

International Organizations and Institutions

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International organizations (IOs) and institutions (IIs) have become an increasingly common phenomenon of international life. The proliferation of IOs, the growth in treaty arrangements among states, and the deepening of regional integration efforts in Europe and in other parts of the world all represent formal expressions of the extent to which international politics has become more institutionalized over time (MacKenzie 2010; Reinalda 2009; Green 2008).

The scholarship on IOs and IIs has burgeoned in response. In the past decade, theories devoted to understanding why these phenomena exist, how they function, and what effects they have on world politics and other outcomes of concern have become increasingly refined. The methods employed in empirical work have also become more sophisticated. The purpose of this chapter is to draw together this divergent literature, to offer observations on the development of its various theoretical strands, and to examine progress on the empirical front. We predict that a broad range of theoretical traditions – realist, rational functionalist, constructivist – will exist alongside and in dialogue with one

another for many years to come (Neumann and Sending 2010). We offer some suggestions on research strategies that might contribute to a better empirical base from which to judge theoretical claims.

The chapter proceeds as follows. The first section provides a brief intellectual history of modern research on IIs and IOs from the post–World War II years to the “regimes movement” of the 1980s, and defines terms. We distinguish international *organizations*, understood as entities, from international *institutions*, understood as rules. The second section sketches three general clusters of theorizing and characterizes how each views the questions of organizational and institutional creation, decisions about membership and design, change and evolution, and institutional and organizational effects. We do not offer these approaches as either exhaustive or mutually exclusive, but rather as representative, semipermeable frameworks that share certain assumptions and diverge elsewhere. Increasingly, a number of scholars straddle or draw selectively from more than one approach.

The third section is devoted to an examination of the empirical literature on the effects

of IIs and IOs. Empirical research has developed significantly over the past decade as scholars have turned from the question of why such arrangements exist to whether and how they significantly impact behavior and outcomes. We examine these questions with respect to international cooperation, rule compliance, and distributional outcomes. We note, too, the growing number of studies that have looked for broader effects associated with IIs and IOs, some of which have been undesired and even unanticipated.

The final section delineates some recent developments and directions for future research. As IOs and IIs have increased in number and complexity, research has turned to the question of how to multiple entities and layers of rules relate to one another, as well as how they accommodate and sometimes even privilege particular actors at the domestic and international levels.

BACKGROUND AND DEFINITIONS

Background

The term *international institution* has been used over the course of the last few decades to refer to a broad range of phenomena. In the early postwar years, these words almost always referred to formal IOs, usually to organs or branches of the United Nations system. This is hardly surprising. Such organizations were the most ‘studiable’ (if not necessarily the most crucial) manifestations of what was ‘new’ about postwar international relations (see Martin and Simmons 1998). The postwar research was largely descriptive and focused almost exclusively on formal international legal agreements, such as the Charter of the United Nations, Security Council resolutions and treaties relating to trade and alliances. A divide seemed to have opened up between students of international relations – who were tremendously influenced by realists such as Morgenthau – and scholars of international

law and organizations who made little explicit effort to link their analyses to theories of state behavior (see the chapter by Simmons in this volume).

The best of the early work in this genre looked at the interplay between formal IOs, rules and norms, domestic politics, and governmental decision making – themes we would recognize today as being near the cutting edge of international institutional research. However, the initial effect of the behavioral revolution on studies of IOs and IIs was to further remove their study from the central problems of world politics, especially during the Cold War. The most clearly identifiable research program in this respect was that devoted to voting patterns and office seeking in the UN General Assembly (Alker and Russett 1965; Keohane 1966). This literature chose to focus on difficult-to-interpret behavior (what did these coalitions signify, anyway?) and imported methods uncritically from American studies of legislative behavior. Studies of the UN that focused on bureaucratic politics with links to transnational actors made more progress, since they opened up a research program that would ultimately lead to more systematic reflection on nongovernmental actors (Keohane and Nye 1977; Cox and Jacobson 1973).

The centrality of formal IOs and formal international legal agreements to the study of international relations has waxed and waned. The major international conflict for a rising generation of scholars – the Vietnam War – raged beyond the formal declarations of the United Nations. Two decades of predictable monetary relations under the purview of the IMF were shattered by a unilateral decision of the United States in 1971 to close the gold window and later to float the dollar. OPEC was hardly constrained by long-standing legal constraints or multilateral forums when it quadrupled oil prices in the 1970s. It became apparent that much of the earlier focus on formal structures and multilateral treaty-based agreements, especially the UN, had been overdrawn (Strange 1978).

The events of the 1970s encouraged thoughtful scholars to theorize international governance more broadly. The study of ‘international regimes,’ defined as rules, norms, principles, and procedures that focus expectations regarding international behavior (Krasner 1983) demoted the study of IOs as actors and began instead to focus on rules or even ‘understandings’ thought to influence governmental behavior. Research in this vein defined regimes for specific issue-areas, for which this approach has been criticized (Hurrell 1993; Kingsbury 1998), and viewed regimes as focal points around which actors’ expectations converge. Principles and norms provide the normative framework for regimes, while rules and decision-making procedures provide more specific injunctions for appropriate behavior.¹

The definition led to some debates that were of questionable utility, such as what exactly counted as a “norm” or a “rule.” The consensus definition of “regime” offered by Krasner and his colleagues was roundly criticized as imprecise and even tendentious (Strange 1982; De Senarclens 1993). But overall, the regimes concept was an important effort to make the study of international institutions (very broadly understood) more relevant to international politics.

Definitions

The regimes literature engendered such definitional confusion that scholars in the 1990s sought a simpler conception as well as a new label. The word “institution” has now largely replaced “regime” in the scholarly IR literature. Though a range of usages exists, most scholars have come to regard “international institutions” as *sets of rules* meant to govern international behavior. Rules, in turn, are often conceived as statements that forbid, require, or permit particular kinds of actions (Ostrom 1990). John Mearsheimer (ironically a neorealist who doesn’t believe that institutions are effective) provides a useful definition of institutions as ‘sets of rules that

stipulate the ways in which states should cooperate and compete with each other’ (Mearsheimer 1994–95).

This definition has several advantages. First, it eliminates the moving parts that lent so much confusion to regimes analysis. Underlying principles, while perhaps of analytical interest, are not included in the definition of an institution itself. Rules and decision-making procedures, referring respectively to substance and process, are both simply ‘rules’ in this conception. This definition allows for the analysis of both formal and informal sets of rules, although the difficulty of operationalizing informal rules is unavoidable.

A second advantage of this definition is that it separates the definition of an institution from behavioral outcomes that ought to be explained. Regularized patterns of behavior – frequently observed in international relations for reasons that have nothing to do with rules – are excluded. The narrow definition strips institutions from posited effects and allows us to ask whether rules influence behavior. Contrast this approach with other well-accepted definitions. Robert Keohane (1989) defines institutions as ‘persistent and connected sets of rules (formal and informal) that prescribe behavioral roles, constrain activity, and shape expectations’, which makes it impossible to test for the impact of institutions on activities and expectations. Similarly, Volker Rittberger has argued that an arrangement should only be considered a regime if the actors are persistently guided by its norms and rules (Rittberger and Zürn 1990), making inquiry into the effects of regimes on behavior tautological. While it may be problematic in any given case to tell whether particular patterns are rule-driven, such a project should be the subject of empirical research and not the result of an overly generous definition.

