centered scheming leads actors to abandon sovereign decision making in favour of combined decision making (Stein, 1983).

In the pursuit of systemic stability in international relations, many postulations have been proposed. One of such postulations is international regimes, implying a prevailing social order, pattern or the set of rules, both formal, and informal that regulates the operation of government and its interactions with the economy and society. A regime can mean a particular state of affairs where a particular physical phenomenon or boundary condition is significant, such as the super fluid regime or the steady state regime.

Regimes are circles of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision making processes around which actors expectations converge in a certain issue area (Krasner, 1983). This exposition covers human interactions ranging from both formal and informal organizations. Note that a regime need not necessarily be composed of states or imply anything about particular government to which it relates. It is the relationship between the state, society, the market and global insertion where the use concerns international regulatory agencies. International regimes operate distinct from the control of national government and have more powers over a greater range than postal or telecommunication agreement, among others and constraint national governments. They therefore imply forms of institutionalized international collaboration distinct from government treaties, or international organizations (Faupel, 1984).

To ensure stability in the contemporary international system, a heterogeneous composition of several coexisting components, one of which is international governance without government implying obligations without hierarchical norms and rule setting process but voluntary agreements to play by a set of rules which are binding because they create convergence expectations and governed behaviour.

Regimes facilitate cooperation by establishing standards of behaviour which signals to all other members that individual states are in fact cooperating (Ebaye, 2012). When states expect each other to cooperate, the probability of sustaining systemic stability in international relations is assured.

The aim of this research therefore is to establish the relationship between international regimes and systemic stability in international relations.

Statement of the Problem

As the state centric realist approach and other models to the study of international relations seems too limited for explaining a progressively complex and interdependent world, the necessity for a search for new ways to ensure international stability is in the increase.

Anarchy in the international system does not involve continual chaos, as cooperative international engagements do exist. Sovereign states have a rational incentive to improve processes for making joint decisions when confronting challenges of common interest or common aversions.

The key idea is that conflict inclines to be pervasive in international relations and that international regimes might be conceive of as social institutions which control conflict between states by constraining their behaviour through the observation of norms and rules in their dealing with disputed objects. This is a clear case of governance without government, a governmental body of an incipient world minimal state.

THEORETICAL POSTULATIONS

The basic approaches to regime theory include the dominant liberal-derived interest based approach, the realist critique of interest based approaches and the knowledge based approaches that come from the cognitivist school of thought (Hasenclever *et al.*, 1997). While the first two are rationalist approaches, the third is sociological. Although the realist approach dominates the field of international relations, as regime theory is by definition specifically a theory that explains international cooperation, it is a traditionally liberal concept. The liberal school of thought of regime theory opined that collaboration in anarchy is possible without a hegemon because there exists a conjunction of expectations (Ebaye, 2009).

Regime theory is a theory within the international relations resulting from the liberal tradition that opined that international institutions influence the activities of states or other international players. It suggests that cooperation is possible in the anarchic system of states, indeed international regimes are by description, instances of international cooperation. Regime theorists opined that there is cooperation despite anarchy. Frequently, they cite human rights, cooperation in trade and collective security, among other matters and that all these cases of cooperation are regimes.

Realism in the context of international relations encompasses a variety of theories and approaches, all of which share a belief that states are primarily motivated by the desire for military and economic power or security rather than ideals of ethics. They opined that the international system is anarchic and that there is no authority exceeding states capable of regulating their connections. States must arrive at relations with other states on their own, rather than being dictated to them by some higher controlling entity. That is, no exact authoritative world government exists. Realism therefore foretells that conflict should be the model in international relations.

According to Robert Keohane, international regimes facilitate the probability of cooperation by providing necessary information about the behaviour of others through monitoring the behaviour

of members and reporting on compliance. Thus prescribing sanctions and thereby reducing the incentive to covertly defect (Koehane, 1984). World politics lack authoritative governmental institutions and is characterized by pervasive uncertainty. In this regards, regimes simplify the making of mutual beneficial arrangements among governments, so that the structural situation of anarchy does not generate to the Hobbesian state of nature. International regimes create the expectation of cooperation among members by building iteration and the belief that collaboration will continue for the predictable future, thereby increasing the essentiality of reputation and allow for the employment of complex strategies such as the need for political regulations beyond the nation state; governance without government, in order to avoid undesirable outcomes in international relations.

