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International regimes: lessons from inductive analysis

Donald J. Puchala and Raymond F. Hopkins

Rising interest in the concept “international regime” in the 1970s is much like that accorded to “international system” in the 1950s. It has become intellectually fashionable to speak and write about regimes.¹ Current faddishness notwithstanding, the purpose of this article is to show that the notion of regime is analytically useful, and that the concept is therefore likely to become a lasting element in the theory of international relations. As realist and other paradigms prove too limited for explaining an increasingly complex, interdependent, and dangerous world, scholars are searching for new ways to organize intellectually and understand international activity. Using the term regime allows us to point to and comprehend sets of activities that might otherwise be organized or understood differently. Thinking in terms of regimes also alerts us to the subjective aspects of international behavior that might be overlooked altogether in more conventional inquiries.

A regime, as defined in this volume, is a set of principles, norms, rules,

¹ See Oran R. Young, “International Regimes: Problems of Conception Formation,” *World Politics* (April 1980): 331–56; Ernst Haas, “Why Collaborate? Issue-Linkage and International Regimes,” *World Politics* (April 1980): 357–405; Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977); S. Brown et al., *Regimes for the Ocean, Outer Space, and Weather* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1977); Edward L. Morse, “The Global Commons,” *Journal of International Affairs* (Spring/Summer 1977): 1–21; Raymond F. Hopkins and Donald J. Puchala, *Global Food Interdependence: Challenge to American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); Hopkins and Puchala, eds., *The Global Political Economy of Food* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979); and Raymond F. Hopkins, “Global Management Networks: The Internationalization of Domestic Bureaucracies,” *International Social Science Journal* (January 1978): 31–46. The major focus of the Council on Foreign Relations’ 1980’s Project on the construction of regimes is a good indicator of the importance the concept has achieved in both academic and practitioner circles.

and procedures around which actors' expectations converge. These serve to channel political action within a system and give it meaning.² For every political system, be it the United Nations, the United States, New York City, or the American Political Science Association, there is a corresponding regime.³ Regimes constrain and regularize the behavior of participants, affect which issues among protagonists move on and off agendas, determine which activities are legitimized or condemned, and influence whether, when, and how conflicts are resolved.

Several particular features of the phenomenon of regimes, as we conceive of it, are worth noting, since other authors do not stress or, in the case of some, accept these points. We stress five major features.

First, a regime is an attitudinal phenomenon. Behavior follows from adherence to principles, norms, and rules, which legal codes sometimes reflect. But *regimes themselves are subjective*: they exist primarily as participants' understandings, expectations or convictions about legitimate, appropriate or moral behavior. Such attitudes may exist in relation to systems of functionally interdependent activities centered in geographic regions, as in neutralization and arms control in Antarctica, or more consequentially, as in western European international economic affairs. Regimes may exist in relation to a mixture of geographic and functional concerns, as in the international air transport system or in the international regulation of the uses of the oceans. Or, again, regimes may exist in relation to largely functional concerns, such as the international regulation of drug trafficking or health systems generally.⁴

Second, an international regime includes tenets concerning appropriate procedures for making decisions. This feature, we suggest, compels us to identify a regime not only by a major substantive norm (as is done in characterizing exchange rate regimes as fixed or floating rate regimes) but also by the broad norms that establish procedures by which rules or policies—the detailed extensions of principles—are reached. Questions about the norms of a regime, then, include who participates, what interests dominate or are given priority, and what rules serve to protect and preserve the dominance in decision making.

Third, a description of a regime must include a characterization of the major principles it upholds (e.g., the sanctity of private property or the benefits of free markets) as well as the norms that prescribe orthodox and

² This definition draws upon a point made by David Easton, "An Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems," *World Politics* (April 1957): 383–400.

³ For example, Lucy Mair finds that regimes exist to prescribe and proscribe behavior even in states with no formal government. See *Primitive Government* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1960).

⁴ Young, "International Regimes," p. 340. In our sense, then, a regime is more specific than structure, such as the power relationship of the North to the South or the distribution of power in a particular issue-area, but is more enduring than mere historical case analysis of ongoing issues. The reality of a regime exists in the subjectivity of individuals who hold, communicate, reinforce or change the norms and authoritative expectations related to the set of activities and conduct in question.

proscribe deviant behavior. It is especially useful to estimate the hierarchies among principles and the prospects for norm enforcement. These bear upon the potential for change.

Fourth, each regime has a set of elites who are the practical actors within it. Governments of nation-states are the prime official members of most international regimes, although international, transnational, and sometimes subnational organizations may practically and legitimately participate. More concretely, however, regime participants are most often bureaucratic units or individuals who operate as parts of the "government" of an international subsystem by creating, enforcing or otherwise acting in compliance with norms. Individuals and bureaucratic roles are linked in international networks of activities and communication. These individuals and rules govern issue-areas by creating and maintaining regimes.

Finally, a regime exists in every substantive issue-area in international relations where there is discernibly patterned behavior. Wherever there is regularity in behavior some kinds of principles, norms or rules must exist to account for it. Such patterned behavior may reflect the dominance of a powerful actor or oligarchy rather than voluntary consensus among all participants. But a regime is present. Here, the tenets of the international regime come to match the values, objectives, and decision-making procedures of the pre-eminent participant or participants. A regime need not serve the common or separate interests of every participant very well or even at all. Slave states, as an extreme example, understand the norms and principles of a bondage regime, although they do not accept them voluntarily. On the other hand, a regime only weakly buttressed by participants' power or disputed among powerful actors may not consistently constrain behavior. Such a regime may be in a formative or transformative stage, but evidence of some normatively prescribed behavior would nonetheless confirm its existence, however tenuous.

Regime distinctions important for comparative study

Theorizing concerning regimes among political scientists is now in the "pigeonhole" stage (to put it more scientifically, we are currently "proliferating taxonomies"). After our initial excitement over discovering, or newly applying, the concept and after coming near to consensus on the concept's definition, we have moved to asking about analytic elements and dimensions that might become bases for comparative empirical studies. Are there, for example, varieties of international regimes, and, if so, how do we distinguish between or among them? If there are varieties of regimes and we are able to distinguish among them, what is the intellectual payoff in making such distinctions and comparisons?

Furthermore, how does one go about identifying regimes? Our methods differ from those adopted by some other contributors to this volume. In

contrast to more deductive approaches, where regime tenets are derived from postulates of general theory in international relations or from modeled patterns in microeconomics, we induce principles and norms from evidence of participants' perceptions and find rules written in charters, treaties, and codes. Evidence of participants' perceptions comes from interviews, when these are possible, or from writings and recorded reflections. We do not, however, induce principles and norms from *behavior*, which would confuse dependent and independent variables and lead to circular reasoning.

Some theorists suggest that what is interesting about regimes is similar to what used to be interesting about "systems"—that is, their origins, their structure, their impact on participants, their durability, and their transformation. In addition, those who study regimes are also concerned with principles and norms, with their effect upon the patterns of behavior that constitute compliance and deviance, and, importantly, with the patterns of reward and punishment that result. "Who benefits, how and why" and, correspondingly, "who suffers" because of regime norms are also central questions. Categorizing regime participants as advantaged and disadvantaged, and explaining why they are favored or penalized by different regimes, are theoretically appropriate objectives. In raising this question we clearly assert that regimes are not benign with respect to all participants, and that regimes can be "imposed" as well as arising solely from voluntary agreement.

Our examination of several international regimes suggests four characteristics of theoretical importance.

1. *Specific vs. diffuse regimes*

Just as systems must be limited analytically before they can be examined, so too regimes must be intellectually mapped according to the activities and participants they include. Regimes can be differentiated according to function along a continuum ranging from specific, single-issue to diffuse, multi-issue. They may also be categorized by participants according to whether a few or a great many actors subscribe to their principles or at least adhere to their norms. No international regimes command universal adherence, though many approach it. More specific regimes often tend to be embedded in broader, more diffuse ones—the principles and norms of the more diffuse regimes are taken as givens in the more specific regimes. In this sense we may speak of normative *superstructures*, which are reflected in functionally or geographically specific normative substructures or regimes. For example, in the nineteenth century, principles concerning the rectitude of the balance of power among major actors (the normative superstructure) were reflected in norms legitimizing and regulating colonial expansion (a substructure), and in those regulating major-power warfare (another substructure). Current norms that legitimize national self-determination, sanctify

sovereign equality, proscribe international intervention in domestic affairs, and permit international coercion, are all general principles of our world order. They are reflected in a variety of more specific regimes, such as that which governs the process of decolonization, and that which regulates the global food system.

