

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Dr. Muhittin Ataman  
AIBU IIBF

### A. INTRODUCTION

Empirical studies demonstrate that it is impossible to ignore the role of international organizations in international politics. By examining three hard cases, Young shows that international organizations matter even in some hard case situations. (1) Ernst Haas shows the effectiveness of the United Nations in his empirical study. (2) An international organization is effective to the extent that its operation impels international actors to behave differently than they would in the absence of the organizations. In order to assess the effectiveness of an international organization, we should look at the state behavior in responding to the dictates of international organizations and in implementing the provisions of regimes. According to Ernst Haas, effectiveness consists of a wide scope of activity matched with high success in managing international conflicts. (3) Effectiveness captures the institutional performance and behavior. It varies greatly. While some organizations remain as "dead letters," some evolve into coercive social practices.

The increasing number of international organizations is parallel to the increasing level of economic, political, cultural and social transactions between individuals, societies and states. Thousands of intergovernmental and nongovernmental international organizations were established during the post-World War II era. These organizations changed the international environment. New theories of international relations such as the "theory of complex interdependence" of Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye were formed in order to explain the new problems. (4) The study on international organizations increased recently as a result of their rapid growth in number and significance as international actors.

Young defines effectiveness as "a measure of the role of social institutions in shaping or molding behavior in international society and

the role of that institutions play as determinants of the content of individual and collective behavior.”(5) The effectiveness of international organizations increases with the knowledge available to them, their institutionalization level, the ability of their executive heads, and the authority and legitimacy that are given to them. Furthermore, their voting procedure, their way of budgeting and their personnel recruitment play significant roles in their effectiveness. As mentioned by Young, when actual cases are examined, the effectiveness of institutional arrangements will more than likely differ from one issue area to another, from one regime type to another, one spatial setting to another, or one time period to another.(6)

There are many variables which strongly influence the effectiveness of international organizations. Some of these factors are rooted from the structure of the organization, some emanate from the domestic structure of member states, and some are rooted in the nature of international politics. Today, we have more factors which have positive impact on the effectiveness of international organizations. With the increasing daily social, economic, cultural and political transactions among peoples, cultures and states will require more need for cooperation that will be achieved only through the institutional arrangements. This paper concentrates mainly on the effectiveness of international organizations. In the first section, it explains factors which have influence on the effectiveness of international organizations. After examining systemic variables offered by Young, I will evaluate their relative importance and explain their effectiveness with power structure of international system. In this context, I will utilize the hegemonic stability theory to get the picture of the international power structure. In the second section, I will propose some factors, emerged from domestic setting of states, that also greatly influence the effectiveness of international organizations.

## **B. SYSTEMIC VARIABLES**

I will evaluate factors which were examined by Young. Explanations made by Young are mainly systemic variables. Their

reevaluation is significant due to their application to hard cases to measure the effectiveness of international organizations.

First, the effectiveness of international organizations varies directly with the ease of monitoring or verifying compliance with their principal behavioral prescriptions. Organizations can be effective only when the creators of the organization comply with the requirements embedded in their rights and rules. If the organization can detect the violation and impose serious sanctions on the violators, it is more effective. The member countries of European Union left many of their rights to the European Commission. Even though member states agreed with this transfer of rights, the Commission makes decision about the domestic issue areas of the member states in spite of their unwillingness.

The importance of transparency increased at the international level with new technologies like earth-orbiting satellites. The testing of nuclear weapons, building nuclear plants and the chemical waste can be observed from the satellites. Especially arms control regime and environmental regimes function effectively as a result of increased transparency.

Second, the effectiveness of international organizations is a function of robustness of the social-choice mechanisms they employ. Mechanisms that are highly robust so long as the membership of an institutional arrangement remains fixed, for instance, may prove weak in the wake of changes in the composition of the subject group. Today, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Union face this problem since the composition of their subject group changed dramatically. It is obvious that excessively fragile arrangements, which do not have robustness cannot be effective at all. For instance, due to the lack of robustness the Organization of Islamic Conference, established in 1969 by Muslim countries, is very fragile and not effective. One of the leading members, Turkey, is not even a formal member. The organization has many sub-organizations, most of them are only ineffective letters.

