

ational environmental regimes shape the behavior of national governments and their citizens toward the global environment. These inquiries into regime effectiveness seek to evaluate how well these regimes alter environmentally harmful aspects of human behavior and improve the state of the environmental resource. Recent theoretical work has argued that international regimes may wield their greatest influence not by shaping behavior through instrumental manipulation of a nation's existing interests, but by reshaping the nation's underlying interests.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Gehring's book, *Dynamic International Regimes*, contributes to these research programs by showing that international environmental regimes that establish ongoing processes of negotiation can alter member states' interests, and thereby shape their behavior and improve environmental quality. His book develops a comprehensive and interesting theoretical discussion of how nations use negotiations to form and reform norms of behavior over time. Gehring also provides the most thorough and up-to-date political narratives currently available on international efforts to control European acid precipitation and global stratospheric ozone depletion. Despite these virtues, the book would have benefited greatly from better integration of the theoretical and empirical aspects such that the theory informed, and was informed by, the selection and analysis of the cases.

Among political scientists, two questions dominate interest in international environmental issues. First, how do nations create cooperative agreements to solve their collective environmental problems? Second, what effects, if any, do those agreements have on behavior and environmental quality? Since the early 1980s, political scientists have used the term *regime* to refer to the social institutions and governance structures that include, but extend beyond the margins of, the texts of the constitutive treaties and conventions. Thus regimes include not only the rules but also the norms, principles, and decision-making procedures to which nations agree. Many international relations scholars have recently sought to demonstrate how, and under what conditions, inter-

Gehring's theoretical argument addresses both the influence of norms on behavior and the influence of negotiations on norms. Norms provide rules of thumb that facilitate action among actors facing complex and/or uncertain circumstances that would otherwise inhibit completely rational action. In the sphere of negotiation, actors can systematically communicate and make joint decisions about norms that differ from the suboptimal normative expectations that often arise through tacit bar-

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Thomas Gehring, *Dynamic International Regimes: Institutions for International Environmental Governance*. Frankfurt/New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1994 (ISBN 3-631-47631-0, 525 pages, \$74.95).

gaining in the sphere of action. Norms developed through a process of negotiation will tend to produce appropriate behavioral change because the actors accept the norms rather than because other actors enforce the collective norms. Gehring posits that "static regimes," in which negotiations end after agreement on some specific set of norms, will wield little influence on behaviors or on the constellation of power and interests that constrain opportunities for international environmental cooperation. In contrast, dynamic regimes that involve ongoing processes of negotiation can foster communication, becoming "an independent source of influence on the interests of the single actors and ha[ving], consequently, an impact on the structural constraints of the decision situation" (p. 484). At a minimum, ongoing negotiations provide a forum for exploiting those brief windows of political opportunity when progress can be made in a given environmental arena. More important, however, dynamic regimes can induce deeper changes in the ways member states perceive their interests, helping to stabilize international governance and simultaneously creating opportunities for international environmental cooperation that would not have existed otherwise (p. 485).

Gehring marshals a wide array of theoretical literature in developing his theory of dynamic regimes. His argument presses analysts to pay more attention to how regimes change over time and to the possibility of mutual causality: interests and structural constraints undoubtedly determine the shape of regimes, but regimes can also shape interests and alter structural constraints. Unfortunately, the solid framework and argument that Gehring creates sometimes becomes overburdened by his efforts to map all the twists, turns, and semantic conflicts in the current theoretical debate on international regimes and cooperation.

Readers interested in environmental governance more than in international relations theory are likely to find the chapters devoted to the case studies of the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP) and the Montreal Protocol of greater interest. Using primary and secondary documentation, Gehring provides a remarkably extensive and detailed account of the policy history of both regimes. Particularly, in the dynamic regimes he studies, published information—especially in books—quickly becomes outdated. Gehring's account, however, covers changes from these regimes' inceptions right up to the day the book went to press in March 1994. The studies here are also far more analytic than diplomatic history books like Richard Benedick's *Ozone Diplomacy*, and more exhaustive and extensive than the myriad articles and book chapters analyzing these regimes. Indeed, researchers on either of these regimes will find this book to be an invaluable resource.

The book's most unsatisfying element lies in the failure to integrate the theoretical argument and the empirical case evidence. Gehring himself notes that he uses his "largely descriptive and process-oriented case studies" to generate theoretically interesting hypotheses rather than to test theories (p. 17). This methodological choice foregoes an excellent opportunity to use his cases to test existing theories of regime formation and effectiveness and to use those theories to inform his analysis of his cases.

Given his theoretical framework, the choice of cases itself is surprising. Both acid rain and ozone depletion involve "success" stories in which nations established dynamic regimes that have allegedly facilitated greater cooperation than would otherwise have occurred. Neither the cases nor other evidence presented develops the empirical contrast with static regimes needed to evaluate whether dynamic regimes actually perform better.

Indeed, Gehring does not make sufficient use of the two cases he did choose to illustrate key theoretical points. He does not rigorously show that the ongoing dialogue established in the LRTAP and Montreal Protocol regimes fundamentally altered the interests of key actors. Nor does he convincingly show that we can attribute whatever cooperation that nations did achieve in these cases to an ongoing negotiation process rather than to other factors.

Although distinguishing static from dynamic regimes makes theoretical sense, in practice many environmental regimes do have regular conferences of the parties and meetings of executive bodies that allow member states to revise collective norms as understanding and commitment to environmental protection increase. Yet in many of these cases such ongoing negotiation processes have either failed to expand or strengthen international cooperation, or have failed to do so soon enough. Triennial meetings of the parties to the Wetlands Convention and annual meetings of its executive body have left the norms and rules of the regime basically unchanged since the initial signatures in 1971, despite ongoing wetlands degradation. In contrast, the shift from quotas allowing the killing of tens of thousands of whales in the 1950s to a ban on all commercial whaling in the mid-1980s represents dramatic changes in norms and rules. Unfortunately, these changes may well have come too late to ensure the survival of some whale species. Gehring's argument would have been stronger had he come to terms with such examples of "failed" dynamic regimes. He also could have bolstered his argument by providing evidence that static regimes consistently fail to take advantage of political opportunities for broadening and deepening regime norms and rules.

Overall then, *Dynamic International Regimes* provides a useful contribution to the new, but growing efforts

to understand how we can improve global environmental governance. Certainly, readers interested in the LRTAP and the Montreal Protocol, as well as anyone desiring a single reference work on the politics and policies of these regimes, will definitely want to buy this book. For readers interested in policy implications, Gehring makes a logically appealing case that regimes should create ongoing processes for communication that can facilitate the joint learning and reshaping of interests that will be essential to resolving the growing list of international environmental problems that we face.

#### Note

1. Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 391-425.

Ronald Mitchell  
University of Oregon