If such relationships between normative superstructure and substructure are real, as we believe, some fascinating questions arise. What, for example, explains the origin of the normative superstructures that exist and persist at given periods in history? Why and how do principles of such diffuse regimes—the superstructures—change over time? Why and how are principles and norms from diffuse superstructures integrated into the normative and subjective features of narrower regimes? What is the relationship between regime change at this substructural level and change at the superstructural level?

2. *Formal vs. informal regimes*

Some regimes are legislated by international organizations, maintained by councils, congresses or other bodies, and monitored by international bureaucracies. We characterize these as “formal” regimes. The European Monetary System is one example. By contrast, other, more “informal” regimes are created and maintained by convergence or consensus in objectives among participants, enforced by mutual self-interest and “gentlemen’s agreements,” and monitored by mutual surveillance. For example, Soviet-American detente between 1970 and 1979 could be said to have been governed by a regime that constrained competitiveness and controlled conflict in the perceived mutual interests of the superpowers. Yet few rules of the relationship were ever formalized and few institutions other than the Hot Line and the Helsinki accords were created to monitor and enforce them.⁵

3. *Evolutionary vs. revolutionary change*

Regimes change substantively in at least two different ways: one preserves norms while changing principles; the other overturns norms in order to change principles. Regimes may change qualitatively because those who participate in them change their minds about interests and aims, usually because of changes in information available to elites or new knowledge otherwise attained.⁶ We call this *evolutionary change*, because it occurs within the procedural norms of the regime, usually without major changes in the distribution of power among participants. Such change, undisturbing to the

⁵ Ted Greenwood and Robert Haffa Jr., “Supply-Side Non Proliferation,” *Foreign Policy* no. 42 (Spring 1981): 125–40.

⁶ See Haas, “Why Collaborate,” p. 397.

power structure and within the regime's "rules of the game," is rather exceptional and characteristic mainly of functionally specific regimes.

By contrast, *revolutionary* change is more common. Most regimes function to the advantage of some participants and to the disadvantage of others. The disadvantaged accept regime principles and norms (and diminished rewards or outright penalties) because the costs of noncompliance are understood to be higher than the costs of compliance. But disadvantaged participants tend to formulate and propagate counterregime norms, which either circulate in the realm of rhetoric or lie dormant as long as those who dominate the existing regime preserve their power and their consequent ability to reward compliance and punish deviance. However, if and when the power structure alters, the normative contents of a prevailing regime fall into jeopardy. Power transition ushers in regime transformation; previously disadvantaged but newly powerful participants ascend to dominance and impose new norms favoring their own interests. In extreme cases the advantaged and disadvantaged reverse status, and a new cycle begins with regime change contingent upon power change. Such revolutionary change is more characteristic of diffuse regimes, highly politicized functional regimes, or those where distributive bias is high.

4. *Distributive bias*

All regimes are biased. They establish hierarchies of values, emphasizing some and discounting others. They also distribute rewards to the advantage of some and the disadvantage of others, and in so doing they buttress, legitimize, and sometimes institutionalize international patterns of dominance, subordination, accumulation, and exploitation. In general, regimes favor the interests of the strong and, to the extent that they result in international governance, it is always appropriate to ask how such governance affects participants' interests. The degree of bias may make a considerable difference in a regime's durability, effectiveness, and mode of transformation. "Fairer" regimes are likely to last longer, as are those that call for side payments to disadvantaged participants. The food regime discussed below functions in this manner. Furthermore, it can make a difference whether the norms of a regime permit movement between the ranks of the advantaged and disadvantaged, as with the ascendance of some previously disadvantaged actors toward greater power over current issues in international finance. By contrast, some regimes institutionalize international caste systems, as under colonialism. We expect that regimes founded on more egalitarian norms, and those that prescribe sensitivity toward mobility for disadvantaged participants, would be more adhered to and less susceptible to revolutionary change. Many elitist, exploitative, and stratified regimes have, however, proven viable for extended periods, and theoretical generalizations must be carefully qualified.

In the next two sections, we use the regime framework to discuss international relations in two contrasting issue-areas, 19th century colonialism and mid-twentieth century food affairs. Readers will recognize that these two regimes differ significantly along each of the four analytical dimensions we have elaborated. The colonial regime was diffuse, largely informal, subject to revolutionary transformation, and distinctly biased in distributing rewards. By contrast, the food regime is more specific, more formalized, probably in the process of evolutionary transformation, and more generally rewarding to most participants. Our primary intention is to highlight and clarify our theoretical definitions and the variables we have identified as useful for comparative analysis. Conclusions will push toward generalizations concerning regime outcomes and patterns of stability and change.

Colonialism, 1870–1914

Though the subject of voluminous writing, colonialism, particularly European colonialism as practiced during the last decades of the 19th century, has not been approached as a regime. Therefore, one aim of our study was to seek new insights by subjecting an already familiar phenomenon to rather unconventional analysis. Our other goal was to select as a basis for comparison a diffuse, informal, highly biased regime that was transformed in a revolutionary manner.

The regime

Historians identify the years 1870 to 1914 as the heyday of European colonial expansion.⁷ Our analysis reveals that during this period the international relations of the imperial powers were regulated by a regime that prescribed certain modes of behavior for metropolitan countries vis-à-vis each other and toward their respective colonial subjects. Save for the United States, which entered the colonial game rather late (and Japan, which entered later and never participated in the normative consensus until after it had come under challenge), all of the colonial powers were European. England, France, Germany, and Italy were most important, but the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, and Russia also behaved imperialistically, and characteristically as far as regime tenets were concerned. The “regime managers” by 1870 were the governments of major states, where ministries and ministers made the rules of the colonial game and diplomats, soldiers, businessmen, and settlers played accordingly. In addition, a variety of sub-

⁷ See, for example, William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism*, 2d ed. (New York: Knopf, 1972); R. R. Palmer, *A History of the Modern World* (New York: Knopf, 1957), pp. 613–59.

national actors, including nebulous “publics” such as church societies, militarist lobbies, trade unions, and bankers, held opinions on issues of foreign policy and in some countries exercised substantial influence over the formulation of colonial policy.⁸

The international relations of colonialism were evident in distinctive patterns of political and economic transactions and interactions. Flows of trade and money were typically “imperial” in the sense implied by Hobson or Lenin: extracted raw materials flowed from colonies to metropolises, light manufactures flowed back, investment capital flowed outward from European centers, and profits and returns flowed back.⁹ Elites also flowed outward as administrators, soldiers, entrepreneurs, and missionaries. They went abroad to rule new lands, make new fortunes, and win converts to their political, economic or religious causes. The flows of people were largely unidirectional. Transactions were discontinuous across empires and each—the British, French, German, Italian, etc.—became a political-economic system unto itself.

But much more important than the characteristic transaction flows of colonialism were the interaction patterns in relations among imperial powers and between them and their respective colonies. There was a pronounced competitiveness among metropolises as each country sought to establish, protect, and expand its colonial domains against rivals. Yet there was also a sense of limitation or constraint in major-power relations, a notion of imperial equity, evidenced in periodic diplomatic conferences summoned to sort out colonial issues by restraining the expansiveness of some and compensating others for their losses. Constraint and equity were also reflected in doctrines like “spheres of influence” and “open doors,” which endorsed the notion that sharing and subdivision were in order.¹⁰ Therefore, what we observe in international relations among metropolitan countries are numerous conflicts, frictions, and collisions at points where empires came geographically together, occasional armed skirmishes outside Europe, periodic conferences called to settle colonial issues, and countless bilateral treaties and agreements between colonial powers that defined borders on distant continents, transferred territories or populations, and codified the privileges and obligations of each colonial power with respect to the domains of others.¹¹ In inter-imperial relations, then, there were distinct elements of international management over selected parts of the non-European world.¹² This management rested upon implicit codes for managing colonies, rationales like

⁸ Julius W. Pratt, *Expansionists of 1898* (New York: Peter Smith, 1951).

⁹ John A. Hobson, *Imperialism* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1938); V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (New York: International Publishers, 1939).

¹⁰ René Albrecht-Carrie, *A Diplomatic History of Europe since the Congress of Vienna* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), pp. 207–226.

¹¹ The events surrounding the Fashoda Crisis well illustrate this point. Cf. Langer, *Diplomacy of Imperialism*, pp. 551ff.; Albrecht-Carrie, *Diplomatic History*, pp. 223–25.

¹² Louis L. Snyder, ed., *The Imperialism Reader* (Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand, 1962), pp. 206 & passim.

