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**Book Review: John Gerard Ruggie (ed.),  
Multilateralism Matters: The Theory and Praxis of an  
Institutional Form (New York: Columbia University  
Press, 1993, 479 pp., \$21.50 pbk.)**

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**John Gerard Ruggie (ed.),** *Multilateralism Matters: The Theory and Praxis of an Institutional Form* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, 479 pp., \$21.50 pbk.).

The conclusion of the Uruguay Round in December 1993 has ended seven years of intensive and sometimes frustrating negotiations among the 117 members of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). This eighth GATT round, probably the most complex and ambitious since the postwar trade regime was established, has been constantly threatened by protectionist and nationalist tendencies among the member states. Now that a final agreement has been achieved, and while the accord is waiting to be ratified, the Uruguay Round provides a strong case for the central thesis of Ruggie's new edited work, *Multilateralism Matters: The Theory and Praxis of an Institutional Form*.

Ruggie has compiled twelve papers stemming from a Berkeley-Stanford Workshop on multilateralism. While some of the arguments have appeared before, this book adds further interesting case studies as well as a concluding theoretical reprise by Friedrich Kratochwil. This coherent presentation focuses on the need for a theoretical revision of multilateralism as a concept in International Relations, while providing illustrative analyses of multilateral practices. This book will thus be of interest within the context of the institutionalist debate, and may also contribute to the study of the post-war international order.

The theoretical discussion in this book starts from a paradox: While the concept of multilateralism is frequently used in International Relations, it plays only a marginal role in the theoretical debate of the discipline. As Caporaso

points out, 'it is rarely used as an explanatory concept' (p.53), and the overall lack of a substantive definition of multilateralism underscores this theoretical lacuna.

Ruggie finds the prevailing 'nominal' definition of multilateralism—the coordinated international behaviour of more than two states—insufficient. For instance, while the Bismarckian alliance system could be subsumed under this definition, it does not embody the distinctive features of multilateral cooperation. Multilateralism, as Ruggie puts it, indicates coordination of national policies 'on the basis of certain principles of ordering relations among those states' (p.7). What exactly these multilateral norms are is still a debated issue and requires further study of historical practice in the international system. The propositions from this book, which are presented as working hypotheses, can be considered a useful starting-point for future research.

In contrast to non-multilateral institutional forms of state interaction, such as bilateralism and imperialism, the organising principles of multilateralism are seen by the authors to entail a minimum of three normative aspects: 1) 'indivisibility among the members of a collectivity with respect to the range of behaviour in question' (p.11); 2) generalised principles of conduct; and 3) what Keohane has called 'diffuse reciprocity', according to which the benefits of cooperation are roughly equal among the members without a specific *quid pro quo* formula. This set of multilateral norms ought to be understood as the 'architectural dimension' (p.12) of different institutions, e.g., regimes, international organizations, or the international order, whereas these institutions need not necessarily be multilateral *per se*.

A central argument of *Multilateralism Matters* is that the post-1945 international order has in fact been multilateral to a great extent, due to the congruence between certain domestic and international structures. While Ruggie suggests that the specific case of American hegemony, not *hegemony* as such, may explain the global spread of multilateral norms, Anne-Marie Burley examines in detail the domestic roots of contemporary multilateralism: the American perception of the world as a 'macrocosm of the New Deal regulatory state' (p.125). This delineation of multilateralism as a byproduct of the liberal domestic environment and international power of the United States is also prominent in the contributions of Peter Cowhey, Judith Goldstein and Steve Weber.

The articles by Patrick Morgan and Geoffrey Garrett concentrate on the practice of multilateralism in the European context. Mark Zacher reaffirms the institutionalist approach by highlighting the crucial importance of formal multilateral organizations in regime-building processes, as exemplified by regimes for non-terrestrial spaces. Miles Kahler argues that despite obstacles to cooperation among great numbers of states and dominance of great power multilateralism, multilateral governance may become more essential in the future, with the development of more efficient institutional designs.

The book does not attempt to formulate a new theory. Its contributions, however, can be seen as a challenge to the neorealist-neoliberal contest for a new

institutionalist approach. Neorealists are reminded of the actual importance of norm-based multilateralism in the post-war international order and its domestic basis, while neoliberals are warned not to confuse international institutions with their specific forms while explaining the phenomenon of inter-state cooperation.

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