Third, the effectiveness of international organizations varies directly with the stringency of acknowledged rules governing changes in their substantive provisions. Some organizations such as the United

Nations have their own legislative mechanisms. Legislative conferences are held on specific issue areas. In these conferences, great powers, which lead the decision-making process in international organizations, have less success. The legislative decision-making process can function without the contribution of superpowers. That is why, even though the United States opposed the UN sponsored Maritime Conference/ Sea Law Conference of 1982, the US opposition did not change the effectiveness of the legislation. For example, the protection of the ozone layer was secured in two such conferences, the 1985 Vienna Convention and the 1987 Montreal Protocol. Some amendments were made in London in 1990 in the same way. Therefore, the ability of the organization to shift its rules and adapt the new environment shows its effectiveness.

Fourth, the effectiveness of international organizations varies with the capacity of the governments of member states to implement their own provisions. Most governments face serious constraints limiting their ability to apply the provisions of regimes to areas and activities under their jurisdiction. This is true for most countries, especially for less developed countries. Preventing drug trafficking, international terrorism and transnational ethnic conflicts are the main areas in which strong member states or capable organizational structure are required. The mobilization of international organizations is important. In this context, strong governments can take initiatives.

Fifth, the unequal distribution of power among participants circumscribes the effectiveness of international organizations. Powerful states are less constrained by the principles of social arrangements than those who are relatively weak. The more symmetrical the distribution of power, the harder it is to establish institutional arrangements initially but the more effective they are once formed. Unequal powers facilitate the formation of institutions by creating a power elite capable of imposing institutions on other members of the organization. The IMF and the UN Security Council are two important organizations in which some powerful states direct the activities of the organization and impose the principles selectively. The UN Security Council decisions on the Palestinian question against Israel always have been vetoed by the United States.

Sixth, the effectiveness of international organizations varies directly with the level of interdependence among the participants. If the actions of a member state of an organization influence the condition of other members, the level of interdependence is high. Interdependence increased with the growth of the ratio of transnational economic, social and political transactions, new military applications and ecological problems. Interdependent countries react to each other's behavior. The increase of interdependence contributes to the effectiveness of international organizations. It increases the capacity of each member of an organization to retaliate for the infractions of others. In the context of European Union, great powers such as Germany, France and Great Britain have to listen to small Benelux countries, Greece or any other small member in some issue areas. They have the power of retaliation.

Seventh, international organizations cannot remain effective for long after the erosion or collapse of their intellectual substructures. Institutions cannot take root in the absence of a coherent system of ideas. Although some regime theorists like Robert Keohane think otherwise, an organization cannot remain effective for long when its ideas fail.<sup>(7)</sup> The most prominent examples of this kind of collapse are the organizations established by the Eastern Bloc, the Warsaw Pact and COMECON. With the collapse of political communism, these organizations also collapsed. Also, the vision of sovereign state and the concept of nation state declines in influence due to growth of non-state actors and increasing interdependence.

### C. DOMESTIC VARIABLES

Young does not go far enough in examining the variables of effectiveness. Another way to examine the effectiveness of international organizations is to look at domestic structures and characteristics of member states. Young does not take into attention domestic variables of states. The effectiveness of international organizations is more influential in European countries because of their domestic structures. European countries have pluralistic and democratic societies, that is, society dominated. Therefore, those countries have complex domestic structures and complex relations between the government and society.

As a result, domestic mobilization, political culture and awareness of peoples play significant roles in the case of the effectiveness of international organizations in domestic politics.

First, the regime type of the state has a direct influence on the effectiveness of international organizations. Oligarchic and authoritarian states do not let international organizations, especially non-governmental ones, enter into their states. For instance, Iranian and Saudi Arabian governments oppose the entrance of many international organizations into their countries due to their domestic rules which are based on the Islamic principles. The domestic structure of Iraq influences Saddam Hussein's position in ignoring the international principles and the sanctions of international organizations. With the nationalistic ideas and activities, he became popular in the domestic setting. During the Gulf War, he was popular even among other peoples of the Middle East. The combination of rhetoric he uses and his cruel authoritarian administration allows him to remain reluctant to international environment.