“civilizing mission,” which were given credence, and growing willingness to agree on imperial borders by diplomatic conferences.

With regard to relations between the metropolitan powers and subject peoples, little equity prevailed. Commands, directives, and demands flowed from colonial ministries to colonial officers and then either to compliant local functionaries or directly to subjects. Deference and compliance flowed back. Defiance usually brought coercive sanctions, with success largely guaranteed by the technological superiority of European arms.¹³ The pattern of colonization was typically characterized by initial economic exploitation (usually by private entrepreneurs) and the arrival of religious missionaries, followed by military expeditions and the imposition of political authority either by coopting local leaders and institutions or by eliminating them in favor of metropolitan administrators. The establishment of political authority was sometimes followed by immigration from the metropolitan country, though the European outflow was seldom substantial. Colonial expansion typically proceeded from established coastal settlements toward the interiors of Africa and Asia. It was hastened where rival colonial powers began simultaneous expansionist drives in geographically proximate regions.

Colonization resulted in a pattern of outcomes that were advantageous to metropolitan countries and especially to particular segments of their national elites, disadvantageous to colonial subjects or at least to the majority of them, and stabilizing to intra-European international politics. Colonies brought wealth and resources that enriched citizens, enlarged national treasuries, and enhanced national power. Overseas empires also brought international prestige. In the colonies collaborating local elites usually accumulated wealth and even power by supporting the colonizers.¹⁴ But colonial peoples were generally exploited economically and certainly dominated politically (although it must be noted that ruler-subject relationships were in some areas less benign before European colonization). As for intra-European international relations, competition for empire became a surrogate for more direct confrontation in Europe and accounted in some measure for the absence of war on the continent for several decades after 1870. In addition, colonial expansion and the global subdivision that ensued were in themselves compensatory mechanisms that helped maintain the multipolar equilibrium among the major states. Above all, colonization skewed the global distribution of political autonomy and initiative as well as the distribution of wealth dramatically in Europe's favor.

All of this was surely pleasing to the colonial powers. While they bickered constantly over pieces of distant territory, none seriously questioned the rectitude or worth of the colonial system itself. In the thinking of foreign

¹³ The Germans, for example, with their policy of *Schrecklichkeit* killed over 100,000 Hehe and Herreros in German East and West Africa.

¹⁴ The Buganda, for example, expanded their territorial sphere within Uganda with British support, thanks to their collaboration. See David Apter, *The Political Kingdom in Uganda* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1962).

and colonial offices throughout Europe, behavior directed toward acquiring, preserving, protecting, and expanding empire was eminently legitimate. The legitimacy of colonization was collectively endorsed by the metropolitan governments and, after 1870, by overwhelming cross-sections of national populations—including Americans.¹⁵ It was this overriding sense of legitimacy, the convictions that imperialism and colonization were right, that all means toward colonial ends were justified, and that international management to preserve major-power imperialism was appropriate, that contributed to the durability of the system.

Norms of the colonial regime

The legitimacy in colonization was founded upon consensus in a number of norms that the governments of the major powers recognized and accepted. These subjective foundations of the international regime may be treated under six headings.

a. *The bifurcation of civilization.* Looking from the metropolitan capitals outward, the world was perceived as divided into two classes of states and peoples, civilized and uncivilized. Europe and northern North America occupied the civilized category, and all other areas were beyond the pale, save perhaps other “white-settled” dominions. Evidence of this genre of 19th and early 20th century thinking is readily gleaned from the popular literature and political rhetoric of statesmen of the day, where “we/they” distinctions abound and where “they” are continually referred to as “savages,” “natives,” “barbarians,” “primitives,” “children,” or the like.¹⁶ From this, it followed politically that inequality was an appropriate principle of international organization and that standards and modes of behavior displayed toward other international actors depended upon which category those others fell into. Toward the “uncivilized” it was reasonable to behave paternalistically, patronizingly, and dictatorially, and acceptable to behave brutally if the situation demanded.¹⁷ Toward “civilized” countries normal behavior had to demonstrate restraint and respect: bargaining was an accepted mode of interaction, concession did not necessarily imply loss of face, humiliation was out of the question, and conquest for subjugation was not legitimate.

b. *The acceptability of alien rule.* The zenith of European imperialism occurred before the principle of national self-determination became a tenet

¹⁵ Pratt, *Expansionists of 1898*; see also J.W. Pratt, *Expansionists of 1812* (New York: Peter Smith, 1949); and Langer, *Diplomacy of Imperialism*, pp. 67–96.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*; Edward Salmon, “The Literature of Empire,” in *The British Empire* vol. 11 (London, 1924).

¹⁷ Even as late as 1939 Robert Delavignette could write a book, *Freedom and Authority in French West Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950 [original French version, 1939]) based on this paternalistic view. The book gives advice to colonial officers on how to deal with subject tribes and chiefs.

of world politics, and indeed before Europe itself had largely settled into the pattern of "one nation, one state."¹⁸ Therefore, the idea and practice of elites and masses, government and governed, being of different ethnic or racial stock, speaking different languages, and espousing different religions and cultures were considered neither illegitimate nor particularly unorthodox. Ethnically alien rule was also common in the colonized regions prior to European penetration. Thus, the imposition of foreign rule and the superimposition of white elites on indigenous elites were approved as right and proper, especially when such behavior was also perceived as "civilizing" or "christianizing."

c. *The propriety of accumulating domain.* During the period 1870 to 1914 states' positions in the international status hierarchy were determined in considerable measure by expanses of territory (or numbers of inhabitants) under respective national jurisdictions. Domain was the key to prestige, prestige was an important ingredient in power, and power was the wherewithal to pursue a promising national destiny. The expansion of domain was therefore accepted by the European powers as a legitimate goal of imperial foreign policy and, indeed, reluctance to pursue such policies was considered unorthodox; it raised questions about the according of status. There were, of course, recognized limits upon imperial powers' expansiveness, as for instance in generally understood injunctions against expansion within Europe, into others' colonial empires, or into others' spheres of influence. States that stepped beyond these limits risked sanctions.¹⁹ Also proscribed were colonial conquests of such magnitude or executed so suddenly as to threaten the balance of power among metropolitan states. Nonetheless, expansion by conquest through Africa and Asia was not considered internationally lawless activity. On the contrary, it was accepted as respectable and responsible behavior by major powers.

d. *The importance of balancing power.* Intra-European relations in the late 19th century were stabilized by principles of a multipolar balance of power (even though the bipolarization that would harden by the eve of World War I was already in evidence). There was a widespread recognition of the efficacy of the balance of power and a general consensus among foreign offices that it should be preserved and perfected. This principle also justified colonial expansion and it further supported the norm of compensation.²⁰ As a matter of right all colonial governments expected compensation for adjustments in the boundaries of colonial empires. In fact, the agendas of periodic international conferences on colonial matters directed discussion toward formulas for compensation, especially as European power pene-

¹⁸ For a discussion of the principle of self-determination see Robert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), pp. 295–362.

¹⁹ Snyder, *Imperialism Reader*, pp. 209, 297, 368, 372, & passim.

²⁰ Richard Rosecrance, *Action and Reaction in World Politics* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), pp. 220–73.

trated the crumbling Ottoman realm and as imperialism extended into China and Africa.²¹ Although often difficult to engineer, compensation was considered legitimate and appropriate.

e. *Legitimacy in neomercantilism.* Economic exclusivity was a norm of colonialism since, as we have noted, colonies were considered to be zones of economic exploitation. Hence metropolitan powers endorsed their rights to regulate the internal development and external commerce of their colonies for the benefit of the home country, and, when appropriate or necessary, to close their colonial regions to extra-empire transactions. Instances abound where powers complained strongly about the protective behavior of others in their empires, but as the latter decades of the 1800s wore on and free-trade principles faded from fashion and practice fewer questions were raised about the propriety of neomercantilism. It had become a behavioral norm of the colonial system before 1900.²²

f. *Noninterference in others' colonial administration.* As colonial domains were considered to lie under the sovereign jurisdiction of metropolitan governments, external interference in "domestic" affairs was not countenanced. The colonial powers could, and did, chip away at each others' domains via strategic diplomacy and occasional military skirmishes. But seldom did any one power question the internal administration of another's colonies. This was a taboo; respect for it resulted in mutual tolerance for whatever modes of subjugation a power might choose to impose in its outlying domains. The slaughter of rebellious tribespeople in Tanganyika and South West Africa by Germans in 1904–1905 was largely ignored in Europe. We suppose, though we cannot actually prove, that one of the factors underlying this norm of noninterference was the fear of retaliation. No imperial country could claim a record of completely enlightened treatment of colonial subjects, since brutalities occurred everywhere, and exposing another's misdeeds might invite exposure of one's own. There was, then, a "glass house" effect in the collective restraints on both criticism and intervention in internal matters of empire. Although the extraordinary and continuing brutality of rule in King Leopold's Congo was exposed in 1909 by investigative journalism it was bankruptcy, not immorality, that led the Belgian government finally to assert control over Leopold's fiefdom. The details of life in the Congo shocked many and violated even the lower standards of human decency applied to "uncivilized" areas; but it was the breakdown of fiscal solvency that was decisive.

