

Preface

The Long Road to Cumulative Knowledge

The idea of constructing a regimes database arose during the November 1991 Regimes Summit. That workshop (supported in part by Ford Foundation grant 890-0042-4) brought together leaders of four major projects—the Oslo/Seattle Project, the Tübingen Project, the Dartmouth Project, and the Harvard Project—who sought to “arrive at common ground among a number of projects dealing with international regimes in the interests of promoting the development of cumulative knowledge about the origins, operations, and outcomes of various forms of institutionalized international cooperation” (Regimes Summit 1991, 1). The Minary Center, owned and operated by Dartmouth College, provided an ideal setting for this gathering.

Participants in the 1991 workshop understood the magnitude of this undertaking; agreement would have to be reached on the design of a protocol that could be used in constructing a regimes database accessible electronically to those engaged in formulating and testing ideas about international regimes. Understandably, therefore, it took some time before we could begin to implement this action plan. The opportunity to move forward came in 1994 when the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) initiated a three-year project on the Implementation and Effectiveness of International Environmental Commitments (IEC) (Victor, Raustiala, and Skolnikoff 1998). The creation of an International Regimes Database (IRD) emerged as one of a number of lines of inquiry included in this project. Marc A. Levy, Oran R. Young, and Michael Zürn undertook to provide scientific leadership for the effort to create the IRD. Early on, we realized that progress toward this goal would require the involvement of a full-time project manager located at

IIASA. This led to the addition of Helmut Breitmeier to the IRD team. He spent two and a half years in residence at IIASA as the database manager during the period 1995–1997; he has remained a central player in the development of the IRD throughout its history.

The IIASA phase of the project focused on the development of what we now know as the IRD Data Protocol (Breitmeier et al. 1996a). The protocol provides definitions of key terms to be used by all participants in the project and identifies all the variables included in the database. The protocol constantly threatened to explode into an unmanageable instrument; its final version is relatively long and complex, despite a concerted effort to control unlimited expansion. The protocol emerged from an ongoing dialogue between the members of the database team and many advisors, including participants in a series of trial runs. Numerous scientists working both at IIASA and at other research institutes located for the most part in Europe or North America provided advice regarding the design of the data protocol.

The IEC project and other projects at IIASA provided a stimulating intellectual environment for our work; we have maintained intellectual cooperation with many of these colleagues following the end of the IEC project. We are particularly grateful to those who participated in trial runs of the database protocol at IIASA. The discussions we had with these experts during the course of the trial runs allowed us to improve the protocol substantially and to make it more user friendly. The results are noticeable particularly in the development of the idea of the precoding agreement and in the guidelines governing the development of case structures necessary for the coding of individual regimes.

When the IIASA project came to a close in 1997, the data protocol for the IRD was essentially complete. But the database itself was an empty shell devoid of data. The U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) provided modest funding that helped keep the project going during a transitional period (grant 9631659). The German-American Academic Council (GAAC) awarded a travel grant that allowed us to hold research meetings among project members in the years following the end of IIASA's IEC project. The German Science Foundation (DFG) ultimately came through with substantial support needed to move forward from the design stage of the IIASA years to the operational stage featuring the

coding of individual cases, the reconciliation of differences between coders, the computerization of all data resulting from the coding effort, and the construction of data tables accessible in MS Access (grants WO 400/5-1 and WO 400/5-2).

During this stage, lasting from 1997 through 2002, the IRD's base of operations moved to Darmstadt University in Germany. We are especially grateful to the Department of International Relations at the Institute for Political Science in Darmstadt for the support we received during this period. We acknowledge as well the essential role during this stage of the hard-working student assistants who checked the data the coding experts delivered and entered these data in the IRD. Members of the Department of Mathematics at Darmstadt solved a number of problems pertaining to the management and evaluation of data.

During this period, Helmut Breitmeier continued to devote most of his professional time and energy to the project. Marc Levy took on a new position at CIESIN that has made it impossible for him to play an active role in the project in recent years. Oran Young and Michael Zürn maintained their roles as key members of the IRD management team. This explains the authorship of this book.

We learned during the project that the effort required for experts to code individual cases is substantial. The honoraria we were able to provide to coders did not compensate them adequately for the time and energy required to code an individual case. Accordingly, we are especially grateful to our expert coders and pay tribute to their commitment to the creation of this database. We admire their legal, political, or scientific expertise; the IRD could not have come on stream without the invaluable input provided by case-study experts. Our thanks, then, go to the following coders: Matthew Auer, James S. Beckett, Thomas Bernauer, Pamela Chasek, René Coenen, Elisabeth Corell, Debbie Davenport, Leonard B. Dworsky, Peter Ehlers, Christel Elvestad, David S. Favre, Bob Friedheim, Fred Gale, Ray Gambell, Andy Garner, Brian Hallman, Gudrun Henne, Richard Herr, Geir Honneland, James Joseph, Christopher Joyner, Jonathan Krueger, Jack Manno, Frank Marty, Britta Meinke, Radu Mihnea, Ronald Mitchell, Ilia Natchkov, Sebastian Oberthür, Kate O'Neill, Edward A. Parson, Dwight Peck, Gerard Peet, M. J. Peterson, Kal Raustiala, Lasse Ringius, Peter Sand, Sibel Sezer, Clare Shine,

Jon Birger Skjaereth, David Victor, Virginia Walsh, Jacob Werksman, Jørgen Wettestad, Koos Wieriks, Andrea Williams, and Bernhard Zangle. Information about the case each coder worked on is readily available in the database itself.

Thanks should also go to the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies in Technology (ZIT) of Darmstadt University of Technology, which awarded a grant for the development of a TOSCANA system. This system provides a graphical tool that allows users to study relationships between variables included in the IRD. Appendix B describes and illustrates the use of the TOSCANA system.

Our intention at this juncture is to make the IRD available to interested members of the research community; we hope that the results will help overcome some of the obstacles to the development of cumulative knowledge regarding the formation, operation, and effectiveness of international regimes. To this end, we are including a CD-ROM containing the database itself with each copy of the book. Thus, this book is not only scientifically significant in its own right; it also marks a crucial turning point in the life of the project. In the substantive chapters of the book, we present some early examples of the types of analysis made possible through the use of the IRD. With the publication of this book, we declare the IRD open for use on the part of other members of the research community. This is a kind of debut or coming out in which a project whose design and developmental stages have lasted longer than any of us could have anticipated is now ready finally for use on the part of others as a public good.

As is often the case with labor-intensive projects, we might well have thought twice about embarking on the creation of the IRD if we had been fully aware in 1994 of what it would take to reach the current stage in the life of the project. Yet we believe that the IRD has much to offer to members of the research community concerned with international regimes; it represents a qualitative advance over past research on international regimes. We look forward to the results produced by other users who see in the IRD a useful research tool.

We are grateful to all who have assisted us in our journey along the long road to cumulative knowledge, and for the general support provided by the Bren School of Environmental Science and Management,

University of California, Santa Barbara; Dartmouth College; the Institute of Political Science, Darmstadt University of Technology; the Social Science Research Center, Berlin; and the Institute for Intercultural and International Studies at the University of Bremen.

Of course, we accept responsibility for any errors of commission or omission remaining in the book. But the book itself could not have come into existence without the help of many colleagues and friends.