Finally, this definition is relatively free from a particular theoretical perspective. There are no qualifying criteria about the social construction of rules, nor about whether rules are explicit or implicit, nor their about

efficiency-enhancing characteristics.² This definition probably downplays but need not exclude “constitutive rules” that have been central to constructivist theories (Ruggie 1998). It is clearly consistent, however, with the “regulative rules” that dominate empirical constructivist research (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). This definition thus allows theorists writing from a range of perspectives to devise their own conditional statements as theoretically driven hypotheses. For example, it should be possible to test claims to the effect that rules are most effective when actors share intersubjective interpretations of what the rule requires, or that rules influence behavior if they lead to improved outcomes for governments. It therefore allows for the systematic evaluation of a broad range of theoretical claims using a single definition of institutions.³

While many find it convenient to use the word “institution” to refer to both rules and organizations, for purposes of this essay we make a distinction between the two. International organizations are associations of actors, typically states.⁴ IOs have membership criteria, and membership may entail privileges (as well as costs). While a state may unilaterally decide to follow a set of rules – the United States, for example, can decide to abide by the Law of the Sea without any other state’s permission – a state cannot typically unilaterally decide to join an IO; they have to be admitted. Some organizations, such as the United Nations General Assembly, may be little more than forums for state actors to deliberate, debate, or to share information. More ambitiously, IOs constitute “corporate actors” that take positions in the name of their membership. Many, such as the World Bank and the IMF, rely on more or less structured bureaucracies to implement their decisions; these bureaucrats themselves have or may develop interests independent of the state membership (Oestreich 2007). Some go as far as to speak of international organizations as exercising “sovereign” powers (Sarooshi 2005). When we speak of international organizations, then, we are often

dealing with principal-agent issues (Vaubel et al. 2007 Vauble 2006) as well as questions relating to the organizational culture of the entity (Barnett and Coleman 2005). To be sure, IOs are usually based on rules (procedural and normative), and their staffs often participate in the creation, implementation, and interpretation of substantive rules (Alvarez 2005). But it is analytically important to distinguish rules from forums and especially corporate or bureaucratic actors. After all, some institutions, such as extradition agreements, may not have organizations associated with them at all; and some IOs, such as the UN, may embody multiple institutions understood as rules.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO IOS AND IIS

Prelude: Realist Schools of Thought

Theories of IIs and IOs have had to contend with the dominant paradigm in international relations from at least the 1930s to the 1980s: realism. Virtually all realists see power exerting the true influence behind the façade of these structures. Hans Morgenthau attributed apparently rule-consistent behavior either to convergent interests or prevailing power relations, arguing that governments ‘are always anxious to shake off the restraining influence that international law might have upon their foreign policies, to use international law instead for the promotion of their national interests’ (Morgenthau 1985). For traditional realists, IIs and IOs are epiphenomenal to state power and interests (Carr 1964).

Neorealists’ role in institutional analysis in the 1980s and 1990s was been that of forceful critic. On the logical side, Joseph Grieco (1988) and John Mearsheimer (1994–95) argue that relative-gains concerns prevent states from intensive cooperation: since the benefits of cooperation can be translated into military advantages, concerns about the distribution of the gains impede substantial

sustained cooperation (but see Snidal 1991; Powell 1991). Joanne Gowa uses this logic to argue that allies are much more likely to trade during periods of bipolarity than during periods of multipolarity, when there are greater uncertainties about friends and foes (Gowa 1994). Lloyd Gruber's work is a realist caution about assuming international institutions provide joint gains. Powerful states, in his view, often have the ability to present others with a *fait accompli* to which they are forced to adjust, sometimes making them worse off than they were before the agreement was made (Gruber 2000). And, of course, realists are the first to note that formal international organizations are ultimately either dominated by the most powerful states, or are designed to be irrelevant to international affairs (Mearsheimer 1994–95). Downs, Rocke, and Barsoom (1996) embellish a familiar realist theme in their claim that *deep* cooperation – anything other than superficial policy adjustments about which states care little – requires enforcement.

The strength of realist theorizing has been its insistence that international institutions are rooted in the interaction of power and national interest in the international system. A plethora of recent research with clever research designs has recently presented a strong reminder of the exercise of power behind IOs and IIs (Stone 2011; Foot et al. 2003). One branch of empirical research explores the extent to which powerful states simply buy off the cooperation of smaller ones in international organizations. Several new studies document the extent to which lending by international financial institutions reflect the geopolitical interests of the major powers, and the United States in particular (Reynaud and Vauday 2009; Stone 2004). Several scholars acknowledge power relations in IOs by modeling and coming up with monetary estimates of aid or concessionary financing funneled to countries by powerful countries. Kaja and Werkman estimate that developing countries that sit on the board of the World Bank scoop up an additional \$60 million in “bonus” loans from that institution

(Kaja and Werker 2010), while Kuziemko and Werker find that a country that rotates onto the UN Security Council can expect a cool 59% increase in bilateral aid from the United States (Kuziemko and Werker 2006).

A new breed of realist is now also exploring the extent to which states try to use international organizations to achieve their security objectives. Of course, this has always been the purpose of military alliances. Call them “soft realists”; these scholars analyze how states use IOs to engage in “institutionalized balancing” behavior, by which is meant the use of pressures and threats in multilateral institutions for the purpose of securing their security interests (He 2008). The world's most powerful countries – working through the G-8 – increasingly co-opt international organizations to achieve their preferred outcomes over debt relief and terrorist financing (Gstöhl 2007). This New Realism sees power and interest at work in a broad range of ostensibly “cooperative” multilateral institutions.

This basic insight cannot be neglected by any theoretical approach that purports to explain international politics. It does pose one important puzzle, however: if governments are not likely to be constrained by the rules to which they agree, why do they spend time and other resources negotiating them in the first place? If IOs and IIs are little more than a power play, why not bribe and threaten the old-fashioned way? Why pay a nickel for a Security Council vote? Why work through multilateral institutions at all?

Rational Functionalism

Rational functionalism developed in the early 1980s as one response to these kinds of puzzles. By the mid-1980s, explanations of international regimes became intertwined with explanations of international cooperation more generally. The work of Robert Keohane (1984) drew from functionalist approaches that emphasized the efficiency reasons for agreements among regime

participants. This research sought to show that IOs and IIs provided a way for states to overcome problems of collective action, high transactions costs, and information deficits or asymmetries. This approach has produced a number of insights, which we will discuss and extend below. Furthermore, the strength of this approach has largely been its ability to explain the creation and maintenance of IOs and IIs. It has been weaker in delineating their effects on state behavior, an issue to which we turn in the next section.