It is easy to see how these various tenets of the colonial regime affected international behavior. They abetted behavior directed toward establishing relationships of dominance and subordination, rationalized conquest and whatever brutalities it might involve, justified subjugation and exploitation, impelled a continuing major-power diplomacy concerning colonial matters,

²¹ Snyder, *Imperialism Reader*, pp. 209, 304–324.

²² Parker T. Moon, *Imperialism and World Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1928).

and necessitated periodic conferences and continuing bureaucratic-level communication. Such communication was aimed at limiting overexpansiveness, providing compensation, and maintaining the balance of power, and it had the effect of insulating empires from extra-imperial scrutiny and intervention. In this normative setting, colonization was deemed right and legitimate. It flourished.

There is little mystery about the basis of the norms that underpinned colonization between 1870 and 1914. They followed from consensus in the preferences of the major powers of the period, preferences that fundamentally preserved a global system that awarded great benefits to the major powers. To deviate from the norms was to invite sanctions, imposed either unilaterally, by particularly offended metropolitan countries, or collectively, by the major powers in concert. For example, the collective suppression of the Boxer Rebellion in China, in 1898, was a response to the Chinese infraction of the “bifurcation” principle (the norm that endowed Europeans with the right to establish dominance-subordination relationships).²³ Conversely, to uphold the norms in one’s actions was to preserve the flow of rewards from colonization, to preserve the European balance of power, and to preserve European ascendancy in the world.

The fundamental principles of the colonial regime were all challenged, even in their heyday, and eventually undermined during the years after 1920. By the 1970s dominance-subordination was considered an illegitimate mode of international relations, alien rule had become anathema, economic exploitation was condemned and attacked, territorial compensation was considered diplomatically ludicrous, and the internal affairs of empire (of which only small remnants remained) became matters of continuing international public disclosure and debate in the United Nations and elsewhere.²⁴ Colonization is no longer considered internationally legitimate, and current norms of international behavior prescribe decolonization just as emphatically as earlier norms prescribed colonization. Indeed, the U.N. Trusteeship Council was set up to terminate the colonial system. There has been a profound change in the international regime that governs relations between the weak and the strong.

Why did the regime change? First, and obviously, the power structure of the international system changed; western European power was drained in two world wars; the United States and the Soviet Union rose to fill the power vacuum; new elites had come to power in both the United States and Russia after World War I and their preferences were distinctly anticolonial (though for ideologically different reasons). After World War II, new power emerged to buttress new principles and to support new institutions like the United Nations, where anticolonialism, promoted by the Soviet Union and

²³ Albrecht-Carrie, *Diplomatic History*, pp. 243–44.

²⁴ David A. Kay, “The Politics of Decolonization: The New Nations and the United Nations Political Process,” *International Organization* 21, 4 (Autumn 1967): 786–811.

acquiesced in by the United States, was taken up by smaller countries and proclaimed by excolonial states, whose ranks swelled yearly. A new global consensus was formed in the General Assembly under pressure from the Committee of Twenty-Four, and this held the tenets of the new anticolonial regime that prevails at present.

Some analytic characteristics of the colonial régime

The international regime that governed turn-of-the-century European colonialism was obviously diffuse, both geographically and functionally. Its tenets pertained to relations among metropolitan countries, and to relations between them and their subjects. Whatever the substance of relations among metropolises, principles of exclusivity, compensation, and power balancing applied. In metropolitan-colonial relations of whatever substance principles prescribing dominance-subordination and abetting exploitation applied. To the extent that there were also geographically or functionally specific sub-regimes operative during the imperial era, such as American hegemonism in the Caribbean, the antislavery system, or intracolony trade, they tended to embody as givens the main tenets of the colonial régime. Interestingly, the colonial régime itself embodied some of the more general principles of 19th century international relations, as for example the central and explicit importance of power balancing, and the linkage between international stature and control over "domain." This suggests the hierarchical interrelationship of *superstructural* and *substructural* régimes discussed earlier.

Managing the colonial régime was a pluralistic exercise conducted largely by mutual monitoring and self-regulation practiced in national capitals. The régime was therefore, by and large, informal; there were few codified rules and no permanent organizations. Periodically, foreign ministers or heads of states would assemble to sort out colonial problems, as in Berlin in 1884–85. Terms of compensation and boundaries of political and economic jurisdiction were spelled out in treaties that concluded colonial conflicts, and the rights of colonizers and obligations of subjects were also elaborated from time to time in unequal treaties between metropolitan governments and local authorities in outlying areas, which established "protectorates." But this was the extent of formalization for the colonial régime. That the régime in its heyday lasted for nearly a half-century may be attributed in part to its informal structure and policy procedures. Formalization would have amounted to a spelling out of the rules, as for example those necessitating compensation, and would have jeopardized major-power relations by calling attention to constraints that rival governments could not admit to in public. The less said formally, the better, and the more durable the régime.

Little need be said about the distributive bias in the norms of the colonial régime. With regard to benefits among metropolitan rivals there was

some sense of equity, born perhaps of the recognition that the regime could prevail only as long as major participants found it satisfactory; each, therefore, had to gain something from it. But with regard to intra-imperial relations, exploitation was the rule. More crucially, the rules of the game did not allow for changes in status, nor for legitimacy in side-payments in return for compliance. Unless they chose to grasp at occasional hints of “self-government someday” or unless they were white settlers or collaborating local elites, colonial subjects went unrewarded by the colonial regime. Yet they played by the rules anyway, deviating only intermittently, mainly because the costs of alternative behavior were kept prohibitively high by colonial authorities (or at least were so perceived by subjects). Nor was there much expectation of assistance from the outside world, where strong states accepted the legitimacy of colonialism and weak states would not challenge the status quo.

While our description of the colonial regime only hints at its transformation in the middle of the 20th century, the change was obviously of the revolutionary variety. There was little changing of minds or goals on the part of the colonial powers (save perhaps for the United States, whose government began to seek decolonialization almost as soon as the Pacific territories were annexed). Instead, counterregime norms took form in the European colonies in the 1920s and 1930s as nationalist elites emerged and movements were organized. The Russian Revolution created a formally anti-imperialistic state, thus breaking the European consensus that supported the principles of colonialism and modestly transferring power from the forces of imperialism to its challengers. Two world wars in the first half of the 20th century eclipsed European power and with it the capacity to retain great empires. After World War II the United States became aggressively anti-imperialistic for a time, thus shifting more power away from the supporters of the colonial regime. With the onset of the Cold War the United States subdued its anticolonialism in the interest of western unity (but Washington never admitted the legitimacy of empires). Meanwhile, counterregime norms prescribing decolonization had been legitimized and institutionalized by the United Nations General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies in the early 1960s. As the power to preserve the old regime waned, the power to replace it expanded. Personalities changed, norms changed, and power changed. As a result an international regime was discredited, eliminated, and replaced. The transformation was nothing less than a comprehensive change in the principles by which governments conducted their international relations.

Food, 1949–1980

The current international regime for food emerged in the aftermath of World War II as a result of several developments. The most important of

these were the creation of international food organizations, the growth of North America as a major supplier of grains to the world market, and the creation and diffusion of more productive farming practices. We have already described the resulting regime at considerable length elsewhere.²⁵ The food regime regulates international activity affecting production, distribution, and consumption of food, and these effects are potent in nearly every country of the world.

Food constitutes a functionally rather specific regime, at least in comparison with diffuse regimes such as colonialism. Nonetheless, it conditions diverse policies and activity. Food trade, food aid, and international financing for rural development and agricultural research, for example, are all affected by the principles and norms of the international food regime. In contrast to the colonial regime, the food regime is more formal. Several organizations shape and spread regime norms and rules, and many rules are explicit and codified. Formal organizations include two specialized agencies of the United Nations, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Program (WFP). Both legislate rules and enforce procedures. Other bodies, such as the International Wheat Council (IWC), the International Fund for Agricultural Development, and the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, also help to manage the world food system and uphold norms of the regime.

