

Review: The Effectiveness of International Environmental Regimes

By Oran R. Young (Ed.)

Reviewed by [Richard Osbaldiston](#)
University of Missouri, USA

.....
Oran R. Young (Ed.). *The Effectiveness of International Environmental Regimes*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999. 326 pp. ISBN 0-262-74023-0 (paperback). US\$25.00. Alkaline paper.

To propose to elucidate the "causal connections and behavioral mechanisms" of anything using just three examples is a formidable task; to try to do so for something as complex as international environmental organizations seems downright crazy. However, Young and colleagues have done a very effective job doing just that in *The Effectiveness of International Environmental Regimes*.

This edited book focuses on three specific regimes and attempts to identify how and why the organizations are effective at ameliorating the problems they address. But this book is not merely a walk-through of three organizations that happen to be successful; rather, it is a meticulous analysis of why they are successful that incorporates psychological, organizational, and sociological theories.

The methodology of the research is particularly impressive. The authors of this book set out to examine regimes using a broad framework that they developed over the course of three workshops. This framework includes six possible pathways by which an organization might effect changes in behavior: regimes as utility modifiers ("utility" being basically economic in nature), regimes as enhancers of cooperation, regimes as bestowers of authority, regimes as learning facilitators, regimes as role definers, and regimes as agents of internal realignment (p. 19-28). With the theoretical framework in place, they selected diverse organizations to examine. One example focuses on corporations which are the cause of the problem but receive no direct benefit from solving the problem (international vessel-source oil pollution, Chapter 2). Another example focuses on two countries that share a common resource (Barents Sea fisheries, Chapter 3). The final example focuses on a long-distance, non-point source type of pollution that affects many countries (acid rain in Europe and North America, Chapter 4). Each chapter of the book explicitly analyzes these examples in light of the theoretical framework and, as such, carefully illuminates which factors make the regimes effective. The authors are very candid about their methodology and are careful not to overstate what they have accomplished. They make no claims about statistical hypothesis testing, but they do show how their

analysis has attempted to be as broad and useful as possible.

The conclusion this book reaches is that regimes are effective at mitigating international environmental problems, but are inherently complex and involve many interactive relationships. Through the use of the six behavioral pathways, many of these complexities are resolved. This book provides lucid insight into how organizations work, and it would be useful to anyone studying organizations, not just international or environmental ones. The book also offers excellent insight into the methodology of doing such research, and serves as a solid example of how to go about such an ambitious project.

.....

Richard Osbaldiston <rjo42c@mizzou.edu>, Graduate Instructor, 3
McAlester Hall, Dept. of Psychological Sciences, University of Missouri,
Columbia, MO 65201, USA. TEL: 1-573-771-9093.