This rational/functionalist research agenda originated with Keohane's *After Hegemony* and Krasner's edited volume on *International Regimes* cited above. Their work was informed by a fundamentally important insight: individually rational action by states could impede mutually beneficial cooperation. Institutions would be effective to the degree that they allowed states to avoid short-term temptations to renege, thus realizing available mutual benefits. In particular, institutions could help to focus expectations on a cooperative solution, reduce transaction costs, and provide a greater degree of transparency. Reputational concerns and the prospect of repeat interactions were supposed to render cooperative rules effective. Recent applications of this basic functionalist logic have been applied in issues ranging from the settlement of territorial disputes (Simmons 2005) to international cooperation with respect to freshwater resources (Dombrowsky 2007). In short, institutions could be explained as a solution to the problem of international collective action, providing a response to the puzzle posed by realism.

Once a basic functionalist logic was in place, researchers began to refine their conceptions of the strategic conditions that give rise to cooperative arrangements. Some authors, recognizing that the prisoners' dilemma (PD) was only one type of collective-action problem, drew a distinction between collaboration and coordination problems (Snidal 1985; Stein 1983; Martin 1992b). While collaboration problems are exemplified by the PD, coordination games

are characterized by the existence of multiple Pareto-optimal equilibria. When states face coordination problems, the dilemma is not the temptation to defect from cooperative outcomes, but how to choose among equilibria. Choice in coordination games may be relatively simple and resolved by identification of a focal point. But some coordination games involve multiple equilibria over which the actors have divergent preferences. German scholars have contributed to the further refinement of the basic functionalist logic by developing 'problem structural typologies' (Rittberger and Zürn 1990) and by unpacking 'problematic social situations', which Michael Zürn defines as those in which the Pareto optimum on the one hand and the individually rational Nash equilibrium on the other are not congruent (Zürn 1997). The logic is functionalist: states build institutions in order to achieve collectively desirable outcomes. Some constellations of interests are conducive to regime formation, while others are not.

Rational functionalism has also made pioneering forays into explaining the *form* that institutional choice will take. While arguments linking problem structure with institutional form are not new, a number of scholars have recently placed rational functional explanations of institutional and organizational design at the center of their intellectual agenda. Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal (2001) explore how five dimensions of design – membership, issue scope, centralization of tasks, rules for controlling the institution, and institutional flexibility – vary across organizations and institutions. These authors argue that particular choices over form are a response to distributional and enforcement problems arising from the number of actors relevant to the provision of joint-gains, as well as uncertainty about behavior or the state of the world.

One of the most promising insights about this line of analysis regards the ways in which institutional design will respond to the existence of various types of uncertainty. When states are uncertain about the state of the

world or the distributive impact of an agreement, they are likely to design institutions with loopholes. Barbara Koremenos (2005) theorizes that uncertainty about the distributional effects of agreements leads directly to the use of renegotiation provisions in international agreements. Similarly, Peter Rosendorff (2005) argues that uncertainty domestic pressures for protection lead trade institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) to offer flexibility, in particular, in the form of the Dispute Settlement Procedure, while Lawrence Helfer and co-authors make a similar argument for derogations from human rights agreements (Helfer et al. 2011). Some but not all of the expectations about uncertainty can be confirmed in studies of negotiation processes, which make a good complement to the design outcomes that most researchers analyze (Thompson 2010).

Research on flexibility provisions raises an interesting design dilemma: Does widespread participation in a particular agreement depend on such provisions? Is there a trade-off between depth of cooperation and the breadth of membership? Logic – and, increasingly, empirical evidence – suggests this is indeed the case, although Michael Gilligan (2004) finds that the broader–deeper trade-off disappears if the agreement allows for variance with respect to the demands on each member. Kucik and Reinhardt (2008) argue that flexibility provisions within the GATT/WTO have encouraged countries to join, and to make commitments to greater reductions in tariff levels. Theirs is one of the most rigorous empirical demonstrations to date that flexibility does indeed support higher levels of trade cooperation. Maggi and Morelli (2006) focus on the voting rules used in various IOs. Because decisions of IOs must be self-enforcing, they argue, often the only sustainable voting rule is unanimity, offering an explanation for the widespread unanimity requirement, but also specifying conditions under which other voting rules might be sustainable.

The hypothesis that flexibility is desirable because it allows states to commit to deeper

forms of cooperation than would have been possible in the absence of flexibility mechanisms is in tension with the notion that states join IOs and IIs precisely for their *binding* effects. One function that IOs and IIs perform is that they make it possible for states to commit themselves to levels of cooperation that would not be credible in their absence. Some IOs have fairly clear “hands-tying” features: the International Criminal Court has independent authority to prosecute certain kinds of war crimes, largely removing impunity for these crimes. Simmons and Danner (2010) argue that the ICC’s hands-tying quality serves as a binding mechanism that leads to a reduction in international violence. Similarly, almost all bilateral investment treaties provide for international arbitration in the case of an investment dispute. States agree to such arrangements to bolster their credibility to treat investors fairly. The ultimate goal, of course, is to tie one’s hands sufficiently to attract foreign direct investment (Elkins et al. 2006). Mansfield and Pevehouse (2006) specify a causal mechanism by which democratizing leaders use IO membership to credibly commit to democratic reforms. Dreher and Voigt find evidence that countries that join a variety of IOs effectively gain credibility by doing so: delegation to IOs, they find, has a robust and felicitous impact on a country’s risk ratings, which they argue is a decent proxy for credibility (Dreher and Voigt 2011).

Another approach to institutional design, still within the rationalist tradition, is the application of principal-agent models. These models provide a framework for understanding decisions to delegate authority to IOs (Lake and McCubbins 2006; Sarooshi 2005). For example, Nielson and Tierney (2003) explain institutional reform in the World Bank with a delegation model, concentrating on environmental policy reforms; similarly, Siebenhüner (2008) explains organizational learning in international environmental organizations in terms of principal-agent theories. One of the major normative issues,

from an agency perspective, is the extent to which IOs remain accountable to the states that comprise them (Grant and Keohane 2005) – an issue upon which practitioners have written extensively as well (Cooker 2005). Empirical work on the extent of “independence” of IOs is growing and is getting more systematic (see, for example, Haftel and Thompson 2006).

Informational problems, in the rationalist approach, are central to the understanding of design and functioning of IOs. The idea that IOs might be useful for solving cooperation problems through the provision of information and signaling was borrowed initially from the domestic literature on legislative actors. That literature emphasized that legislative structures could be designed which would allow legislators to learn about the policies they are adopting, thus avoiding inefficient outcomes (Gilligan and Krehbiel 1990; Krehbiel 1991). IO theorists have applied these insights at the international level, analyzing various IOs from the UN Security Council to the WTO to international human rights IOs as credible sources of policy information that help various audiences to determine the quality of particular policies, such as a military intervention in the case of the Security Council (Fang 2008; Thompson 2006; Voeten 2005; Chapman 2007). Others have extended the informational theory of IOs as a mechanism to enhance states’ accountability to domestic actors who may favor outcomes such as improved human rights, a cleaner environment, or liberal trade, and thereby indirectly increase the possibilities for cooperative outcomes at the international level (Mansfield et al. 2002; Dai 2007). In all of these models, IOs generate credible information about governments’ policies that end up producing more cooperative outcomes.

