Rational Design

Imagining an International Institution for the Internet

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Bloc Seminar: The Politics of Connectivity

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Outline

Hypotheses

H1: Rational design tells us that States favor some institutions because they are better suited to new conditions or new problems and abandon or downplay those that are not. Thus, explaining China's Great Firewall.

H2: A rational design approach works best as a tool kit to assess the mechanisms of international institutions in dynamic environments such as the digital one but is too traditional an approach for institution building.

H3: Since the onset of the digital age the shadow of the future resides closer, increasing the value of future gains and supporting cooperative arrangments under anarchy.

H4: Through ideal-type institution criteria and by embracing fluidity in institution building, the international community could establish a more fitting international institution of the internet that allows for increasing multilateralism.

RATIONAL DESIGN

- How and why are international institutions design as they are?

  Spontaneity -- Path Dependency -- **Deliberated Choices**

- States use diplomacy and conferences to select institutional features to further their individual and collective goals (Koremenos et al, 2001)

  ⮑ Changing conditions are met with a conscious evolution.

Bottom line: treat institutions as rational, negotiated responses to the problems international actors face.
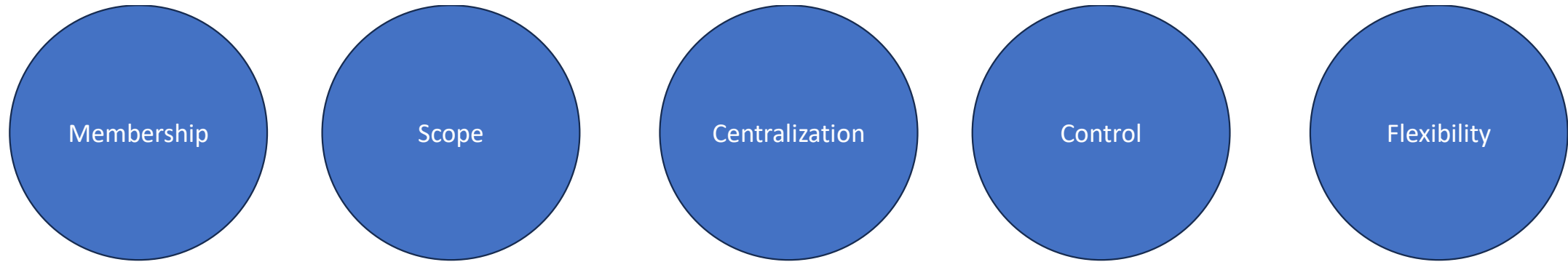
Membership Scope Centralization Control Flexibility

TABLE 1. Summary of Rational Design conjectures

M1:	Restrictive MEMBERSHIP increases with the severity of the ENFORCEMENT problem
M2:	Restrictive MEMBERSHIP increases with UNCERTAINTY ABOUT PREFERENCES
M3:	MEMBERSHIP increases with the severity of the DISTRIBUTION problem
S1:	SCOPE increases with NUMBER
S2:	SCOPE increases with the severity of the DISTRIBUTION problem
S3:	SCOPE increases with the severity of the ENFORCEMENT problem
C1:	CENTRALIZATION increases with UNCERTAINTY ABOUT BEHAVIOR
C2:	CENTRALIZATION increases with UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE STATE OF THE WORLD
C3:	CENTRALIZATION increases with NUMBER
C4:	CENTRALIZATION increases with the severity of the ENFORCEMENT problem
V1:	CONTROL decreases with NUMBER
V2:	Asymmetry of CONTROL increases with asymmetry of contributors (NUMBER)
V3:	CONTROL increases with UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE STATE OF THE WORLD
F1:	FLEXIBILITY increases with UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE STATE OF THE WORLD
F2:	FLEXIBILITY increases with the severity of the DISTRIBUTION problem
F3:	FLEXIBILITY decreases with NUMBER

H1: Success or Failure

- Rational design tells us that States favors some institutions because they are better suited to new conditions or new problems and abandon or downplay those that are not.

- Moreover, since establishing and participating in an international institution is costly, States choose in which basket to put their eggs.

H2: Rational Design as a Toolkit

- A rational design approach works best as a tool kit to assess the mechanisms of international institutions in dynamic environments such as the digital one but is too traditional an approach for institution building.

- Too traditional an approach to solve the governance problems of the Internet. We may use, and do use, the criteria for ideal institutions as a tool kit for criticizing current processes (Burkert, 2012)

H3: Shadow of the Future

- Since the onset of the digital age the shadow of the future resides closer, increasing the value of future gains and supporting cooperative arrangments under anarchy.

- Could the negative consequences also have a similar effect?

H4: Ideal Type Criteria and Fluidity

- Through ideal-type institution criteria and by embracing fluidity in institution building, the international community could establish a more fitting international institution of the internet that allows for increasing multilateralism.

- The assessment of the ITU and ICANN under a rational design approach demonstrates their unsuitability as platforms for an international institution for the internet.

Conclusions:

H1: Rational design tells us that States favor some institutions because they are better suited to new conditions or new problems and abandon or downplay those that are not.

H2: A rational design approach works best as a tool kit to assess the mechanisms of international institutions in dynamic environments such as the digital one but is too traditional an approach for institution building.

H3: Since the onset of the digital age the shadow of the future resides closer, increasing the value of future gains and supporting cooperative arrangments under anarchy.

H4: Through ideal-type institution criteria and by embracing fluidity in institution building, the international community could establish a more fitting international institution of the internet that allows for increasing multilateralism.

China's Great Firewall

Assesment Capabilities

Consequences of innaction

Multilateralism and Creativity

Bibliography

- Burkert, Herbert: "Some comments in the Institutionalization of the Net: ITU or ICANN, is there an ideal solution?" Seite 91-98 in Normative Experience in Internet Politics, 2012

- Koremenos, Barbara; Lipson, Charles; Snidal, Duncan: "The Rational Design of International Institutions" S. 761-799 in International Organization, 2001a