Axelrod sees the single shot exploitation as the behaviour whereby states avoided 'tit for tat' (1984). In the prisoners dilemma, actions are based on the presupposition that present actions have future consequences and that it is therefore, in the interest of states to cooperate in the present, because, in the future, other states will defect on them (tit-for-tat strategy). Thus the theory assumes that states are concerned with absolute gains or advantages over others. In contrast, neorealists argue that states are concerned with relative gains or advantages they gain versus the advantages of other states in the anarchic system. The realists such as Joseph Greico (1990) suggest power-based theories of regimes utilizing hegemonic stability theory. Though, occasionally regimes theory functions as a counterweight to the hegemonic stability theory, realists equally use it within regime theory itself to describe how regimes change. When used in this way, realists argue that the presence of a strong hegemon is what makes for a successful regime. Regimes have no independent power over states, particularly great powers. As such, regimes are simply intervening variables between the real independent variable (power) and the observed outcome (cooperation). For example, Susan Strange argues that the post-second world war international organizations such as the World Bank, GATT, and the IMF are simply instruments of American grand strategy (Krasner, 1983). In contrast to the rationalist approaches above, cognitivists critique the rationalist theories on the grounds that liberalists and realists both use flawed assumptions such as, that nation-states are always and continually rational actors, that interests remain stagnant, that different clarifications of interests and power are not possible. The cognitivists further opined that even when rationalist theories employ iterated game theories where future outcome affect present decisions, they ignore a key implication of such iteration learning. They use a post-positive methodology which believe that social institutions or actors cannot be separated from their surrounding sociopolitical context for analytical purposes. The cognitivist approach then, is sociological or post-positive instead of rationalist. For the cognitivists, it is not only interests or power that matters but perceptions and environment as well.

While some have related the concept of regime to routinised and institutionalized transactions between and among states, his definition remains rather broad and lacked the issue area orientation of Krasner. This lack of a definite conceptualization was brought to bare in his claim that the

concert of Europe practicing balance of power policies could be perceived as an international regime and that the détente of the 1970s could have developed into international regime if the USSR had understood or was keen to comply with the rules of the game. Regimes must be understood as something more than temporary arrangements that change with every slight of power or interests. It is the infusion of behaviour with values and norms that distinct regime governed concerns in the international system from the conventional issues steered mainly by narrow calculations of interest. The concept of regimes suggests not only norms and expectations that simplify cooperation, but a practice of cooperation that is more than the following of short-range self-interest (Jervis, 1983).

Other scholars also opined that international regimes can offer incentives to cooperate and deterrent to effect by changing the pay-off structure of the regime (Oye, 1986). By institutionalizing cooperation, regimes can reduce the transaction costs of future agreements. By decreasing the cost of getting an agreement, regimes upsurge the likelihood of future cooperation. As earlier stated, Grieco (1990) had maintained that international politics presently exhibit behavioural patterns which describe the operation of competing ordering principles, including governance by shared self-regulation.

International regimes can be approached in terms of the concept of imposed order. Keohane's Hegemonic theory is adopted here to account for regime formation, the theory of hegemonic stability, enforced orders (compulsion, e.g. colonialism) differ from spontaneous orders (e.g. League of nations) in the sense that they are nurtured deliberately by dominant powers or consortia of overriding actors. In short, imposed orders are deliberately established by dominant actors which succeed in getting others to conform to the requirements of these orders through some combination of coercion, compulsion and the manipulation of incentives. However, overt hegemony happens when the dominant actor willingly and explicitly articulates institutional arrangements and forces subordinate actors to obey them, e.g. Colonialism. On the other hand, de facto imposition happens when the prevailing actor is able to encourage institutional arrangements favourable to itself via several forms of leadership and the influence of incentives, e.g. Nigerian activities in the formation of ECOMOG.

The cognitivist has challenged the dominance of the power based and the interest based approaches to regime formation, persistence and demise. They criticize the realists and utilitarian for not taking into account the pervasive ambiguity of reality and consequently lay emphasis on the factors such as perception, knowledge and ideology (Haggard and Simmon, 1987). Jonsson responded to this by attempting to explain that contemporary cognitive theory depicting man as an intuitive scientist, who uses various heuristic devices to make sense of the complex signals emanating from his environment, is capable of guiding empirical research on international cooperation and regimes (1993). Regime analysis has been too state-centric, ignoring the influence of local politics on both the creation and the protection of international regimes. To get hold of the local forces of regime

formation, we must first institute the characteristic of regime conducive foreign policy. Only then can we study the domestic variables affecting the probability that such a foreign policy will actually be pursued (Zurn, 1993).

A good defence of contextualizing a theory of regime formation is the one by Krasner that human rights issues do not meet the conditions for an application of liberal cooperation theory because they are not instances of market failures (1993). An attempt to understand the factors that determine specific properties of regimes with regard to their content and substances, the actors related attributes of a regime such as its scope and its strength which has to do with the overall compliance with regime rules must be analysed. In order to understand why compliance mechanisms and monitoring provisions function well in some regimes and not in others, regime effectiveness is exerted by factors such as the content of norms and rules of the regimes.

Statement of Hypotheses

The hypotheses upon which this research is premised are cast in the null forms:

Hypothesis 1:

Ho: There is no significant relationship between International regimes and the making of substantive agreements in world politics.

Hi: There is significant relationship between International regimes and the making of substantive agreements in world politics.

Hypothesis 2:

Ho: There is no significant relationship between international regimes and social institutions which regulate conflict to ensure systemic stability in international relations.

Hi: There is significant relationship between international regimes and social institutions which regulate conflict to ensure systemic stability in international relations.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the Survey research design. The survey design allows information to be gathered from a sample of people or organizations by the use of questionnaire. The main source of data for this study was primary data. The main instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The Spearman rank order correlation coefficient was used in testing the hypotheses formulated for the study. Each of the hypotheses was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Hypothesis 1

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between International regimes and the making of substantive agreements in world politics.