Rational functionalist approaches are notable because the method of analysis treats institutions both as environmental constraints and as objects that are consciously chosen and manipulated by actors. However, one of the major drawbacks of the rational

functionalist approach lies in accurate ex ante specification of games and interests. Empirical researchers wanting to test functional explanations often find it difficult to determine precisely what games are being played without observing the outcome of state interactions, leading to a lack of refutability and loss of explanatory power. While recognizing the need for independent measures of interests, researchers have found it difficult to construct them. Rationalist theories of the kind discussed here are also silent on how to think about some of their central concepts. The concept of “focal point” is frequently relied upon as a way to reduce transactions costs, but just why some solutions are accepted as focal is rarely discussed. The notion of “common knowledge” helps to solve games with multiple equilibria, but what information is held in common by actors is asserted rather than explained. Appeals to “reputation” are ubiquitous in this literature, but there is nothing more socially determined than one’s reputation. The assumptions that these concepts are unproblematic has, however, been challenged most directly by scholars working from sociological assumptions.

From the English School to Social Constructivism

Rational functionalist approaches have been roundly criticized by theorists that place prime analytical importance on the social context of state behavior. While rational functionalism focuses on explaining cooperation under anarchy, social constructivists have questioned the primacy of anarchy, and have sought to reassert social context into the understanding of international relations. While rational functionalism explains IIs and IOs in terms of various forms of market failure, constructivists situate international institutions in their intersubjective social context.

A number of scholars, frequently associated with English scholarship, have emphasized the importance of international society

in maintaining international order. Bull and Watson (1984) define international society in state-centric terms, as a group of states that have 'established by dialog and consent common rules and institutions for the conduct of their relations, and recognize their common interest in maintaining these arrangements'. International society, in this conception, is the legal and political idea on which the concept of international institutions rests (Buzan 1993). Martin Wight's work emphasized the role of cultural unity in the identity of an international society (Wight 1977). Bull, on the other hand, saw the possibilities of international society for any group of states that shared coherent goals, such as limits on the use of force (Bull 1977). Others offer a subjective interpretation of international society that is echoed in contemporary constructivist assumptions: international society exists because those who speak and act in the name of states assume that it does (Evans and Wilson 1992).

The English school has offered a definition of institutions that is much broader than the one we employ in this essay; scholars in this tradition also typically eschew reference to specific issue-areas. Institutions in this view are 'a cluster of social rules, conventions, usages, and practices ..., a set of conventional assumptions held prevalently among society-members ... [that] provide a framework for identifying what is the done thing and what is not in the appropriate circumstances' (Suganami 1983). English school scholars have been concerned with 'institutions' as broad as the balance of power and the practice of diplomacy (Evans and Wilson 1992). Their work has tended to de-emphasize formal organizations (Crawford 1996), viewing these as important only to the extent that they 'strengthen and render more efficient the more basic institutions of diplomacy, international law, and the balance of power' (Evans and Wilson 1992). Furthermore, scholars in this tradition have on the whole been less interested in economic issues and rather less taken by

dilemmas of interdependence than have American scholars working in a more functionalist vein.

John Ruggie and Friedrich Kratochwil have done the most to advance the central insights of the English school and adapt them to the study of IOs and IIs. In their view, intersubjective meaning explains the role that IOs and IIs play in international life. In a critique of the regimes literature as it was developing in the United States, these authors noted the inconsistencies of trying to describe a subjective world of norms and beliefs with a positivist epistemology based on observed behavior (Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986). In Kratochwil's view, '... interpretations of actions by the actors are an irreducible part of their collective existence. We as observers therefore can go only as far as looking 'at the facts' of their overt behavior; beyond that lies the realm of intersubjective rules which are constitutive of social practice and which an interpretive epistemology has to uncover' (Kratochwil 1988). It is crucial in this view to understand the ways in which specific institutions are embedded in larger systems of norms and principles, such as the liberal economic order of the postwar period (Ruggie 1982).

Constructivist approaches are highly attentive to the framing of rules and norms as clues to a deeper understanding of their intended meanings. When a rule is embedded in the context of international law, for example, governments have to forgo idiosyncratic claims and make arguments based on rules and norms that satisfy at a minimum the condition of universality (Kratochwil 1988; see also Kingsbury 1998; Hurrell 1993). Indeed, most constructivist theorists would go further and insist on the mutually constitutive nature of norms and actors' identities. International institutions define who the players are in a particular situation and how they define their roles, and thus place constraints on behavior. Constructivist scholars emphasize that international institutions can alter the identities and interests of states, as a result of their interactions over time within the auspices of

a set of rules (Arend 1999; Onuf 1989) or within a specific organization that actors imbue with meaning (Johnston 2001). This gives rise to an analysis that (compared with realist or rationalist approaches) takes nothing for granted: the relevant actors, their interests, and their understandings of rules and relationships are all open to interpretation. Moreover, constructivism emphasizes feedback effects and the complexity of social interactions, it lends itself naturally to the view that institutions cannot be treated as simply exogenous or purely objects of choice (Ruggie 1992).

Social constructivist approaches have been especially appropriate for appreciating the ways in which international institutions create, reflect, and diffuse intersubjective normative understandings. One important contribution to the literature on IOs and IIs has been to theorize their role in furthering normative convergence among actors. Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) sketch out various stages of the norm 'life cycle' and note that IOs contribute to norm 'cascades' by 'pressuring targeted actors to adopt new policies and laws and to ratify treaties and by monitoring compliance with international standards'. In this way, IOs can be 'chief socializing agents' pressuring violators to conform (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998).⁵ Checkel (2005) provides a framework for studying socialization processes, specifying how the mechanisms of strategic calculation, role playing, and normative suasion can lead to socialization. Johnston (2008) elaborates these mechanisms, as well as social mechanisms such as backpatting or shaming. He theorizes that these powerful processes of socialization that are heightened among members of specific international organizations.

As it does in all aspects of politics, legitimacy plays a key role in constructivist accounts of IOs and IIs. The essence of most theorizing in this vein is the issue of how and to what extent international organizations and rules come to be understood by states and civil society actors as legitimate

instantiations of social goals, values, and aspirations (Coicaud and Heiskanen 2001). Christian Reus-Smit sees the rise of what he refers to as multilateral forms of legislation as a result of the shift of legitimacy from absolute rulers to popular sovereignty, and associated norms of procedural justice. Self-legislation mandates that those subject to the law should create it. Nondiscrimination means all are equally bound. In combination, these values give rise internationally to multilateralism (Reus-Smit 2004). IOs (e.g., the UN Security Council) may be conceptualized as representing the cumulative legitimacy of the post-war order, and the desire to maintain this order has a moderating effect even on the great powers (Westra 2010). International rules and the forums in which actors hammer them out in turn become key focal points for discursive struggles over legitimate political agency and action (internationally and domestically). By many accounts, rules and organizational membership become critical resources in the international politics of legitimacy (Reus-Smit 2004).