Many of the regime's principles and norms are codified in treaties, agreements, and conventions such as the FAO Charter, the International Grains Agreement, and the Food Aid Convention. The norms of the food regime are biased to favor developed and grain-trading countries, which have long enjoyed special weight in the IWC and FAO forums. Still, in contrast to the colonial regime, most participants in the food regime benefit to some extent from their compliance with norms. The regime is now in transition though, again in contrast to the colonial regime, change is taking place in evolutionary fashion.

We refer to and discuss an international *food* regime advisedly, because policy coordination among and within states is organized around food rather generally, not only around separate commodities. Formal organizations that regulate international trading in the agricultural sector do so as part of a broad focus on food, and many procedures are standardized across commodities. Much the same is true of trading in agricultural inputs and in other functional tasks related to food. Agronomic research, for example, is internationally channeled and coordinated by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research. Furthermore, most officials whose behavior is important to the regime tend to be professionally responsible for food affairs rather generally; they are not just commodity specialists. For example, the norms they accept relating to nutrition, hunger, and eligibility for aid are based on food needs broadly defined in terms of calories and protein; the

²⁵ Hopkins and Puchala, *Global Political Economy of Food*, pp. 18–27.

norms relating to prices are based on market needs as affected by total farm production, subsidies, and incentives.

For illustrative purposes we will focus on wheat as a key commodity in the international food regime, mainly because the international economics and politics of wheat have been thoroughly researched and we can therefore discuss regime influences with some confidence. Wheat is the most easily stored and substituted product in the world's basket of foods. It is the preferred grain of consumption among well-off people in most parts of the world (though rice is still preferred by many in Asia). Wheat is suitable for both livestock and human feeding, and, for its costs of production, compares favorably with other grains and food products in delivering calories, proteins, and other nutrients. For these reasons, not surprisingly, the management of the world's wheat supply is essential in adjusting the world's food supply through international mechanisms. Wheat constitutes a special sub-regime.²⁶

The national actors dominating the international wheat market since World War II have been the United States and Canada. In 1934–38 these North American countries supplied 20 percent of the wheat, coarse grain, and rice traded, while in 1979 they supplied 70 percent.²⁷ These countries also held very large surpluses until 1972 (a byproduct of their domestic agricultural politics). Their common interests led them to operate as an informal duopoly. Together they controlled and stabilized international prices for two decades, though at the cost of allowing the price of internationally traded wheat to decline in constant terms by nearly one-half between 1950 and 1963–69.²⁸ Other important actors in the food regime, as reflected by their participation in the wheat sector, include 1) major producers and consumers such as members of the European Communities (EEC), eastern European countries, and the Soviet Union; 2) other principal exporters such as Australia and Argentina; 3) poor importers such as China, Bangladesh, and Egypt; and 4) various international bodies such as the World Food Council, the Committee on Surplus Disposal of the FAO, and the major grain-trading firms.²⁹ Some importers, notably Japan, import far larger proportions of their total consumption than many poor importers. Japan imports over 50 percent of its food grains, 80 percent of its feed grains, and 90 percent of its soybeans.³⁰ The economic strength of such industrial countries, or oil producers in the case of OPEC, gives these importers a strong position in

²⁶ For an elaboration of this point historically, see Wilfred Malenbaum, *The World Wheat Economy: 1885–1939* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953).

²⁷ See the figures in Hopkins and Puchala, *Global Food Interdependence*, p. 36. The U.S. share in this was about 80% and the Canadian about 12%.

²⁸ See Alex F. McCalla, "A Duopoly Model of World Wheat Pricing," *Journal of Farm Economics* 48, 3 (1968), pp. 711–17, and Hopkins and Puchala, *Global Food Interdependence*, chap. 2.

²⁹ Dan Morgan, *Merchants of Grain* (New York: Viking Press, 1979).

³⁰ Fred H. Sanderson, *Japan's Food Prospects and Policies* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1978), pp. 1–2.

bargaining over food with major exporters. Poor importing countries, on the other hand, even those that are 80 to 90 percent self-reliant, remain the most vulnerable to international price changes and the least influential in shaping outcomes in the food system.³¹ Of course, in more concrete terms the participants in the food regime are not really states and organizations but individuals, an international managerial elite of government officials who are responsible for food and agricultural policy within countries, and for bargaining about food affairs in international forums. Their network usually includes executives from the trading firms, some scientific experts, and occasionally representatives from public-interest organizations. But its core is a cluster of agricultural and trade officers. To take one example, the elites responsible for negotiating toward an international grain reserve agreement between 1974 and 1979, at least those most visible in London and Geneva, were senior officials in government ministries of agriculture and trade officials from the large grain-trading countries, along with delegation members from producers' associations and trading firms. The United States invited a representative from an organization concerned with hunger to serve in an advisory capacity, but the elites who determined the outcome were clearly representatives of large, concentrated economic interests.³² The negotiations failed because consensus could not be mustered among the world's food managers.³³

Carrying the grain reserve story a step further illustrates the central position of the United States in the world food system, and in shaping the regime that regulates it. In November 1980, after the breakdown of international negotiations on the grain reserve, the United States adopted a four-million-ton emergency reserve of wheat. This unilateral reserve resulted from a coalition of two interests. The first was the interest of wheat producers, whose anxieties were heightened by the embargo imposed on shipments of grain to the Soviet Union in response to the invasion of Afghanistan. The U.S. Department of Agriculture tried to prevent a drop in prices from the lost sales by using its reserve authority to buy up four million tons of wheat (and ten million tons of corn). But producers wanted assurances that this grain would not be later dumped on commercial markets. The second interest was that of the humanitarian hunger lobby. It was largely organized after

³¹ Cheryl Christensen, "World Hunger: A Structural Approach," in Hopkins and Puchala, *Global Political Economy of Food*, pp. 171–200.

³² The one exception was Brennon Jones of Bread for the World. Key talks at the negotiations involved American Agriculture Department negotiators who worked out their positions in consultation with Canadians and with representatives of American wheat farmers (the latter served on the United States delegation) and representatives of the EEC (where French officials played a leading role). Soviet Union trade officials also played an important contextual role through clarifying their intentions but declining to participate in reserve obligations.

³³ For some of this information we are indebted to Daniel Morrow. In 1978–79 he was Special Assistant to the Under Secretary for International Affairs and Commodity Programs, United States Department of Agriculture, and one of the principal negotiators working on the food aid convention.

the world food shortage of 1973–75 and had pressed for international reserves for five years. The coincidence of the two interests in 1980 resulted in a food reserve that by law could be released to food-aid recipients but not to commercial customers. The creation of this international reserve marked the first time that a stockpile of food had been held for release *only* to poor people overseas on concessional terms. Its creation represented a minor change in the international food regime that was, ironically, engineered by Americans playing at domestic politics.

Norms of the food regime

In regulating food affairs over the last several decades, regime managers have been able to find consensus on a number of norms. Some of these reflect the overarching principles or superstructure of the state system; others are more specifically aimed at regulating food transfers. Eight norms in particular tend either to be embodied in the charters of food institutions, or to be recognized as “standard operating procedures” by food managers.

Respect for a free international market. Most major participants in the food trade of the post-World War II era adhered to the belief that a properly functioning free market would be the most efficient allocator of globally traded foodstuffs (and agricultural inputs). At the FAO and in other forums, therefore, representatives of major trading countries advocated such a market, aspired towards it, at least in rhetoric, and assessed food affairs in terms of free-market models. Communist countries did not accept this norm for Soviet bloc trade, but abided by it nonetheless in East-West food trade. Actual practice often deviated rather markedly from free-trade ideals, as the history of attempts at demand and supply controls testifies, but in deference to the regime norm these were either rationalized as means toward a free market or criticized for their unorthodox tenets. The Common Agricultural Policy of the European Communities, certain United States policies with regard to supported commodities, and Japanese rice pricing have been relentlessly attacked as illegitimate and contraventions of free-trade norms. Such practices are defended as “temporary,” “unfortunate but necessary,” “politically imperative,” and the like, so that free-market principles tend to be supported even in the breach.

National absorption of adjustments imposed by international markets. This derives from norms worked out in the more diffuse trade and state-system regimes. The relative price stability that prevailed in international grain markets during much of the postwar era can be accounted for in large measure by American and Canadian willingness to accumulate reserves in times of market surplus and to release them, commercially and concessionally, in times of tightness. Of course, these practices occurred largely for domestic reasons. Yet there was still the almost universal expectation that

North Americans could and would hold reserves for the world and would manipulate them in the interest of market stability. Hence this major norm—that each group dependent on the market should bear, through its own policies, burdens created by large price swings—was made easier to maintain as long as North American reserves acted to prevent large price variations.

