Toward a Theory of International Norms

SOME CONCEPTUAL AND MEASUREMENT ISSUES

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This article looks conceptually and empirically at how international norms influence state behavior. Using the decolonization norm as an example, guidelines are developed for the conceptualization, measurement, and testing of international norms and their effects on state behavior. In particular, the role of norms vis-à-vis self-interest and power politics concerns are discussed.

[The expected-utility] calculation only reveals whether minimal, necessary conditions have been satisfied. [A state] must still decide about a number of considerations including the “rightness” or “wrongness” of a war with [another state]. War, being a brutalizing and devastating experience, rarely survives as an option once these additional considerations are introduced.

(Bueno de Mesquita 1981, 60)

Views on the importance of norms in human affairs vary dramatically in the social sciences. In anthropology, they are an essential conceptual tool for understanding human behavior. At the other end of the spectrum is economics where norms are rarely used to explain behavior; the preference there is strategic or utility maximization models. International relations, with its emphasis on power, finds itself closer to economics than to anthropology.

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Rarely are issues of rationality and power brought into close company (or face-to-face confrontation) with those of norms in international relations.¹ It is our contention, however, that one cannot think properly about norms and their relation to behavior without considering power and rationality; that is, these two concepts must be kept in mind when discussing the concept of a norm and when looking at a norm's influence on behavior.

The concern with international norms has developed most prominently in the past decade in the fields of international organization and international political economy. There, norms in the framework of regime theory are important in setting the expectations and, therefore, the behavior of states (Young 1980; Krasner 1983). The concept of a regime is regularly applied to describe the behavior of states in trade, environmental, and other issue areas. One subfield of international relations that has been largely uninfluenced by a concern for order and the influence of international norms is the study of international conflict (an exception is Kegley and Raymond 1990). The dominant metaphor there remains one of a system without supranational authority and devoid of effective moral guidelines. Not surprisingly then, those studies rely on realpolitik factors such as power distributions, alliances, and arms races to explain and predict state behavior.

In this article, we look conceptually and empirically at international norms and their influence on state behavior. This article provides a classification scheme for the conceptualization of international norms, offers some guidelines in their operational measurement, and discusses methodological issues for testing their impact on state behavior. The theoretical model we estimate controls explicitly for factors such as self-interest and power politics concerns that we argue are essential to understanding the impact of international norms (or any other norm). In addition, we develop one of the first empirical and behavioral measures of an international norm (the norm of decolonization) in order to assess the impact of a norm on the propensity for military conflict. In this way, we hope to make a contribution to the study of international norms beyond the standard description of norms in a narrow case study.

The next section addresses the conceptual bases of international norms as there is some disagreement in the international relations literature on these

¹. We have quite consciously chosen to use the term norms rather than alternatives such as rules and regimes. This is in part because of the desire to refer to the extensive literature on norms from sociology, anthropology, and philosophy. Norm reflects the deontological component that is lacking in the term rule, whereas regime is usually conceived of as a complex of rules and norms. Until the concept of a single norm is well understood, it seems inappropriate to move to complexes of norms that constitute regimes.
points (Thomson 1990). This discussion is followed by an examination of the methodological issues involved in the study of norms. Having presented a clear idea of what constitutes international norms and how to study them, the last part of the article applies this conceptual apparatus to the norm of decolonization. Beyond a description of that norm’s development, we formulate and estimate a model of the norm. Finally, we examine empirically the decolonization norm’s impact on state behavior controlling for self-interest and power politics motivations.

FOUR ELEMENTS FOR A THEORY OF INTERNATIONAL NORMS

In any conceptualization of international norms, there are at least four central elements that characterize a given norm. Various views on international norms emphasize one, some, or all of these elements in describing the origin and impact of international norms. By looking at the variation in these four elements, we can not only distinguish different approaches, but differentiate between different kinds of norms. Thus this section sets the stage for our subsequent theoretical discussion of the impact of international norms and provides the groundwork for the testing of a sample case below.

The traditional image of the international system is clearly depicted in the usual description of an anarchical society. The international system is a community, but one without rules of behavior, the classic Hobbesian society where life is nasty, brutish, and short. The implication is that each state uses whatever means at hand — most notably military force — to gain its ends. The analogy is often to a market with every state out to maximize its own power. One can say that the dominant position on norms since World War II is that, although they exist, they are relatively unimportant to understanding state actions (Goertz and Diehl 1991b) and should not influence foreign policy (Kennan 1954).

The first element for conceptualizing norms is that of regularity and consistency of behavior. If, in the same set of circumstances, a state acts

2. Although realist thought is not strongly concerned with international norms and is contradictory in its treatment of the subject, there are some expectations that can be drawn from it. Except for extreme versions, realpolitik does recognize the existence of norms. But most conceptions do not attribute much explanatory behavior to international norms when trying to understand state behavior. Rational calculation of national interest is said to be the path to understanding decision choices. Depending on the approach, international norms are either contrary to such a calculation or completely coterminus with it; in either case, norms have little real or independent effect on state behavior.
differently, then there is some doubt that its behavior is guided by normative considerations. Tradition is very important in this regard for understanding international norms, as behavior is codified and ritualized over time. Norms may eliminate otherwise efficient and effective means to a desired end. Unlike rationality, which is about the efficient means for gaining a predetermined goal, norms are concerned with the desirability of the means and goals themselves.