One branch of research associated with sociological theories focuses on the role of IOs as international bureaucracies with agency in their own right. These scholars emphasize that organizations have agency; they make loans, send peacekeepers, inoculate babies, and maintain databases. They have long been viewed as actors providing international collective or redistributive goods (Kindleberger 1951; Gregg 1966), but increasingly they have also come to regulate many of the social, political, and economic problems traditionally within nation-states' purview (Smouts 1993). Organization theorists point out that through the development of specific competencies, organizations can potentially transform agendas and goals (Cyert and March 1992). Moreover, these entities can function as creators of meaning and of identities (Olsen 1997). Some have urged far greater attention to the sociology of IOs, as well as the ways in which intergovernmental organizations interact with nongovernmental

organizations (De Senarclens 1993). In a critical vein, Barnett and Finnemore (1999) draw attention not only to IO autonomy, but also to the potential for pathological behavior when IOs become bureaucratized. These efforts represent a synthetic look at international organizational structures, normative standards, transnational actors, and governmental decision making (Barnett and Coleman 2005).

In short, the works of social constructivists have drawn attention to the intersubjective nature of IOs and IIs. The former insists on understanding these in the context of the broader purposes of the major actors in world politics. Constructivists have incorporated the importance of social meanings into their analysis of IOs and IIs, and have more fully developed the notion that institutions and interests are mutually constitutive. Both approaches have provided ways to think about the links between norms and institutions. It is to international organizational and institutional effects on state behavior that we turn in the following section.

THE ROLE OF IOS AND IIS: EMPIRICAL STUDIES OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTS

Empirical studies of IOs and IIs have burgeoned in the last couple of decades. A growing body of research is developing that addresses many of the specific theoretical mechanisms discussed in the previous sections. Some set up competing tests of the various mechanisms implied by the theories, but increasingly studies are combining the insights from decades of theorizing in interactive ways, finding, for example, that coercive mechanisms sometimes reinforce socialization pressures, or that socially constructed focal points help to reduce transaction costs. The empirical studies below represent a variety of methodologies, but the empirical literature in the last decade on the effects of IOs and IIs on cooperation has

definitely taken a quantitative turn. This section discusses the empirical literature on effects of IOs and IIs on patterns and modes of interstate cooperation, organized roughly by mechanism. Paralleling the discussion above, we begin with the self-consciously rational and move to the rather more sociological research. In addition, we highlight some of the empirical research that tests for broader institutional effects as well.

One way to gauge the impact of IOs and IIs is to test for their coercive impacts. As agents of their state members, IOs are sometimes used as mechanisms to enforce the norms, values, and preferred outcomes of their members. Why might we expect coercion via IOs to differ from its unilateral cousin? Lisa Martin's research demonstrates that cooperation on economic sanctions increases when sanctions are imposed in an institutionalized environment (Martin 1992a). Rather than free-riding on the sanctioning efforts of others, Martin shows that highly institutionalized environments have assisted self-regarding states to overcome their collective action problems and impose sanctions on specific targeted states. Part of her logic is that international organizations are a forum for the credible bundling of issues in a way that makes deals "stick."

Several studies have looked into the *consequences* of coercion by IOs: does the United Nations enforce the peace and help to settle disputes? Do international financial institutions enforce internationally accepted standards of open and responsible economic policies through conditionality? These institutions have the potential to impose costs on states for contravening international norms. Some scholars note that enforcement actions are actually quite rare (Chayes and Chayes 1995). The empirical research on the consequences of coercive multilateralism is mixed. On the one hand, some studies have found that IO-imposed sanctions may increase the likelihood of conflict resolution in civil wars settings, especially if the targeted state is a member of the international institution imposing the sanctions (Escribá -Folch

2010). On the other hand, while the United Nations has not often sanctioned countries for human rights violations, when they have, studies suggest that results may not be salutary. Dursun Peksen (2009) found that the multilateral imposition of economic sanctions by the United Nations and the European Union were associated with *worsening* human rights thereafter, as measured by physical integrity indices. Emilie Hafner-Burton argues, however, that the threat of punishment is critical in the human rights area. Though there may be some endogeneity issues that are yet to be resolved, she finds that trade agreements with clear consequences for human rights violations are associated with improved rights practices, while agreements with soft human rights provisions are not (Hafner-Burton 2005). The drawing of firm generalizations about the consequences of multilateral sanctioning through IOs has been elusive.

Coercion can also potentially be exercised by economic IOs or their members. By offering benefits (loans, aid, trade, recognition) or imposing costs (exclusion, sanctions, military intervention), IOs can potentially coerce national decision makers to implement favored economic policies. For example, Witthold Henisz and others argue that the IMF and World Bank have indirectly coerced particular market reforms by tilting “the balance of power toward the group (or groups) favoring reform by providing that group with more resources, legitimacy, or rhetorical arguments, and by prompting various groups to join the pro-reform coalition” (Henisz et al. 2005). They find that international coercive pressures – measured as conditional IMF loans – have increased the likelihood of majority privatization and regulatory separation, but not of regulatory depoliticization and liberalization of competition in the telecommunications and electricity industries (Henisz et al. 2005; see also Brune et al. 2004). Other empirical studies link conditional IMF loans with monetary policy reforms, such as independent central banks (Polillo and Guillén 2005) and the

signing of treaty agreements that protect investors’ interests (Elkins et al. 2006). Recent research sees the hand of powerful countries working through multilateral aid agencies such as the World Bank (Dreher et al. 2009a) and IMF (Dreher et al. 2009b) to influence states temporarily holding seats on the UN Security Council. Whether such strategies “work” – that is, whether such attempts can actually buy political support – has yet to be shown empirically.

Some institutions are designed explicitly as enforcement mechanisms. They are designed to “tie actors’ hands” by imposing costs that deter actors from violating certain norms. For example, bilateral investment treaties call for transnational arbitration when investors allege they have not been treated fairly by host states. The prospect of a monetary award – enforceable in most domestic courts around the world – may encourage some states to respect investors’ rights (Tobin and Rose-Ackerman 2011; Busse et al. 2010; Egger and Merlo 2007). Similarly, the International Criminal Court has the potential to put individuals convicted of heinous war crimes in prison for life, which Simmons and Danner (2010) argue may account for ratification patterns as well as hiatuses in civil conflict. In these models, the threat of punishment allows for joint gains by helping states credibly to commit to certain actions.

Most empirical studies in the rational functionalist tradition, however, argue that IOs and IIs raise costs for noncompliance *not* through organized punishment as much as through “reputational” consequences (Joachim et al. 2008). “Reputation” was, of course, one of the main mechanisms Keohane developed in his original functional theory of regimes (Keohane 1984). Several empirical studies rely on reputational costs to account for their findings. Simmons (2000) asks whether IMF restrictions on manipulation of the current account have influenced state currency behaviors, and finds that states that have made a public declaration to be bound by Article VIII of the IMF’s Articles of Agreement are much more likely to eschew

current account restrictions than nonsignatories, a finding extended by Grieco, Gelpi, and Warren (2009; see also Simmons and Hopkins 2005; von Stein 2005). Similarly, Mitchell and Hensel rely on the purported ability of IOs to raise reputational costs for states when they pressure them to settle their territorial or boundary disputes peacefully. They find that common membership in various IOs increases the possibilities for the “passive” influence of IOs, but such a finding leaves wide open the exact nature of such influences (Mitchell and Hensel 2007). It is fair to say that many of these studies assert rather than document actual reputational damage as the unseen but presumably operative mechanism likely to account for cooperative state behavior. While quite reasonable in many cases, “reputation” is difficult to observe empirically, which has encouraged some researchers to turn to experimental methods to test for the plausibility of this mechanism (Tomz 2007).