The authoritarian and oppressive regimes are reluctant to accept international norms and principles. International organizations are unable to influence the closed regimes. When we look at the Kurdish case, we see that the effectiveness of international organizations, *ceteris paribus*, on Turkey is greater than those on Iraq and Iran since Turkey's political structure is more open to the West than that of the other two countries. Due to intensive political and economic relationship with the West, Turkey has to attach great importance to Western institutions. State dominated countries have more difficulties when dealing with international organization, especially with NGOs. Even technical organizations face difficulties in functioning in authoritarian regimes. Leaders do not want their society to get stronger via the foreign contacts. The stability of their repressive regimes depends on exclusion from the outside world.

Second, the political culture of peoples directly prevents or improves the influence of international organizations. For instance, the Western type treatment of women is not acceptable in most Islamic and African countries. When faced with Western criticism because of

“women circumcision,” former leader of Kenya, Kenyatta, counter attacked the Western critiques in the name of the African continental culture. Even one of the most secular states in the Middle East, Egypt, did not accept some principles of the Women Convention due to the dominant Islamic principles which are strictly practiced by the Egyptian society and due to the fear from conservative forces. Similarly, the political culture of the Iraqi people requires loyalty to the tribe. The tribe of “at-Tikrit” governs Iraq besides Hussein. Cal Clark and Steve Chan demonstrate the influence of domestic structure and political culture of some East Asian countries on the openness of their economies and the role of multinational corporations (MNCs).<sup>(8)</sup> They conclude that the political culture of some countries does not allow MNCs to enter into their countries.

Third, the level of consciousness of peoples plays a direct and important role on the effectiveness of international organizations. This is a very significant factor for the proliferation of NGOs. Uneducated peoples even do not know how to claim their rights. Mobilization of uneducated peoples is more difficult in many issue areas. Therefore, there are fewer NGOs in less developed Third World Countries. The backwardness and unawareness of people enable leaders to continue their authoritarian administration ignoring foreign interference. Instead of national interests, personal interests and concerns of leaderships decide the role and influence of international organizations in the country.

Fourth, when the domestic structure is in vulnerable position, it may ignore systemic influences. That is, if domestic interdependence is greater than the external interdependence, states neglect the external one and thus, the effectiveness of international organization is undermined. Policy makers use instruments like nationalism in domestic politics in order to justify their activities. Sometimes Western countries and NGOs send monitoring groups to other countries in order to search for human rights violations. They visit jails, watch political trails, witness the state institutions’ conduct against people, and write reports on violations. For instance, Turkish government mostly does not care how much it is dependent on the relationship with European countries when dealing

with the Kurdish question. When Turkish policy makers face criticism from European countries due to human rights violations, they declare that all initiatives and critiques are attacks of foreign enemies on the national unity of the state and the national interests of Turkish nation. They claim that every action is taken against separatists, the Kurdish organizations, is due to maintaining the territorial integrity of the country. When faced with the critiques from NGOs such as the Amnesty International and Helsinki Watch, political leaders name their actions as "communist activities."

#### **D. POWER STRUCTURE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

There is a strong relationship between the distribution of power and international organizations. Power plays a very significant role in international politics. It is one of the core concepts of most international theories such as political realism. According to political realism, rational actors concern about their self-interests in an anarchic international system. Power is the key variable in explaining the behavior of states. Neorealists concentrate on the relative power of states when they explain international cooperation. Creating an international organization needs cooperation, voluntary or involuntary. International organizations are mainly created by strong states because they need them to protect their interests. Most intergovernmental international organizations (IGOs) are created by treaties and negotiations, which means they reflect the preferences of stronger states. States use IGOs as an instrument of their foreign policy. They use international organizations for collective legitimization and delegitimization of state actions. This typology confirms the political realism that power structure explains the functions of international organizations.

