The climate regime: Development, effectiveness and drivers

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Vilnius, 27.9. 2010, PhD Training school
The following points covered:

- Agenda setting
- regime formation
- Negotiating the climate regime
- The effectiveness of the UN regime
- Explaining the effectiveness of the regime
- The role of key actors: Power and leadership
- The key role of the US
- Other approaches: The APP and MEF
- Conclusion: Future perspectives
Agenda setting

• The beginning of climate science: 1950s in the US
• The 1960-70s: climate science becomes an international scientific concern
• The 1980s: green activists and green policy makers move in
• Congressional hearings in the US: Al Gore
• The Toronto Conference 1988: 20% reductions by 2005
• 1989: The establishment of the IPCC
• Increasing number of international conferences
• High ambitions and low knowledge
• Domestic approach
• Scientific uncertainty and external events
• Key actors: non state - not the states
Regime formation: The road to Rio

Three main perspectives:

- Realists: The hegemon decides it all
- Liberalists: Don’t count out interests
- Constructivists: knowledge and learning

- How does this square with the climate regime?
- The hegemon may be dead, but not power
- Competing interests may forge agreement
- Knowledge and epicom may also make a difference
- Supplementary perspectives
Negotiating the climate regime

• The adoption of the climate convention, Rio Summit 1992: no binding commitments
• The Kyoto Protocol (KP) 1997: genuine compromise
• The Marrakech Accords 2001: ‘Kyoto Light’
• Exit the US - 2001- enter the ‘Gang of Four’
• 2002-2005 - negotiating formalities
• KP in force 2005 but “frightening lack of leadership’ (Kofi Annan at COP 13 in 2006
• Strongly increased public attention paving the way for
• Bali Road map: a step forward, some key features
• Copenhagen Accord: A new approach..?
• Lessons learned from a theoretical perspective
The effectiveness of the UN regime

- Achievements depend upon measuring rod
- normative: mixed picture
- Cognitive: fairly strong
- rules and regulations (output): mixed picture
- behavioural effect (outcome): very modest
- effect on the problem (impact): exceedingly modest
- goal achievement - exceedingly low
- How hard to measure: counterfactuals and influence from other factors
Explaining effectiveness

Two main explanatory perspectives: (i) the nature of the problem and (ii) problem solving capacity

(i) an exceedingly malign problem intellectually and politically - key properties and changes

(ii) Power: more laggards than pushers;
   Leadership: Varying but overall modest
   Institutions and mechanisms: promising elements but insufficient

In malign problems: power looms large (Miles et al 2002)
The role of key actors: overall picture

- The US: most influential, but mostly laggard, emerging change underway
- The EU: consistent pusher with ‘fortunate circumstances’
- Overall EU/US performance is not that different
- Developing countries: A more than mixed bag..
- The key role of China: also new trends
- Non state actors:
  - Business: part of the problem, increasingly part of the solution - varied roles and positions?
  - Green NGOs: Limited influence, utilise new attention?
  - Science: Necessary input, but limited influence; linkage to other ‘benign’ factors necessary for more influence
The key role of the US

- Its role in the overall development
- Gradual shift since 2005 - ‘bottom-up approach - why and with what consequences
- Recall: Never meaningful to regard US as one actor
- ‘Two level game’: ‘Home game most difficult?’
- Congress and Senate means more than parliaments
- Level of conflict generally higher in the U.S.
- But international agreements are taken seriously
- The influence of various non-state actors
New administration: High ambitions, but will Congress follow?

Obama quote: “This was the moment when the rise of the oceans begun to slow and our planet began to heal” - when clinching the nomination

New key persons and institutional strengthening
Maybe most important: Target and ‘Cap and trade’, but not overly ambitious

10% of stimulus package to energy and environment: biggest energy bill ever..

Congress: Procedural limitations
Party lines and political geography
House cleared, Senate blocked: Stalemate and mid term election
The Non-UN tracks: alternative or supplementary?

What is it and why has it emerged?
The US Bush Jr. administration main architect: also in line with broader US foreign policy approach
Asia Pacific Partnership (APP) members, approach and goal
Major Economies Forum (MEF): Members and role
Other targeted technological partnerships

Major advantages and disadvantages:
High effectiveness and low legitimacy?
Supplement or alternative - not much achieved so far
Concluding comments

- Improved knowledge and institution building, but modest effect on GHG emissions: why
- The new deal in Copenhagen 2009, - more of a start than an end-point?
- Clarification and ratification takes time: lessons from KP
- Soft law and hard law - we may need both
- Passing public momentum?
- The effect of the global economic crisis, good or bad?
- The ‘Obama momentum’ has waned
- The Copenhagen Accord and beyond
- Global structural characteristics (economy and population):
  - reason for pessimism – malign issue