Qualified acceptance of extramarket channels of food distribution. Food aid on a continuing basis and as an instrument of both national policy and international program became an accepted part of the postwar food regime. By 1954 it was institutionalized by national legislation in the United States and by international codes evolving through the FAO's Committee on Surplus Disposal. Concessional food trade was given major impetus by the United States' effort to legitimize its international disposal of grain surpluses. Yet in a system oriented toward free trade, participants' acquiescence in extramarket distribution could be obtained only on the stipulation that market distribution was to take precedence over extramarket distribution. Therefore, food aid was acceptable to American and foreign producers and exporters as long as aid did not dramatically reduce income from trade or distort market shares. Rules to this effect were explicitly codified in national and international law. One example is the "usual marketing requirement," which demands that a food-aid recipient must import commercially, in addition to food aid received, an amount equal to its average imports of the preceding five years.

Avoidance of starvation. The accepted international obligation to prevent starvation is not peculiar to the postwar period; it derives from more remote times. There has been and remains a consensus that famines are extraordinary situations and that they should be met by extraordinary and charitable means.

The free flow of scientific and crop information. Whereas most of the other norms of the international food regime (and, more specifically, the wheat regime) emerged during the postwar era largely because of American advocacy and practice, "free information" emerged in spite of U.S. misgivings. Freedom of information about the results of agricultural research was a notion nurtured by the FAO and welcomed by those seeking technology for development. With American acquiescence, especially after 1970, it became a norm of the food regime and has become nearly universal. The same is true of production information: even the Soviets now acquiesce to American and FAO reporting requirements on their current crops.

Low priority for national self-reliance. Partly because the global food system of the past thirty years was perceived by most participants as one of relative abundance and partly because of international divisions of labor implicit in free-trade philosophies, national self-reliance in food was not a norm of the international food regime. Indeed, food dependence was encouraged and becoming dependent upon external suppliers was accepted as legitimate and responsible international behavior. World Bank and World Food

Council efforts to conduct national food-sector studies in the most dependent food importers, begun in 1980, are explicit challenges to this norm.³⁴ Measures that reduce dependence in rich importers, such as the Common Agricultural Policy of the EEC and the subsidization of domestic rice production in Japan, also conflict with this norm implicitly. Such policies, however, reflect domestic political pressures rather than explicit goals of food self-reliance; hence they do not directly conflict with the emphasis on food trade *per se*.

National sovereignty and the illegitimacy of external penetration. The international food system of the last thirty years existed within the confines of the international political system, so that principles governing the latter necessarily conditioned norms of the food regime. Among them, the general acceptance of the principle of national sovereignty largely proscribed external interference or penetration into matters defined as "domestic" affairs. In practice this meant that food production, distribution, and consumption within countries, and the official policies that regulated them, remained beyond the legitimate reach of the international community; a "look the other way" ethic prevailed even in the face of officially perpetrated inhumanities in a number of countries. Relief for starving Ethiopians in 1973–74 was delayed a year, for example, by adherence to this norm.³⁵

Low concern about chronic hunger. That international transactions in food should be addressed to alleviating hunger and malnutrition, or that these concerns should take priority over other goals such as profit maximization, market stability or political gains, were notions somewhat alien to the international food regime of the postwar era. It was simply not a rule of international food diplomacy that hunger questions should be given high priority, or, in some instances, it was not considered appropriate that they should even be raised when there was a danger of embarrassing or insulting a friendly country by exposing malnutrition among its citizens. President Carter, for example, established a World Hunger Commission, but its report was considered so unimportant that it took over three months in 1980 to secure an appointment to deliver it officially to the president.

Regime consequences

Some effects of the prevailing food regime upon the international food system during the postwar era are easily discernible. In setting and enforcing regime norms for commercial transactions, the United States worked out trading rules in conjunction with key importers and other exporters. The most formal expressions came in the series of international wheat agreements, beginning in 1949. Communist countries remained peripheral

³⁴ Other challenges to this norm may be found in the works of revisionists such as Frances Moore Lappé and Joseph Collins, *Food First* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977).

³⁵ See Jack Shephard, *The Politics of Starvation* (New York: Carnegie Endowment, 1975).

participants in these arrangements. They worked out their own rules within COMECON, although they occasionally interacted with “western” food traders, playing by western rules when they did. World trade in foodstuffs attained unprecedented absolute levels, and North Americans became grain merchants to the world to an unprecedented degree. Through concessional transactions the major problems of oversupply and instability in the commercial markets were resolved. Surpluses were disposed of in ways that enhanced the prospects for subsequent growth of commercial trade by the major food suppliers. Especially with respect to grain trading, adherence to regime norms enhanced the wealth and power (i.e., market share and control) of major exporters, most notably farmers and trading firms in the United States. The nutritional well-being and general standard of living of fairly broad cross-sections of populations were also enhanced within major grain-importing countries. Adhering to regime norms, however, also encouraged interdependence among exporters and importers, an interdependence that, over time, limited the international autonomy and flexibility of both. With regard to concessional food flows, regime norms facilitated global humanitarianism and enhanced survival during shortfalls and famines. In absolute terms no major famine has occurred in the world since the Bengal famine in 1943. The availability of food on a concessional basis also undoubtedly alleviated some miseries in a number of aided countries. On the other hand regime norms also contributed to huge gaps in living standards between richer and poorer countries; they helped to perpetuate large gaps between rich and poor within countries; and they failed to correct chronic nutritional inadequacies of poor people worldwide. By promoting transfers of certain types of production technology as well as foodstuffs, the food regime also contributed to the spread of more capital-intensive farming and specialized rather than self-reliant crop choices. Overall, the food regime reflected and probably reinforced the global political-economic status quo that prevailed from the late 1940s to the early 1970s. It was buttressed by, and in turn buttressed, the global power structure of American hegemony.

The period 1970–78 was one of substantial instability in markets and concern for food distribution, food insecurity, and malnutrition. In 1963, when crop failure led the Soviets to make large international purchases, resources in the form of large surplus stocks in the West were available to smooth adjustments. But in 1972 world grain production lagged and trade rose sharply, and such resources were not available in the 1973–75 period. Production actually declined worldwide and the traded tonnage expanded dramatically, and wheat prices tripled in the two years between the summer of 1972 and 1974. Sufficient concern was aroused both in and beyond the circle of elite regime managers that a World Food Conference was held in November 1974, to institute a series of reforms in the regime. Three substantive major defects in the world food system, as well as many minor ones, were identified at the Conference. The first was inadequate food reserves to assure reasonable stability in markets and security for consumers; second,

the use of food aid in ways that reflected low priority for the food problems of less developed countries; and third, inadequate and inappropriate investment flows with respect to food production capacity in food-deficit areas.

These defects arose because behavior according to regime norms, which previously had not led to a conflict between domestic and international interests, now did so. The stockpiles that had guaranteed international price stability (though not the food security of those unable to buy food) had not been created or maintained with the purpose of providing international stability. No norm had been institutionalized that prescribed reserves for international purposes. Reserves, held mainly by the United States and Canada, had been largely a function of political and economic responses to the income demands of the politically significant farm populations in exporting countries. The norm held that adjustment to market conditions was a national responsibility. When reserves were no longer required for adjustment purposes in North America they were gladly, not cautiously, depleted. Similarly, for the most part food aid had been an attractive means of foreign assistance precisely because surplus stocks overhanging markets were thought undesirable. Food aid was a mechanism to reduce such stocks and to promote new markets. In addition, the largest donor, the United States, allocated the bulk of its food aid on the basis of political rather than nutritional criteria and in direct proportion to the size of American stocks. When food was no longer in surplus, nutritional and international welfare interests did not command enough influence to maintain food-aid levels or even to control allocations of diminished aid. Dietary adequacy in poorer countries was not prescribed by the regime. Thus, Egypt, South Korea, Taiwan, Israel, and even Chile got aid, while near-famine occurred in Bangladesh. Finally, investment in food production, especially in poor countries, was low because it was not seen as attractive by the dominant philosophy of economic development—import-substituting industrialization. Nor was it relevant to the largest motivation that shaped private capital flows, namely, the search for cheap sources of supply. As noted, agricultural development was not prescribed by the regime. These considerations abetted the transfer of existing rather than new technologies, and leaned against investment in rural areas and in food crops for local consumption (as opposed to fibers or tropical products such as coffee, tea, and pineapples). The outlook for managers of the food regime was shaped by their positions and the rewards for these positions. Food affairs were generally not decided in ministries of development, let alone ministries of health. Rather, they were managed by agriculture and trade officials, and served their understanding of interests and goals. The international arena, for them, was largely a means for solving domestic problems through market development or surplus disposal. Goals of public health, political stability, and general economic development were at best given lip service in the calculations and actions of the food regime's managers.

