

An Application of Regime Theory to Examine Regional Ocean Governance

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Much attention has been focused in recent years on regional ocean governance, as nations and international organizations have come to realize the transboundary nature of many ocean issues and ecosystems. Ocean issues, including land- and sea-based pollution, and overfishing, do not occur in isolation but have effects on ocean areas crossing multiple jurisdictions. Accordingly, management of ocean areas must take into consideration actions occurring not only within national jurisdictions, but also activities occurring in neighboring states and on the high seas. Regional ocean governance regimes attempt to make this link to provide for holistic, cross-sectoral and jurisdictional management.

Despite their importance, the knowledge base concerning how these regimes function and the effectiveness of these regimes is relatively limited. The purpose of this research is to expand the knowledge base regarding the formation, effectiveness, and dynamics of regional ocean governance regimes in an effort to understand when, how, and why these regimes work, or conversely, fail. This research will focus on the UNEP Regional Seas Programmes and Large Marine Ecosystem Projects, as these are the two regimes currently attempting to apply holistic management to regional ocean areas. Specifically, this research will seek to address the following questions:

- ⊕ What factors are important in regime formation?
- ⊕ To what extent do various features of regimes play a role in increasing or decreasing effectiveness?
- ⊕ What are the “on the ground” effects of these regimes at international/national levels?
- ⊕ What factors determine whether an existing regime will remain operative over time?

This research will utilize regime theory based on work completed by Breitmeier, Young, and Zurn in their 2006 book Analyzing International Environmental Regimes, to quantitatively expand knowledge regarding the formation, effectiveness, and dynamics of regional ocean governance regimes. It will identify key variables in regime formation, regime attributes, regime consequences, and regime dynamics, and code their values into a proposed Regional Ocean Governance Regime Database (ROGRD).

The data protocol will be formatted as a questionnaire requiring quantitative and qualitative answers. The variables will then be coded using a well-defined set of concepts, definitions, and scales adapted from Breitmeier, Young, and Zurn. The finalized ROGRD will represent a relational database that can be utilized as an analytical tool – this research will then draw on the database and use descriptive statistics to evaluate theoretical ideas, including international relations theories of compliance, decision rules, legitimacy, and the role of knowledge. Ultimately, this research will seek to establish a path to action from regime formation to national actions, and provide recommendations for enhanced performance in regional ocean governance regimes.