Many empirical studies in the past couple of decades have been designed to test the claim that international organizations and institutions increase cooperation by creating focal points that help to coordinate behavior. A theoretically strong argument can be made that the mutual liberalization of markets is the paradigmatic “cooperative dilemma.” In the absence of a clear rule (focal point), states are tempted to protect their producers from competition. Trade agreements create clear focal points and reduce the transaction costs of continual bargaining over terms of market entry. If institutions could matter anywhere, it should be in ongoing commercial relations, where transaction costs are high and temptations to defect from liberal trade may exist, but the potential for joint gains is also high. It was surprising, therefore, when Andrew Rose found in an initial study that there is no evidence that the WTO has influenced trade patterns (Rose 2004; see also Gowa 2005). However, Goldstein et al. (2007) find that once the actual institutional standing of various states is taken into account, the GATT/WTO has, in fact, substantially increased trade flows. Some

studies suggest multilateral trade organization help to reduce trade volatility as well. Claiming that trade agreements “foster policy transparency and convergence in expectations, standards, and policy instruments” (2008), Mansfield and Reinhardt show that the WTO as well as preferential trading arrangements (PTAs) substantially reduce the volatility of exports, leading to a higher volume of exports. These studies seem to suggest that trade agreements are for the most part self-enforcing, inasmuch as they do not distinguish the more passive influence of “expectations” and reciprocity (Kono 2007) from the more active application of WTO enforcement (legal retaliation). Some scholars emphasize the ability of the WTO to structure liberalizing negotiations in the first place. Christina Davis, for example, attributes the trade liberalizing effect of the WTO to its ability to link bargains across sectors, increasing the range of actors with a stake in the negotiations’ success. Like Martin, Davis finds that the ability of international organizations to link issues enhances the prospects for international cooperation (Davis 2004).

Rationalist theories also emphasize the nature of the information environment and how IOs and IIs influence this environment. The hypothesis most often tested is that IOs actively (and IIs passively) promote more credible, unbiased information on the behavior of actors than would be available in their absence, making it possible to overcome market failures that impede cooperation. A spate of empirical studies has explored the implications of such informational models. David Bearce and co-authors credit the informational functions of IOs (in this case, alliances, and conditional on power relations) with substantially reducing the risk of conflict among their members (Bearce et al. 2006; see also Haftel 2007; Hansen et al. 2008). Several empirical tests now exist that seek to show that the information-producing function of IOs helps *domestic* audiences hold their leaders accountable, which can have the effect of moderating governments’ behaviors in the direction of international norms.

Xinyuan Dai's domestic constituency mechanism depends on the ability of international human rights and environmental institutions to produce credible information on a government's rights practices and pollution patterns, and she produces case studies on air pollution and human rights to illustrate her theory (Dai 2007). James Morrow makes a different argument that also depends on the information function of international institutions. In his view, ratification of an agreement itself reveals information in some cases. Specifically, he argues ratification reveals information by signaling governments' intent to comply with the laws of war, but that this signal is only effective for democratic governments. He finds that the Geneva Conventions helps democratic governments to cooperate through reciprocity because of the information conveyed by the fact of ratification (Morrow 2007; see also Leeds 2003).

The UN Security Council has proved an especially fertile ground for testing theories about the information functions of IOs. Alexander Thompson sees the Security Council as a medium for the transmission of strategic information and, in particular, information about the level of international support offered to the coercing state. Thompson argues that IOs that are known for their independence, relative autonomy, and neutrality are able to convey information both about the intentions of a potentially coercive state as well as potential allies' support. His qualitative case study of the first Gulf War provides some suggestive evidence that in the absence of a UN Security Council resolution, the United States would have faced much more international opposition to intervention, largely because many more states would have been highly skeptical of US intentions (Thompson 2006). Similarly, Erik Voeten (2005) argues that states seek the blessing of the Security Council not to find out what constitutes "appropriate" behavior, but rather to find out what kind of opposition they will face if they decide to go ahead and intervene militarily in another country. Approaching

the Security Council is in his view all about finding out what other political elites will *tolerate*, not what they have internalized as legitimate. He provides qualitative evidence that the Security Council has behaved rather inconsistently, but that nonetheless governments act as though the Council's support is valuable. He sees Security Council decisions as creating focal points regarding socially acceptable uses of force through a process of elite political judgment (Voeten 2005). Terrence Chapman and Dan Reiter argue that gaining the approval of the UN Security Council is useful for domestic political reasons as well. UN approval for a US military intervention greatly increases the extent of public support for such interventions (measured as presidential approval ratings), and they argue that this is because the American public is thereby better informed of the likely success in these cases (Chapman and Reiter 2004).

Constructivist theories have inspired a rich empirical foray into the role of IOs in setting standards of appropriateness, diffusing international norms, and mobilizing various group socialization mechanisms to shape actors' behavior (Johnstone 2010). Inspired by the insights of scholars in political science as well as sociology, empirical work is looking into how and when states become "socialized" to international norms through their membership in international organizations. Finnemore (1993, 1996) and Legro (1997) study specific examples of norm promotion in international politics, finding that IOs can play a crucial role in the systematic dispersion of beliefs and standards of appropriate behavior. Several interesting case studies have argued that even in the most unlikely case – that of China – states have changed important aspects of their behavior as a result of socialization in the context of international organizations (Kent 2007; Acharya, and Johnston 2007).

Increasingly, researchers have noticed that IOs play a crucial role both in adopting norms promulgated by various international civil society groups, and in promulgating

these norms to their state membership. Cora True-Frost's case study of the United Nations Security Council suggests that this central security institution has taken up the norms of "human security" offered by a range of non-state actors. These norms go well beyond its traditional concerns with interstate conflict, and deal with issues such as women's equality, HIV/AIDS, and children's rights. As "the sole organ with the capacity for collective judgment and mobilization of force in interpreting the UN Charter" (True-Frost 2007), the Council's decision to "consume" and also to promulgate broad notions of human security has had an important impact on international conceptions of legitimate collective action in this area. Susan Park makes a similar point about the World Bank. The bank's contacts with environmental NGOs overtime have altered its "identity" as an institution and made it much more sensitive to the environmental impact of its development projects (Park 2005). These case studies analyze IOs as both consumers and diffusers of norms internationally.

One of the more well-developed lines of inquiry into the role of IOs in shaping outcomes worldwide has been the contribution of sociologists who advance theories of the world polity. As formulated by John Meyer, "world polity" refers to a rationalized but decentralized world order centered in the cultural West and consisting of models or "scripts" that shape states, organizations, and individual identities and ultimately their behavior (Meyer et al. 1997). This approach eschews the radical individualism assumed by rational functionalism, and sees states as embedded in broader social structures of which memberships in IOs and participation in IIs are an expression. IOs exemplify and teach states the tenets of modern statehood – from sovereignty to bureaucratic rationality to the adoption of human rights. "Embeddedness" in the world polity – often proxied by memberships in IOs and participation in IO sponsored conferences – has been used to explain a range of outcomes, from the spread of public education (Meyer et al. 1992) to the

bureaucratization of science (Drori 2003) to the ratification of human rights treaties (Wotipka and Ramirez 2008).