In the seven years since the World Food Conference, has the regime

changed? The answer is “marginally,” and by evolution. First, there has come to be a greater emphasis on rural development. Growing more food has received high priority at the World Bank and in the efforts of national foreign assistance agencies, especially in food-scarce countries. New norms emphasizing food in development planning have been codified by a special conference on rural development held in Rome in 1979 and by continuing World Food Council resolutions. Finally a new lending agency, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, has been established (1977). A second change is that greater security for food-aid recipients has been assured. This results from a new Food Aid Convention, agreed to in March 1980, which raised the minimum aid donor pledges from four-and-one-half to eight million tons, and from the four-million-ton emergency international wheat reserve of the United States signed into law in January 1981. New norms formalized by the WFP established the legitimacy and stressed the urgency of these steps. Such norms have also prompted policy changes in major countries. The United States adopted a Title III program—food aid for development—that increased its concessional aid. A violation of older, nonintervention norms is reflected in the way this aid intervenes in the domestic food policy of aid recipients. Another norm change is reflected in increased programming of food aid according to nutritional rather than political criteria, which has occurred in the food aid programs of the WFP, Australia, Canada, and Europe.

These changes constitute the evolution of new norms that challenge the priority of market principles and give higher priority to chronic hunger, food security, and food self-reliance. Such norms have been explicitly promoted by international conferences, by the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, and by the Brandt and Carter Hunger Commissions.

In other respects the tenets of the old regime prevail, and priorities remain as they were in the early 1970s. National policies dominate international policies and “free market” mechanisms are still held to be ideal for the bulk of food allocations flowing in international channels. With respect to reserves to increase stability and security, progress has been limited. The total flow of food aid remains about one-half that of the mid 1960s in volume, and less than half on a per capita basis. A larger proportion, however, now goes to least-developed countries—85 percent, up from about 50 percent.

Food security remains tenuous. The internationally coordinated system of reserves for food security called for at the World Food Conference has not been created. World stocks, which have increased since 1974, are still less than half the average size of stocks in the 1950s and 1960s.

All current trends suggest that food deficits will grow in a number of regions of the world, particularly in Asia and Africa. Furthermore, the rising cost of production, ecological deterioration, and the decline of subsistence agriculture all point to increasing vulnerability in the relationship between food supplies and needy customers. Regime changes since 1974 to cope with this problem of maldistribution are almost certainly inadequate.

We expect that the higher degree of formalization of the food regime and its large number of voluntary participants will lead to continuing and accelerated efforts to change substantially the norms of the food regime. These efforts will occur within the frameworks of public and private organizations—United Nations agencies, special forums and secretariats, centers, councils, committees, conferences, and companies. Setting the rules of the game will remain the prerogative of powerful national governments, especially those whose foodstuffs dominate in trade and aid flows, and in particular the United States. To the extent that there has been incremental change in the global food regime, pressures from formal international institutions have been helpful. Periodic meetings of international organizations have compelled governments to think and rethink their policies, and to defend them. If goal change in the regime has been the result of learning, the institutions and organizations of the food regime have been the classrooms.

Otherwise, the food regime does not look very different or function very differently from other regimes. Its principles have legitimized unequal distributions of food and unequal distributions of benefits from buying and selling food. Its norms have given authority to the powerful, both informally and in formal international bodies. Interestingly, though, there has been little formulation or articulation of revolutionary norms. Suggestions of movement toward revolutionary change have been more prominent in American “hunger” groups than in speeches by leaders of the Group of 77. In short, there has been some evolutionary change but no major challenge to the central principles of the regime.

Conclusions

Regimes in the 1980s, nevertheless, seem more to be under construction (or perhaps reconstruction) than destruction. This is a consequence, we believe, of changing conditions in which either prevailing regime principles and norms have proved inadequate in serving the principles of powerful groups or norms themselves have come under challenge as wrong. The decline of U.S. hegemony and the attendant reduction in resources available for enforcing norms buttressed by American power have created challenges to existing regimes. Disagreements have arisen over appropriate norms in the areas of trade, oil, food, and even nuclear security. These disagreements could indicate the rise of a new anomie as a condition in international affairs or, as we believe, they could be ushering in new normative orders buttressed by new distributions of power and higher degrees of international organization.³⁶

³⁶ Talcot Parsons, for example, argues that anomie is the absence of norms while its opposite, institutionalization, is marked by structured complementarity of norms. See *The Social System* (New York: Free Press, 1964), p. 39.

Six general conclusions

Our two cases, colonialism and food, suggest some conclusions. They are hardly definitive or universal, but they might be subject to broader generalization and further refinement.

Without intending to be trivial let us first underline that *regimes exist*. In international relations there are revered principles, explicit and implicit norms, and written and unwritten rules, that are recognized by actors and that govern their behavior. Adherence to regimes may impose a modicum of order on international interactions and transactions. Our two case studies demonstrate that actors are guided by norms in diverse issue-areas. We would suggest that regimes exist in all areas of international relations, even those, such as major-power rivalry, that are traditionally looked upon as clear-cut examples of anarchy. Statesmen nearly always perceive themselves as constrained by principles, norms, and rules that prescribe and proscribe varieties of behavior.

Second, taking regimes into account contributes to explaining international behavior by alerting students of international affairs to subjective and moral factors that they might otherwise overlook. Once this subjective dimension of international relations is included, explanations of international behavior can be pushed beyond factors such as goals, interests, and power. Our case study reveals that regimes mediate between goals, interests, and power on the one hand, and behavior on the other. Such normative mediation is most effective, and hence most theoretically significant, between two limiting sets of conditions. At one extreme, a regime may be an empty facade that rationalizes the rule of the powerful by elevating their preferences to the status of norms. Under such conditions a regime exists because subordinate actors recognize the rules and abide by them, but knowing this would not significantly improve upon our ability to explain behavior as all we would need to know are the identities of the powerful and their interests and goals. Under the colonial regime, for example, knowledge of norms contributed little to explaining the dominance of metropolises over colonies. Similarly, under the food regime, the knowledge that there were norms revering free markets does not contribute greatly to explaining major trends in the trading behavior of the major exporters. These actors pressed for free trade because it was in their interest. Promoting the liberal doctrine itself was largely incidental, and exceptions were made when this doctrine was countered by powerful national (domestic) interests.

At the other extreme are conditions where regimes are determinative, where codified international law or morality is the primary guide to behavior, and where the separate goals, interests or capabilities of actors are inconsequential. Such conditions are extraordinarily rare in international relations. Where they prevail (in narrow, highly technical issue-areas like smallpox control or international posts and telegrams) consequent international behavior is analytically uninteresting. One area where a regime could evolve to

become determinative is the oceans; the Law of the Sea deserves close watching by regime analysts.

Between the limits of major-power hegemony and legal or moral order is a rather broad range of international relations where regimes mediate behavior largely by constraining unilateral adventurousness or obduracy. The case studies suggest conditions under which such normative mediation takes place. For example, it occurs in relations among powers of comparable capability, where the exertion of force cannot serve interests. Here, norms and rules tend to order oligarchies, establishing the terms of a stable and peaceful relationship, mediating and moderating conflict, and preserving collective status and prerogatives against outsiders. Relations among the colonial powers, for example, were obviously mediated by norms, and knowing this adds to our ability to explain behavior that had large consequences for colonial regions. Under the food regime, exporters' direct and indirect relations with each other were mediated by norms such as those proscribing concessional dealings until commercial markets were cleared. Knowing about these norms and their impacts helps to explain behavior that otherwise might be puzzling. Why, for example, did Americans or Canadians not fully push their competitive advantages when they held food supplies that could be sold at discount prices? Why also did they tacitly compensate for lost markets between them?

