

Martin Dimitrov –March & Olsen: Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders (1999)

Introduction: Westphalian nation-state order is weakened, as manifested by the growing importance of international institutions that intervene in domestic political orders in the name of dispute resolution, economic stability, and human rights.

Institution: “relatively stable collection of practices and rules defining **appropriate** behavior for specific groups of actors in **specific situations**. Such practices and rules are **embedded** in structures of meaning and **schemes** of interpretation that explain and legitimize particular identities and the **practices and rules** associated with them. Practices and rules are also embedded in resources and the principles of their allocation that make it possible for individuals to **enact roles in an appropriate way** and for a collectivity to **socialize individuals** and sanction those who wander from proper behavior” (p. 308) (bold type mine, MKD)

“institutions link states (and their components) in structures of shared norms and expectations that impinge on nation-state autonomy and make it hard to maintain sharp distinctions between foreign and domestic politics” (p. 307) (do we agree?)

Distinction between rational-choice logic of expected consequences and rule-based socially-constructed and publicly mediated and accepted logic of appropriateness. Two logics are complementary.

Efficient and inefficient institutional histories:

Efficient institutional history: institutional survival is predicated by environmental constraints; institutional history is endogenously determined and immaterial

Inefficient institutional history: history matters; suboptimal outcomes and multiple equilibria are more common than efficient institutional theory would predict; institutional origin, history, and dynamics influence the final outcome.

International identities can be created intentionally (e.g. the EU). Conversely, they can spread unintentionally:

--by spillover of domestic norms into the international arena (e.g. democratic states export democratic norms) –democratic norms are contagious (why is it that non-democratic norms will not be contagious? normative preference)

--by evolving from cooperation around specific issue areas

Competency traps (rule-based institutional lock-in) and multiple equilibria may lead to inefficiency; however, by transforming the capabilities of institutions we could endow them with new competency and new objective.

Problems:

--Non-falsifiability

--Inability to account for institutional change and decline

--explanation of the mechanism of norm diffusion lacks rigor and fails to convince

--claim of existence of international society not substantiated

--suspect methodology (e.g. storytelling)