In this section, I will examine the relationship between power structure of international system and the effectiveness of international organizations. For this cause, I will combine the hegemonic stability theory and the previous explanations. First of all, I will reevaluate systemic explanations based on the power structure of international

system and that of member states. Then, I will examine the hegemonic stability theory and redefine and revise it based upon some assumptions.

### **1. Reevaluation of Systemic Variables:**

All systemic explanations are related to the power structure of international system and power distribution among member states of organizations. Each systemic variable has a dimension explained by power distribution. The ease of monitoring or verifying compliance is based upon the technology of the most advanced state which is almost always the hegemon. Today, the technology provided by the United States makes this process available. The US controls transparency at the international level with technologies like earth-orbiting satellites. International organizations backed by a hegemon can easily impose sanctions on the violators. Otherwise, the imposition of sanctions on and punishment for the violator will be very difficult if not impossible. Without the US support and direct intervention, the implementation of the UN principles against Saddam Hussein would be impossible.

International organizations in which hegemon participates are relatively stronger in terms of effectiveness than others since the hegemon always tries to control the organization. The United States' conduct in the IMF and the UN systems demonstrates this tendency. The UN was used more easily by the US immediately after the World War II. With the decolonization process, the strength of the US decreased in the organization. When the UN did not reflect its interests and even sometimes acted opposite to its interests, the US government took negative position against the organization. And at last, the US had to withdraw from some of the UN organizations like UNICEF at least temporarily. The UN used force in two cases, Korea and Kuwait, in which the US used the organization as an instrument according to its own interests.

Most governments face serious resource constraints limiting their ability to apply the provisions of international organizations to areas and activities under their jurisdiction. Therefore, they need a stronger power to intervene on their behalf. The US plays a major role in opening the economies of less developed countries by using the IMF and the World

Bank. The hegemon, like the US role in the UN to initiate the Gulf War in order to liberate Kuwait, mobilizes international organizations and takes initiatives. The US involvement in ethnic conflicts, international terrorism, and international drug trafficking all around the world shows the effectiveness of the hegemonic power. The US government punished Libya due its support to terrorism and some Latin American countries because of their involvement in drug trafficking, and forced the conflicting sides to start the peace process in the Middle Eastern conflicts.

Furthermore, the hegemon takes initiatives in the legislative decision-making process in the context of international organizations. Mostly the hegemon initiates the agenda setting. Any invitation, for international arrangements by the hegemon is seriously taken into consideration by other states. The legislative mechanisms have limited success in the cases of the hegemonic opposition. The hegemon can prevent the provisions which conflict with its interests. Sometimes it creates international provisions by itself. For instance, the US declared the continental self in 1940s for the first time, and then other states followed it. Thus, the principle of the continental self was created.

The unequal distribution of power among participants circumscribes the effectiveness of international institutions. Powerful states are less constrained by the principles of social arrangements than those who are relatively weak. The more symmetrical the distribution of power, the harder it is to establish international organizations, but the more effective they are, once formed. Unequal power facilitates the formation of institutions by creating a power elite capable of imposing institutions on the other members of the organization. The IMF and the UN Security Council are two prominent organizations in which some powerful states direct the activities of the organization and impose the principles selectively. While the UN Security Council decisions on the Palestinian question against Israel always have been vetoed by the US, all decisions against Iraq were imposed and implemented due to the strong support of the US.

The level of interdependence among member states is also related to the power structure. Because of the inequality in the

distribution of power, the interdependence among states is complex and asymmetric. The dependence on other states changes from issue area to issue area, from time to time, and from one region to another. For instance, the interdependence between the US and Saudi Arabia changes from issue area (economic issues, oil dependence) to issue area (political security issue, Arab-Israeli question). The interdependence between the US and Turkey changed from time to time. During the Cold War, the US more needed Turkey, for the containment the Soviet Union, than the post-Cold War era. The interdependence between the US and a Middle Eastern country and an African country differ according to the position of the state. The power of the US and its superiority in almost all issue-areas prevent other countries to force the US in order to change its conduct in any issue-area as much as the US forces them to change their behavior. The increase of interdependence contributes to the role and effectiveness of international organizations. It increases the capacity of retaliation.