Regimes also mediate under conditions of diffused power, or under conditions where asymmetries in power are neutralized, as in one-state-one-vote international forums. Here, consensus about appropriate decision-making procedures and their legitimacy keeps pluralism from deteriorating into anarchy, and consensus about legitimate objectives makes policy possible. Artificial equalization of power in the United Nations General Assembly and the Committee of Twenty-Four was one of the factors that forced colonial powers to begin to comply with norms that eventually became components of a decolonization regime. Similar circumstances in FAO congresses helped to bring the United States to participate more fully in the international exchange of agronomic information, and to accept norms concerning the free flow of information and a higher floor for food aid.

Finally, regimes mediate during transitions of power. They tend to have inertia or functional autonomy and continue to influence behavior even though their norms have ceased either to reflect the preferences of powers or to be buttressed by their capabilities. This is one of the most fascinating and useful aspects of regime analysis, where compliance with norms explains why patterns of behavior continue long after reasoning in terms of power and interest suggests that they should have disappeared. For example, decolonization might have been a phenomenon of the 1930s instead of the 1960s had Asian and African nationalists dared sooner to challenge European imperialism with force. Similarly, French withdrawal from empire might have been less prolonged and less destabilizing within France had governments of the Fourth Republic less reverently espoused discredited norms of the

colonial regime (and realized, as De Gaulle did, that most of the French had long since abandoned the colonial ethos). In the same vein, a lingering acceptance of the tenet that it is more appropriate to address food shortages by importing food than by growing it contributed to the severity of the global food crisis of the early 1970s. And a lingering endearment with the notion that the American and Canadian governments will duopolistically buffer grain prices in the interest of global stability may now be contributing to a new food crisis, even though neither government has either interest in or adequate capability for making domestic adjustments for global stability.

Our third conclusion is that functionally specific and functionally diffuse regimes differ importantly with regard to the locus of management and the nature of managers. Functionally specific regimes such as the food regime are directed by technical specialists and middle-echelon administrators in participating governments. Such officials are recruited for their expertise and skills, traits that are well dispersed internationally. As a result, specific regimes tend to follow rather democratic procedures, at least as concerns policies pursued by managers. By contrast, functionally diffuse regimes such as the colonial regime are more often managed by diplomatic generalists and higher-level political officers. Not only does this suggest that diffuse regimes are likely to be much more highly politicized than specific ones, but also that conflicts which arise in the contexts of various regimes will be different. Resistance to issue linkage, for example, will be more common in specific regimes, where managers will variously seek to insulate (or, alternatively, expand) their jurisdictional domains. On the other hand, difficulties in enforcing norms, and greater deviance and regime challenges, are likely in diffuse regimes.

Fourth, international regimes are formalized in varying degrees. Our analysis suggests that degrees of formality tend to have relatively little to do with the effectiveness of regimes measured in terms of the probabilities of participants' compliance. With the two regimes we considered, one formal and one informal, both predictably and consistently constrained most participants' behavior over considerable periods of time. The colonial case suggests that some of the most effective regimes are those that are quite informal. This would seem to be true especially for regimes that regulate the general political behavior of major powers. "Understandings," "gentlemen's agreements," expected reciprocities, expected restraints, and predicted reactions, largely informal and uncodified, are important determinants of major power behavior. It is not accidental, moreover, that major power behavior is more likely to be subject to informal instead of formal expressions of principles and norms. Low hierarchy among major states reduces authority based upon raw power among them. But part of the ethos of major-power status is that great states must appear to be able to act in an unrestrained manner. No government of a major power wishes to appear constrained, least of all by a rival power. Yet we observe in cases such as the colonial one that powers usually are constrained, and statesmen recognize

this; but statesmen can behave "according to the rules" more readily when no one formalizes them.³⁷

While there may be few differences in the effectiveness of formal and informal regimes, our analyses suggest that "formalization" itself may be a dynamic factor. Regimes tend to become more formal over time, as with the colonial regime, where multilateral diplomatic conferences became increasingly important in the latter years of the imperial system; or with the food regime, where organizations, institutions, and rules seem now to be proliferating to fill a void in management created by American reluctance to provide informal leadership. We believe that regimes formalize over time because maintenance often comes in one way or another to require explicitness. As those rewarded by a regime's functioning become either accustomed to or dependent upon such benefits, they tend to formalize interaction patterns in order to perpetuate them. As elites change, "understandings" and "gentlemen's agreements" have a way of getting confused or reinterpreted, and formalization becomes necessary to preserve established norms and procedures. As challenges to a status quo preserved by a regime arise, maintaining orthodoxy comes to require explicit doctrine and more formal commitment; or, contrariwise, as a new regime emerges to replace a discredited older one, proponents of change might press for formalization as a hedge against reaction. Formalization thus might represent the apogee of a regime's influence, the first symbol of its prevalence, or the beginning of its decline. In all these instances, changes in formality seem to be related to shifts in the capability of dominant actors to manage or control.

Fifth, effectiveness in terms of compliance with rules and procedures of any given regime depends largely upon the consensus or acquiescence of participants. Formal enforcement is extraordinary and coercive enforcement is rare despite its prevalence in relations between metropolises and colonies during the colonial era. Usually it is self-interest, broadly perceived, that motivates compliance.

Explaining why actors choose to exercise self-restraint and to behave compliantly, especially if such behavior differs from that prescribed by "purely selfish" interests, is rather involved. First, in most international regimes a certain degree of unorthodox behavior is tolerated and not taken as a challenge to the regime, since no international regime embodies enforcement mechanisms capable of controlling all deviance. Dumping and other questionable trading practices are intermittently engaged in by participants in the food regime, for example. Similarly, despite the "glass house" tenets of the colonial regime there was occasional "stone throwing"; King Leopold's Congo was one noteworthy target. Hence one answer to why actors comply with regime norms contrary to their selfish interest is simply that

³⁷ Michael Mandelbaum, for example, believes that important but informal principles and norms exist with respect to nuclear weapons. Our thanks for his comments at the Palm Springs Conference, 27 February 1981.

they do not always comply. But such deviance is usually inconsequential or short-lived.

On the other hand, those who customarily comply with regime norms do so sometimes because they value the regime itself. These participants have no wish to establish precedents that might cause unorthodox behavior to proliferate and eventually to destroy the regime. This is one of the reasons for compliance with norms of the food regime that assign low priority to nutritional questions and define starvation as a national problem until an affected government chooses to request international assistance.

But such “regime-mindedness” is probably a lesser reason for compliance. More common is compliance out of calculated self-interest. Most participants in international regimes, whether they are advantaged or disadvantaged under the regime’s normative biases, usually comply because compliance is calculated to be more rewarding or less costly than deviance. Saying this is perhaps pushing the obvious. But what is intriguing is how regime participants calculate their benefits and costs, and especially how they assign weights to perceived “moral” benefits of acting in accord with norms, or perceived “moral” costs of acting against them. It is a tantalizing observation that patterns of compliance with regime norms, and hence the stability of regimes, may result from the faulty cost-benefit calculations of participants who exaggerate the importance of norms or the degree to which they are hallowed by actors who back them with power.

Sixth and finally, our comparative case studies of regimes suggest that regime change is closely linked to two classical political concepts—power and interest. Most regime change results from changes in the structure of international power. For diffuse regimes, the relevant power structure is the global political-strategic balance, as was the case with the colonial regime, which began to change when major powers such as Russia (the Soviet Union) and the United States defected from the normative consensus. On the other hand, for more functionally specific regimes, relevant power also must include command over specific resources within particular issue-areas, as with the oil companies during the 1930s and the oil states in the 1970s, and the food-supplying states in the food regime. Of course, principles such as sovereignty may extend from the diffuse state system to affect or be part of the features of these specific regimes as well.

Revolutionary change is the more frequent pattern of regime change, and such change most often comes after changes in the structure of power. On the other hand, regime change via cognitive learning and the recasting of goals among dominant elites also occurs. This evolutionary change seems less frequent than revolutionary change, perhaps because major wars, from the Thirty Years War to World War II, have preceded and been instrumental in regime change.

Regime change without significant changes in power structure occurs when leading elites seek to preserve their status and their control of the regime by eliminating “dysfunctional” behavior, either in the substantive

performance or in the decision procedures of a regime. This results when learning and technology foster new or changed goals. Changes in interests and goals have arisen from expanding knowledge of the world and its environmental exigencies. New understanding and capability with respect to disease, food technology, and air travel are important instances of regime change and even regime creation. The norm that no one should be hungry is not accepted by the current food regime, but it has sparked major efforts at regime change, including the creation of international reserves and external aid to increase food production in areas of the world that are most chronically malnourished. Unfortunately, it is only rarely the case that controlling elites—especially the fragmented and oligarchic elites of the international system—learn enough in sufficient time to change from within.