World polity theorists have always been keenly aware that many of the apparent influences of IOs and IIs are quite superficial. "Institutional isomorphism" is the phrase they use to describe the adoption of bureaucratic forms and formal policies that often do not signal either the capacity or the willingness fully to internalize the norms of western scripts. This observation is consistent with empirical research that finds that the socialization effects of IOs are quite conditional. While some have claimed that Western democratic IOs have had an important socializing effect on new members from the eastern bloc (Gheciu 2005), Frank Schimmelfennig's case studies reveal that membership in the EU and NATO – both conceptualized as institutions with the capacity to socialize new members to accept the liberal human rights norms of the majority of members – influence the human rights of liberal parties, but not those of antiliberal parties in Eastern and central Europe (Schimmelfennig et al. 2006; Schimmelfennig 2005). Several studies in the human rights area note that international socialization pressures quite often lead to incomplete internalization of norms and the decoupling of form and practice (Hafner-Burton et al. 2008). Bearce and Bondanella (2007) offer a possible resolution to this conflicting evidence, suggesting that short-term socialization efforts show little effect, but that in the longer term joint participation in formal intergovernmental organizations does lead to interest convergence among members. Meanwhile, in East Asia, Becky Shelley's research suggests that the United Nations has had a complex and ambiguous impact, in some cases delaying democratization, and in some cases, such as Taiwan's, contributing only very indirectly (Shelley 2005). While undoubtedly IOs contribute in some degree to changes in form and values, empirical research on the extent to which genuine internalization takes place is quite speculative, not least because there seems to

be no good way to observe norm internalization in any reliable way.

The central methodological difficulty in many of these empirical studies of the consequences of IOs and IIs has been to show that they contribute to a causal explanation of outcomes (Downs et al. 1996). Statistical analyses have had to grapple – with varying degrees of success – with the problem that membership in IOs and commitments to IIs are themselves choice variables, creating hoary problems of endogeneity when trying to estimate “institutional effects.” Some of the empirical research reflects skepticism. Ringquist and Kostadinova (2005), for example, question whether environmental protocols have any causal impact, arguing that in the case of sulfur dioxide emissions, states that intended to reduce emissions signed the 1985 Helsinki Protocol, but that the protocol itself had no discernible effect. Oona Hathaway has made the same argument about human rights treaties (Hathaway 2002; but see Simmons 2009).

Overall, empirical work on IOs and IIs in the past decade has been rich, varied, and increasingly sophisticated. It has ranged from military conflict to commercial relations to human rights, embracing case studies as well as statistical work. Reflecting the trends in theorizing, the boundaries between “schools of thought” have come down, and scholars are increasingly testing claims about how power and norms interact and even reinforce one another (Hurd 2005; Neumann and Sending 2010). While there is room for skepticism, the thrust of much of the literature has been to show that the influences of IOs and IIs are much more wide-ranging than might have been supposed only a decade or two ago.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This survey of the extensive and growing literature on IOs and IIs suggests much progress, yet many questions that continue to demand answers and ongoing research. In

this section, we briefly sketch out what we see as some of the most promising directions for ongoing and future research in this field, noting where appropriate, authors who are already engaging in research on these issues. We consider, in particular, the emergence of networks of IOs and IIs; the relationship between IOs and civil society; new directions in work on IOs and domestic politics; and some normative issues.

IOs, IIs, and Networked Politics

The rapid growth and diffusion of IOs and IIs has led some scholars to move their analysis to a different level, considering how clusters such as “regime complexes” (Raustiala and Victor 2004) influence both institutions themselves and state behavior. As clusters of institutions grow, networks emerge – sometimes including formal organizations, sometimes not (Kahler 2009). In these cases, IO influence is both direct and indirect; networks create possibilities for linkages between states that would be difficult to forge in their absence. The network effects of IOs may be at least partially responsible for the collective effect of these organizations in mediating and settling international disputes (Dorussen and Ward 2008). Networks of organizations may also enable learning within institutions, as in the case of diffusion of capital taxation (Cao 2010; De Lange 2010).

Networks of memberships in IOs magnify the possibilities for cooperation and expanded joint gains among members. Scholars have found, for example, that trade relationships are enhanced not just by belonging to the WTO, but by participation in a broad network of IOs, including those that are primarily political or even cultural (Ingram et al. 2005); or by a thickening population of regional organizations that operate alongside global institutions (Tavares 2010; Kirchner and Dominguez 2011). As scholars consider the role of these networks in global governance, they find a dense network of civil society actors who participate in both IOs and in

politics at the local level (Armstrong 2010). Some consider these networks in terms of their “multiplier effects,” or the extent to which organizations overlap, coordinate their activities, and reinforce their messages and activities (Blavoukos and Bourantonis 2011; Heintze and Zwitter 2010). The high level of institutionalization of most areas of international relations suggests that the study of these networks will become a more prominent aspect of scholarship in coming years.

IOs and Civil Society

IOs and IIs constitute structures within which international civil society actors operate strategically. Some authors view these structures as placing limitations on the autonomy and agency of NGOs. IOs constitute and affect at least in part the international “opportunity structure” in which civil society actors pursue their interests (Tarrow 2005; Joachim and Locher 2009). Indeed, some scholars have argued that the existence of IOs – and their cautious embrace of civil society participation in their activities – has had a good deal to do with the growth of international civil society over the past several decades (Reimann 2006). But as Kathryn Sikkink has pointed out, much depends on the extent to which institutions are “open” or “closed” to civil society participation: “.... for some activists, international institutions are part of the solution, and for others they *are* the problem” (Sikkink 2004). IOs have exhibited substantial variation in the degree to which they have welcomed or opposed the participation of elements of civil society, even within the same issue-area: compare, for example, the relative ease with which the World Bank has engaged civil society to the IMF’s grudging moves toward transparency. What accounts for the nature of IO interaction with civil society actors, and what will be the consequences of such interaction (or lack thereof)? So far, work on these questions has been intriguing but primarily descriptive; analytical frameworks that tie

together the institutional and societal dimensions are needed.

IOs, IIs, and the Domestic Connection

IR has long recognized that there are systematic connections between regime type and foreign policy orientations (see the chapter by Schultz in this volume). For example, there is a long tradition in the study of international institutions of linking regime support or “regime conducive foreign policies” to reciprocity and conflict management, especially through IOs and IIs. Zuern (1993) (Underdal 1995: 116; see also Cortell and Davis 1996). However, given the roots of contemporary work on IOs and IIs, domestic politics have often received short shrift. This aspect of the literature has undergone rapid transformation in recent years (see Simmons 2009), and we anticipate significant movement in this area in the near future.