## **2. The Hegemonic Stability Theory and International Organizations:**

Scholars explain the relationship between the distribution of power and international institutions based upon some theoretical approaches derived from the concept of power. The most well known perspective that concentrates on the power structure of international politics is the hegemonic stability theory which is proposed by realist scholars. Hegemony means a world in which a single power possesses superiority of economic and military resources and implements a plan for international order based on its interests and its vision of the world. Pax Britannica and Pax Americana are the only two modern hegemonies. Hegemony facilitates international cooperation. According to hegemonic stability theory, the hegemon ensures an international system of relative peace and security.

Regimes are created by a hegemon in order to create and maintain an international order which provide the maintenance of its leadership and strong position. Hegemonic states create international regimes to ensure their worldwide interests. Whenever they realize that

established regimes do not serve their interests, they change those regimes and international institutions. For instance, the US made the main change within the monetary regime in the early 1970s. When its relative power declined, the US began to protectionist trade policies. Although the free trade regime remained since the US did not increase the tariffs, it imposed non-tariff barriers such as quotas and voluntary export restrictions against other states. It means that the hegemon can exploit the free trade regime.

There is a need for a hegemon and an enforcement mechanism to secure the rule of the market in a free trade regime. Even when the American industry was doing everything right according to liberal economic theory, the free trade regime began to collapse since the other actors did not play according to the rules of the game. In recent decades, European, Japanese, and other Asian producers broke all the rules of American ideology. Governments intervene, organize and direct the national economy. This condition requires a hegemon, an organizer of the world economy. As Gilpin mentioned, the creation, maintenance and successful functioning of a liberal international economy require the exercise of political leadership.(9) Charles Kindleberger also points out that "for the world economy to be stabilized, there has to be a stabilizer, one stabilizer."(10)

As mentioned above, trade policies are a function of realities inherent in the international system, such as the existence of a leading, hegemonic power and the eventual decline of that state. Gilpin assumes that the era of "after hegemony" causes the increasing market competition, government intervention and protectionism.(11) Stephen Krasner also points out that the hegemony of a leading power is necessary for the creation and continuance of free trade.(12) The size and economic robustness of the hegemonic state enable it to provide the confidence necessary for a stable international monetary system, and its currency can offer the liquidity needed for an increasingly open system. The historical experience of the last two centuries verifies this assumption.

Openness is most likely to occur during the periods when a hegemonic state is in its ascendancy. Such a state has the interests and

resources to create a structure characterized by lower tariffs, rising trade proportions and less regionalism. Historical experience shows us that the increasing openness in the structure of international trade was parallel to the rising a hegemonic power. First, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, free trade was secured and maintained by Great Britain. It began lowering its trade barriers before any other state in 1820s. With the relative decline of British power, Germany, Italy, Russia and France started protectionism by imposing higher tariffs.

Similarly, American hegemony was guaranteeing the economic liberalism after the Second World War. The institutions created by the group led by the United States, namely the Bretton Woods system or regime, secured liberal economy for decades. The diffusion of economic power and economic nationalism reemerged as a result of this diffusion of power necessitates a very different international economic order from that of the Bretton Woods system. Regional leaders will less likely follow the hegemon in their economic activities and policies. The level of consensus between the US and its allies (Western Europe and Japan) is low compared to the immediate postwar era. With the decline in the relative power of the US, many conflicting issue-areas emerged.

However, there are some imperfections of the hegemonic stability theory. First of all, it ignores the oligopolistic leadership in regime formation. In a multi-polar international system, all major states may act together to create regimes and international institutions. The European Concert in the 19<sup>th</sup> century can be considered as an example of collective leadership or oligopolistic hegemony. Furthermore, if all states believe in principles, regimes and international organizations do not need a hegemon. In addition, some regimes such as technical transportation, telecommunication, and postal regimes do not need a hegemon. This is why, I will try to revise this early version (pure realist) of the hegemonic stability theory in order to make it more explanatory. I will criticize some deterministic aspects, like its assumption of the collapse of the regime or international institutions depending on the hegemon, of the theory by utilizing some assumptions of institutionalism.

