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## International Organization

Special Issue

**Knowledge, Power, and International Policy Coordination**

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# **Knowledge, Power, and International Policy Coordination**

edited by

**Peter M. Haas**

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# Abstracts

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## **Introduction: epistemic communities and international policy coordination**

by Peter M. Haas

How decision makers define state interests and formulate policies to deal with complex and technical issues can be a function of the manner in which the issues are represented by specialists to whom they turn for advice in the face of uncertainty. The contributors to this issue examine the role that networks of knowledge-based experts—epistemic communities—play in articulating the cause-and-effect relationships of complex problems, helping states identify their interests, framing the issues for collective debate, proposing specific policies, and identifying salient points for negotiation. Their analyses demonstrate that control over knowledge and information is an important dimension of power and that the diffusion of new ideas and data can lead to new patterns of behavior and prove to be an important determinant of international policy coordination.

## **Ideas, interests, and institutionalization: “trade in services” and the Uruguay Round**

by William J. Drake and Kalypso Nicolaïdis

After much deliberation, member governments of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) agreed to pursue a new regime for international trade in services as part of the Uruguay Round negotiations begun in 1986. The talks have produced a draft agreement—the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)—which, if ratified, could have important implications for the world economy. But when the question of trade in services first arose, most governments did not understand the issues or know whether a multilateral agreement would be to their advantage. If anything, their existing national interests and institutions seemed contrary to the goal of liberalizing trade in services. This article argues that an epistemic community of services experts played a crucial role in clarifying and framing the complex issue of trade in services and placing it on the global agenda. Through their analyses of the services issues and their interactions with policymakers, the epistemic community members were able to convince governments that international services transactions had common trade properties and that the liberalization of services through removal of nontariff barriers was potentially advantageous to developing as well as developed countries. In addition to fostering international negotiations within the GATT forum and helping states redefine their interests, the community members were instrumental in specifying a range of policy

options to be considered. However, once governments understood their interests and domestic constituencies were mobilized, their policy choices were influenced more by power and bargaining dynamics than by continuing, direct epistemic community influence.

### **The emergence of cooperation: national epistemic communities and the international evolution of the idea of nuclear arms control**

by Emanuel Adler

An American epistemic community played a key role in creating the international shared understanding and practice of nuclear arms control. In the absence of nuclear war, leaders' expectations of nuclear war and of its control were affected by causal theories and abstract propositions and models which, given their "scientific" and technical nature, were developed by an epistemic community. This study, which emphasizes the roles played by epistemic communities in policy innovation and in the diffusion of understandings across nations and communities, analyzes how the theoretical and practical ideas of the arms control epistemic community became political expectations, were diffused to the Soviet Union, and were ultimately embodied in the 1972 antiballistic missile (ABM) arms control treaty. In contrast to those studies that have concentrated primarily on the workings of international epistemic communities, this study stresses the notion that domestically developed theoretical expectations, which were worked out by a national group of experts and selected by the American government as the basis for negotiations with the Soviets, became the seed of the ABM regime. Moreover, by suggesting that the arms control epistemic community was really an aggregation of several factions that shared common ground against various intellectual and policy rivals, this study sheds light on the question of how much coherence an epistemic community requires. The political selection of new conceptual understandings, followed by their retention and diffusion at national and international levels, suggests an evolutionary approach at odds with explanations of international change advanced by structural realism and approaches based on it.

### **Whalers, cetologists, environmentalists, and the international management of whaling**

by M. J. Peterson

Postwar management of whaling was marked by two major policy changes: the 1974 adoption of a more restrictive set of management procedures and the 1982 adoption of a moratorium on commercial whaling. In both cases, U.S. government efforts to ensure compliance with the International Whaling Commission (IWC) decisions were central to the outcome. Yet no government's choices can be understood without examining how decision makers were influenced by three nongovernmental groups—an economic interest group of whaling industry managers, an expert epistemic community of cetologists, and an issue-oriented lobbying coalition of environmentalists—which vied for influence nationally and transnationally. The epistemic community of cetologists shaped particular policy choices only in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Earlier, it was eclipsed by the industry managers and, later, by the environmentalists. However, it had



sufficient continuing influence to limit the range of policy options and thereby prevent the adoption of the most consumptionist alternatives in the 1940s and 1950s and of the most preservationist ones in recent years.

### **Banning chlorofluorocarbons: epistemic community efforts to protect stratospheric ozone**

by Peter M. Haas

The emergence of scientific evidence that emissions of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) were depleting the stratospheric ozone layer prompted an epistemic community of atmospheric scientists and concerned policymakers to push for regulations regarding CFC use. Members of the transnational epistemic community played a primary role in gathering information, disseminating it to governments and CFC manufacturers, and helping them formulate international, domestic, and industry policies regarding CFC consumption and production. Community members contributed to the timing and stringency of CFC regulations through a combination of strategies ranging from the persuasion of individuals to the capture of various decision-making channels. Most important, by influencing the actions of the United States and DuPont, the largest producer of CFCs, the epistemic community changed the external environment in which policy decisions were made by other governments and firms.