One approach to the problem of domestic politics is to acknowledge that certain domestic actors have incentives to use and delegate to IOs and IIs. In trade, for example, governments delegate to IOs to realize joint gains for a society as a whole when they are blocked by domestic economic groups. Several scholars have interpreted international dispute settlement in trade, as well as territorial conflict, in this way (Goldstein 1996; Davis 2012; Simmons 2002). In general, if pursuit of gains over time involves short-term sacrifices, turning to international institutions can be an attractive option for domestic policymakers. These institutions can enhance the commitment of the state as a whole. From a domestic perspective, more importantly, they mobilize and empower particular interest groups, thereby shifting the weight of domestic politics. Through these mechanisms, IOs have an impact on the provision of domestic public goods, such as education (Bassett and Maldonado 2009; Martens et al. 2007) and social/welfare policies (Ervik et al. 2009),

areas that have not yet received sustained attention from IR scholars.

Beyond interest groups, domestic politics interact with IOs and IIs via the judicial system. International norms and agreements are often adjudicated in domestic courts (Simmons 2009; Sikkink 2011). As international agreements take on a legal form, they are interpreted by domestic courts. Judges can therefore use international law as a basis on which to make judgments (Alter 1996; Conforti 1993). In contrast, we can identify growing instances in which national courts challenge the rulings and actions of international organizations, from sanctions imposed by the Security Council, to acts of Interpol, to EU decisions about patents (Reinisch 2010). Regardless of the sign of this effect, the fact of judicialization of the relationship between IOs and domestic politics remains a pressing issue.

Normative issues

The domestic level of analysis also allows us to ask questions of normative significance. How and under what conditions can characteristics valued in domestic politics be preserved in governance structures at the international level? This concern has progressed furthest in the discussion of the ‘democratic deficit’ in the EU. Critics of EU structure argue that the inability of national parliaments to deeply influence EU decision making, combined with the weakness of the European Parliament, mean that the EU itself falls far short of the democratic standards it demands of its members. This concern has led to creative thinking about the meaning of ‘democracy,’ and whether the procedures that assure legitimacy on the international level should mimic those on the domestic level (Weiler 1995). Fritz Scharpf (1999) has cogently argued that the lack of a strong ‘European identity’ means that measures such as majority voting that assure legitimacy within states cannot do so on the European level, and argues instead in favor

of ‘output oriented’ mechanisms. Such discussions will have wide relevance, as demands for greater transparency and broader participation in the decisions of the WTO, the IMF, and the World Bank have recently highlighted.

Andrew Moravcsik argues that when compared to domestic regimes – and “calibrated to reasonable expectations in the ‘second-best’ world constrained by transaction costs, commitment problems, and justice claims” – the EU does in fact meet reasonably criteria of democratic legitimacy (Moravcsik 2004). Others disagree, pointing to the conspicuous lack of contestation over political leadership and policy at the highest levels of the institution (Follesdal and Hix 2006). The EU has responded to criticisms of a democratic deficit by allowing for increased civil-society participation, but scholars appear divided on whether this has significantly improved democracy on a regional level in Europe (Steffek et al. 2008; Smismans 2006). Despite rejection of the European constitution, Risse and Kleine have argued that the process by which European basic agreements are adopted and changed retains a good deal of legitimacy (Risse and Kleine 2007). What are the standards by which we are to judge whether processes and structures within IOs are normatively acceptable? Once our scope of analysis moves beyond the EU, is it possible that we will find that different issue-areas require different sets of standards? Arguments such as those raised by Keohane, Macedo, and Moravcsik (2009; see response by Gartzke and Naoi, 2011) about the relationship between multilateralism and democracy have begun to scratch the surface of these complex normative issues.

CONCLUSIONS

The political study of international institutions reveals a vibrant and diverse body of scholarship. In recent decades, research has turned from the study of formal IOs to the

study of regimes and institutions, informal as well as formal. For the most part, this turn has been salutary, as it has reflected a broad interest not only in formal organizations but in the deeper role that rules and norms play in a system of formally co-equal states. Initially, this turn was instigated by the observation that much of what is interesting about world politics – especially during the Cold War period – seemed to take place among intensely interdependent actors, but beyond the purview of formal interstate organizations. This turn was furthered by a rational-functionalist approach to the study of institutions, which took up the puzzle of how we could understand international cooperation at all, given the assumptions of neo-realism prevalent in the American international relations literature at the time. Meanwhile, in European circles, theorists of international society worked from sociological assumptions on a parallel question: how can order be maintained in an anarchical international society?

These theoretical orientations have made for interesting theoretical fireworks, as we have seen in the broader debates between today's constructivists and rationalists. This debate is clearly reflected in the institutional literature as a distinction between those who view international institutions (including institutional form) as rational responses to the strategic situations in which actors find themselves, versus those who insist on a subjective interpretation of social arrangements (which may or may not be 'rational' and are unlikely to be understood through the use of positive methodologies). These approaches in turn have spawned subsets of coherent scholarship, such as the German school among the rationalists, or those who give primacy of place to normative explanations among the constructivists. Each school has its more state-centric proponents: the English school among the constructivists; those whose mission it was to meet neorealism on its own terms among the rational functionalists. Theorizing is getting much more eclectic, drawing from a range of traditions to

synthesize our understanding of IOs and IIs. For example, inspired by the writing of Foucault, Neumann and Sending advance a conception of international organizations as a form of governing rationality ("governmentality") that embraces liberal norms in the context of state power challenged (though hardly rendered impotent) by globalization (Neumann and Sending 2010)

Several positive developments in the institutional literature should be highlighted as we wrap up this discussion. First, scholars from a range of approaches are showing a greater willingness to drop the assumption of unitary state actors and to engage systematically the world in which we live. For the rationalists, this has meant looking to domestic institutional conditions that make it rational to delegate authority to international institutions. For others working from a more sociological point of view, this has meant drawing in a wide array of transnational actors that have been empowered by democratization or international institutionalization itself. Much of the recent literature has furthered our understanding of the complex milieu in which institutions operate by systematically examining the relationship between governments, domestic coalitions, IOs, and transnational actors.

Despite these gains, weaknesses remain. The major weakness we would point out is the lack of confidence we have in the ability to draw strong inferences from much of the research to date. Some scholars would, of course, deny that this is the point of the exercise, but we feel that more attention to the causal mechanisms advanced, as well as much greater attention to research designs that allow for systematic comparisons across time, across states, or across international institutions, would greatly enhance our ability to explain the world around us. A careful look at literatures that develop theories of domestic and transnational politics, for example, should be drawn upon more systematically if we are to understand the sources and effects of international institutionalization. We also advocate thinking conditionally

about institutional effects, as some of the compliance literature has begun to do. Both the research completed so far and the directions we identify for future research suggest a promising and productive future for studies of international institutions.

NOTES

1 Subsequently, some scholars have divided this definition and labeled the principles and norms underlying an international relationship the "meta-regime" while reserving the term "international regime" for specific rules and procedures in a given issue area. Aggarwal 1998, 4.

2

3 Of course, this definition is not neutral in one important sense: it embodies our preference for the testing of theoretical propositions using social-scientific methods.

4 We limit ourselves in this chapter to public international organizations and institutions, and leave the analysis of private authority structures to Chapter 13.

5 This approach bears some affinity with sociological institutionalism, which emphasizes the role of "world culture" in explaining institutional isomorphism across countries, but which might also account for growing participation in the network of international institutions that can result from such socialization. See Meyer and Rowland 1977, Meyer et al. 1994, and Thomas, Meyer, Ramirez, and Boli 1987.

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