Keohane suggests that a synthesis of realism and institutionalism is necessary since both perspectives are incomplete.(13) After the World War II, the American hegemony helped to create regimes and international institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank, the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT), and most importantly the United Nations system along lines preferred by the United States. On the other hand, the decline of the hegemonic power does not cause the end of the regimes and international organizations. Nevertheless, regimes are weakened with the declining hegemony. International institutions will remain and continue to function in international politics, at least, until the rise of another hegemon. Therefore, regimes and international institutions do not collapse with the declining hegemony.

Robert Keohane, the leading neo-liberal institutionalist, divides the classical theory of hegemonic stability into two propositions.(14) One, international order is typically created by a single dominant power. Two, the maintenance of that order requires continued hegemony. He agreed with realists on the first proposition. Keohane and many other regime theorists argue that the maintenance of international regimes and institutions does not require the existence of a hegemon. When we examine the current situation, we see that principles and norms established under the US hegemony continue. While the US power declines relatively, no other state is able to challenge the US and want to take the responsibility of being the hegemon. Furthermore, the US is still willing to continue as the hegemon. That is, the second proposition of the early version of the hegemonic stability theory does not reflect the reality.

Keohane also accepts the role of the hegemon in facilitating international cooperation. He only differs from the realists in the degree of necessity of the hegemon. For Keohane, hegemony facilitates a certain type of international cooperation, but unlike realists, he argues that hegemony is not either a necessary or a sufficient condition for the emergence of cooperative relationships. However, as Keohane himself mentions, his assumption is "only makes sense if cooperation and discord are not determined simply by interests and power."(15) When we consider the rationality of actors, we can say that international actors

almost always cooperate or conflict according to their interests and capabilities.

A hegemonic state must possess enough military power to be able to protect the international political economy that it dominates from incursions by hostile adversaries. This is essential because issues may become military-security issues as well, if they are crucial enough to main national interests. The United States established and led dormant coalition against Iraq during the Gulf War in order to protect its economic interests in the region. The US used the United Nations to legitimize its behavior. It mobilized the international society based on the UN regime principles. Hegemonic power and international regimes established under the conditions of hegemony combine to facilitate cooperation. As Keohane points out, hegemony itself reduces transaction costs and mitigates uncertainty, since each ally deals with the hegemon and expects it to ensure consistency for the system as a whole.<sup>(16)</sup> Among other functions, international institutions provide legitimacy for the behavior of the hegemon. Even in the situation of complex interdependence, hegemonic powers draw the picture of international politics.

#### NOTES:

1. Oran R. Young, "The Effectiveness of International Institutions: Hard Case and Critical Variables," in J. N. Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel (eds.) *Governance without Government: Order and Change in World Politics* (1992, pp. 160-194).
2. Ernst B. Haas, "Conflict Management and International Organizations, 1945-1981," in Paul Diehl (ed.) *The Politics of International Organizations: Patterns and Insights* (Chicago: Dorsey Press, 1989).
3. Ernst B. Haas, *When Knowledge is Power: Three Models of Change in International Organizations*.
4. Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1989).
5. Young, Effectiveness of International Institutions, p. 161.
6. A.g.e.
7. Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984).

8. Cal Clark and Steve Chan, "MNCs and Developmentalism: Domestic Structures as an Explanation for East Asian Dynamism," in Thomas Risse-Kappen (ed.) *Transnational Relations Back In: Non-State Actors, Domestic Structures and International Institutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
9. Robert Gilpin, *International Political Economy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987).
10. Quoted in Keohane, *After Hegemony*.
11. Gilpin, *International Political Economy*.
12. Stephen Krasner, "State Power and the Structure of International Trade," in J. Frieden and David Lake (eds.) *International Political Economy* (New York: St. Martin's, 1995).
13. Keohane, *After Hegemony*.
14. A.g.e.
15. A.g.e.
16. A.g.e.