Table 1: Correlation Analysis showing the Relationship between International regimes and the making of substantive agreements in world politics.

		Correlations		
Spearman's Rho	International regimes		International regimes	Making of substantive agreements
		Correlation coefficient	1.000	.805**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	366	366	
	Making of substantive agreements	Pearson correlation	.805**	1.000
		Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.
N		366	366	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Based on result on table 1 above, the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.805$) shows that the relationship between international regimes and the making of substantive agreements in world politics is strong and positive. The significant value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) reveals a significant relationship. Based on that, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there is a significant strong relationship between International regimes and the making of substantive agreements in world politics.

Hypothesis 2

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between international regimes and social institutions which regulate conflict to ensure systemic stability in international relations.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis showing the Relationship between International Regimes and Social Institutions Which Regulate Conflict.

		Correlations		
Spearman's Rho	International Regimes		IR	Social Institutions
		Correlation coefficient	1.000	.489**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	304	304	
	Social Institutions	Pearson correlation	.489**	1.000
		Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.
N		304	304	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Based on result on Table 2 above, the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.489$) shows that the relationship between International Regimes and Social Institutions is strong and positive. The significant value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) reveals a significant relationship. Based on that, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there is a significant and positive relationship between IR and social institutions which regulate conflict thereby ensuring systemic stability in international relations.

In the international system, binding decisions entered into through highly institutionalized, rule-oriented processes are limited and such decisions do not constitute the essence of international regimes. Regimes are like contracts, when these include actors with long-term objectives who seek to structure their connection in a stable and mutually advantageous ways. A substantial role of these arrangements is the instituting of a stable mutual expectation about others' forms of behavior and to advance working relationships that will allow the parties to adopt their practices to new situations (Lowry, 1979). While international organizations represent purposive entities, international regimes are sets of norms and rules spelling out the range of admissible behaviour of different kinds of actors pertaining to particular sets of issues in international relations, they are issue area specific.

Collective action towards ensuring systemic stability is possible among otherwise independent actors even when they are motivated by the pursuit of self-interest. Then, if relations by collective self-regulation are realistic without reliance to the states' ultimate monopoly of force, one can also expect this to happen in the wider international system. A major part of international political relations has become the object of collective self-regulation involving voluntary participation by states to achieve joint gains or to avoid joint losses in conflictual social situations (Ebaye, 2018). System stability need not be the result of a spontaneous solidarity dispersed competition, or hierarchical control, it can also result from an organized concerted association (Streeck and Schmitter, 1985). This is a clear case of governance without government, a governmental body of an incipient world minimal state.

A better understanding of regime effects can be made by turning to individual regime and seeking to ascertain their effect. Some of the penalties of regimes include change in actor's cognitions of issues of beliefs, change in actor's abilities, from goal attainment to achievement of efficacy of distributive justice (Rittberger, 1993). It seems safe to conclude that regimes effects do not depend only on regime content but on the strength of the regime as well. When actors constantly disregard regime prescriptions, the regime cannot be expected to have great effect, whereas, reasonable effect on a given variable such as goal attainment are possible in the case of high degree of rule compliance.

Suffice it to opine that with international regimes, actors will have the motivations to coordinate their behaviours, indirectly or directly, in order to achieve bigger collective benefits without decreasing the utility of any unit and thereby ensuring systemic stability in international relations.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

To understand the role of international regimes in ensuring systemic stability in international relations, one may choose what could be labeled a microscopic perspective on their object in attempt to understand why international regimes arises in certain issue areas and not in others. One

may also have the option of adopting a macroscopic perspective, where all the international regimes within the international system are made the depended variables of research. This ambiguity is not restricted to regime formation and demise but also affect regime consequences. However, one technique of accounting for regimes effectiveness is by clarifying regime content in terms of the priorities of particular actors as could be understood in Krasner's (1993) proposition that human rights regimes reflect the preference and values of the most powerful states. Interest in regime substance is not aroused by just any differences among regimes but by the variation in particular scope of this rules.

The reason is that hypothesis tracing institutional features to some actor's preferences, the precise nature of which is often concealed from the contemporary observer have only a very moderate predictive value and thus are by no means optimal. On the other hand, hypothesis seeking to account for differences in particular properties of regimes include the contractualist explanation of the principle of institutional membership in terms of the function the regime is to serve whether coordination, collaboration, or cartelization. Thus, the variables such as influence of power, number of actors, and existence of an epistemic community influences the style of institutional learning that conquers in a regime, its scope and the stringency of its rules. Regime variations is accounted for by many institutional variables such as geographic scope, status of NGOs, the revenue base, form of participation of members in the regimes decision making procedures and the range of issues covered by the regime. However, the impact of regimes in ensuring systemic stability in international relations is best demonstrated at the unit level of analysis with a focus on situations in which compliance with regime rules is inconvenient for government. (Keohane, 1993, Hass, 1990, Hurrel, 1993).

International regimes constitute an increasingly significant element in ensuring systemic stability in international relations, and therefore, remains an important component of envisioned world governance without a world state that makes it easier for the attainment of world peace.

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