### **Reform in the international food aid regime: the role of consensual knowledge**

by Raymond F. Hopkins

The principles and norms adopted by the regime governing food aid in the 1950s have changed substantially during the subsequent three decades. Explaining the changes necessarily includes analyzing the efforts of an international epistemic community consisting of economic development specialists, agricultural economists, and administrators of food aid. According to the initial regime principles, food aid should be provided from donors' own surplus stocks, should supplement the usual commercial food imports in recipient countries, should be given under short-term commitments sensitive to the political and economic goals of donors, and should directly feed hungry people. As a result of following these principles, the epistemic community and other critics argued, food aid often had the adverse effects of reducing local production of food in recipient countries and exacerbating rather than alleviating hunger. The epistemic community (1) developed and proposed ideas for more efficiently supplying food aid and avoiding "disincentive" effects and (2) pushed for reforms to make food aid serve as the basis for the recipients' economic development and to target it at addressing long-term food security problems. The ideas of the international epistemic community have increasingly received support from international organizations and the governments of donor and recipient nations. Most recently, they have led to revisions of the U.S. food aid program passed by Congress in October 1990 and signed into law two months later. As the analysis of food aid reform demonstrates, changes in the international regime have been incremental, rather than radical. Moreover, the locus for the change has shifted from an American-centered one in the 1950s to a more international one in recent decades.

## **Between power and purpose: central bankers and the politics of regulatory convergence**

by Ethan Barnaby Kapstein

In the early 1980s, when the debt crisis threatened to disrupt the pattern of trade and investment flows that had evolved since the end of World War II, central bankers faced the challenge of maintaining public confidence in the commercial banks that were at the heart of the international payments system. Although the central bankers agreed that a run on one international bank could lead to a global catastrophe requiring massive government intervention, they did not initially agree on a policy project to strengthen the international payments system. In analyzing central bank cooperation and the processes leading to the adoption of a single international capital adequacy standard, this article argues that agreement on a uniform standard was due to a combination of political power and shared purpose on the part of the United States and Britain. While the article does not argue that the central bankers were an epistemic community as defined in this issue, it further explores the conditions under which epistemic communities are likely to arise.

## **A world economy restored: expert consensus and the Anglo-American postwar settlement**

by G. John Ikenberry

Although British and U.S. officials held markedly different views during the initial negotiations for a postwar economic order, they were able to reach watershed trade and monetary agreements that set the terms for the reestablishment of an open world economy. How does one explain this Anglo-American settlement reached at Bretton Woods in 1944? Structural explanations, based on underlying configurations of power and interests, are helpful but leave important issues unresolved. Given the range of postwar economic “orders” that were possible and potentially consistent with underlying structures and also given the divergent and conflicting views both within and between the two governments, why did the economic order take the particular shape it took? This article argues that agreement was fostered by a community of British and American economists and policy specialists who embraced a set of policy ideas inspired by Keynesianism and who played a critical role in defining government conceptions of postwar interests, shaping the negotiating agenda (for example, shifting the focus of negotiations from trade issues, which were highly contentious, to monetary issues, about which there was an emerging “middle ground” created by Keynesian ideas), and building coalitions in support of the postwar settlement.

## **Challenging conventional explanations of international cooperation: negotiation analysis and the case of epistemic communities**

by James K. Sebenius

Analyses of international policy cooperation are often marked by analytic and empirical confusion. First, by largely treating cooperation as a binary phenomenon (typically, as cooperation versus defection), they direct attention away from crucial issues of distribution, the possibility of suboptimal cooperation, and the degree of unrealized

joint gains. Second, even when simple matrix games with known payoffs capture distributional conflict and Pareto-inferiority, they typically do so by suppressing the inherent uncertainty and the need to learn, especially with respect to payoffs and values. And, third, even when they take both power and knowledge-dependent joint gains into account, they often treat the two as competing alternatives or as analytically separable, rather than as inherently bound together in the bargaining process. This article describes the emerging negotiation-analytic approach and argues that it provides a useful framework within which these conceptual problems can be avoided and explanatory power can be enhanced. From a negotiation-analytic perspective, it argues, epistemic communities can be viewed as distinctive de facto natural coalitions of “believers” whose main interest lies not in meeting material objectives but, rather, in expanding to become winning coalitions capable of ensuring the adoption of specific policy projects. An epistemic community’s actions can thus be understood as changing the perceived zone of possible agreement through well-understood ways that are favorable to its objectives. Although ultimately a community’s influence is exercised through bargaining, there is practically no theory of bargaining elaborated in the epistemic communities approach. Despite this and other drawbacks, the approach helps account for players’ interests and usefully insists on the importance of perceptions and learning in negotiation. The article concludes that the effects of shared beliefs and of policy conflict can be readily incorporated into the negotiation-analytic model of bargaining, thereby giving rise to more precisely drawn observations about the conditions under which “believers” will have the strongest impact on negotiated outcomes. This will in turn make it possible to improve policy prescriptions in the actual or potential presence of epistemic communities.

### **Conclusion: epistemic communities, world order, and the creation of a reflective research program**

by Emanuel Adler and Peter M. Haas

Studies in this issue show that the epistemic communities approach amounts to a progressive research program with which students of world politics can empirically study the role of reason and ideas in international relations. By focusing on epistemic communities, analysts may better understand how states come to recognize interests under conditions of uncertainty. According to this research program, international relations can be seen as an evolutionary process in which epistemic communities play meaningful roles as sources of policy innovation, channels by which these innovations diffuse internationally, and catalysts in the political and institutional processes leading to the selection of their shared goals. The influence of epistemic communities persists mainly through the institutions that they help create and inform with their preferred world vision. By elucidating the cause-and-effect understandings in the particular issue-area and familiarizing policymakers with the reasoning processes by which decisions are made elsewhere, epistemic communities contribute to the transparency of action and the development of common inferences and expectations and thereby contribute to policy coordination. International cooperation and, indeed, the development of new world orders based on common meanings and understandings may thus depend on the extent to which nation-states apply their power on behalf of practices that epistemic communities may have helped create, diffuse, and perpetuate.