Behavior in an anarchical society may not be at all erratic, random, or disordered (Bull 1977). As rationalist models of politics demonstrate, widely variable behavior can be quite consistent with rule-like behavior and can be quite rational. Thus rational behavior may appear similar to norm-following behavior depending on the situation. The key point is that norm-like behavior may be driven by pure self-interest. Rule-like regularity in behavior may be norm-influenced or it may be dictated by self-interest. Thus it may be impossible to disentangle the two. In addition, many times norms are used as convenient justifications for self-interested behavior. Given a choice between self-interest and norms as an explanation for behavior, we almost always choose the self-interest argument, a tendency perhaps influenced by the predominance of realpolitik. Thus a second critical element for conceptualizing norms is the extent to which they conflict with self-interest. One must at least recognize that norms and self-interest are not always coterminous.

That rational behavior may be norm-like can be seen by noting a large category of norms that might rightly be called conventions. For example, it does not matter which side of the street we drive on as long as we all agree. It is in our self-interest to respect this convention: if we do not, we risk sanctions such as tickets and accidents. In game theory, there is a variety of games that has this property, such as coordination games (Snidal 1985b). Many of the successes of international organizations are notable in this domain, where it is in the best interests of states to cooperate. Technical organizations such as the Universal Postal Union are successful because it is in the interest of states to establish common standards for communications across borders.

Keohane (1983) takes economic rationality as a basis for studying international regimes, of which norms are an essential part: “I explore . . . how we can account for fluctuations in time in the number, extent, and strength of international regimes, on the basis of rational calculations under varying circumstances” (p. 142). He focuses on situations in which the conflict

3. Acting for the “public good” is not considered rational in the usual formulations, and we neither desire nor are able to address all the issues concerning prisoner’s dilemma and collective goods here.
between self-interest and norms is minimal; but there may be cases in which the conflict between the two is severe. For example, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) norms may lead to high costs for some states as their domestic markets are flooded with cheap foreign goods and home industries suffer. Whereas rationality is about the efficient means of achieving ends, norms are frequently concerned about means. Norms may be prescriptive or proscriptive, but they are relatively rigid and context insensitive. This distinguishes norms fundamentally from rational models. Consistency of behavior is a characteristic of norms, and this frequently contrasts with the variability of rational behavior.

Often when codes of behavior are violated, there are sanctions. Axelrod takes these aspects as central to his definition of a norm: “A norm exists in a given social setting to the extent that individuals usually act in a certain way and are often punished when seen not to be acting in this way” (1986: 1097; see also Parsons 1969 and Scott 1971 for related sociological approaches). Thus the third element for a theory of norms is the importance of sanctions.

Note that Axelrod (1986) makes no distinction as to whether it is in the individual’s self-interest to act the way he does. Individuals follow standards of behavior and are sometimes punished when they do not. These aspects of regularity and sanctions are, on the other hand, absent from Keohane’s (1983) concept. It is also important to notice that power is not absent from this conceptualization. The idea of sanctions means that groups with power are willing and able to use coercion to enforce the norm. Thus norms cannot be considered merely a series of “oughts,” but the possibility of sanctions is also an essential component.

Norms may well be “internalized,” but in virtually all cases of functioning norms, there seem to be some sanctions. In Axelrod’s conception, sanctions play a central role because they are in some sense the cause of behavioral change. For Keohane, sanctions are less visibly present because he focuses on cases in which norms correspond to self-interest. Domestically, sanctioning power is concentrated in the hands of the central government. Similarly, in hegemonic regime theory, it is focused in the hands of the hegemon. An important question is whether there can be effective norms in systems in which the sanctioning power is decentralized and diffused throughout the system.

The fourth aspect of norms is one that has been largely ignored by behavioralists. Norms in the international regime literature and elsewhere (but not always in international law [Nardin 1983]) have failed to deal with the reality that norm means normative, that there are issues of justice and
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rights of a moral or ethical character. Because they vary across historical periods and are sometimes culture-bound, they are more elusive. The moral aspect of norms is crucially lacking in rationalist theories, which assume them away as preferences. National self-determination, or the notion that democracy is the most legitimate form of government, cannot be derived by rational calculations of efficiency.

Because norms have deontological character does not mean that power politics are irrelevant. In most societies, it is powerful groups that are generally at the origin of norms. What we wear and how we eat all come down to us through relations of power. This approach to norms is what in the international relations literature is called the hegemonic theory of norms. Briefly, hegemonic powers create regimes and norms that later decay along with the hegemon's power. One of the important aspects of norms is that they may remain although the interests of hegemons change. For example, the United States promoted free trade after 1945, but now finds its hands bound by those same precepts even as it loses its ability to compete under those norms. The importance of this element varies depending on the norm, ranging from technical norms in which it is absent to ecological regimes in which it is central.

In summary, there are four building blocks that can be used to construct different types of norms: (1) behavioral regularity conforming to the norm, (2) its relationship to self-interest, (3) the importance of sanctions, and (4) its relationship to morality and deontology. The notion of behavioral regularity (number 1 or what could be called norms of behavior as opposed to norms for behavior — number 4) has a different status from the other conditions. Different concepts of norms (see below) take different positions with regard to self-interest, sanctions, and morality, but all concepts of norms assume behavioral regularity. This is a base assumption that distinguishes norms from other theories of behavior, notably rational ones.

TOWARD A THEORY OF INTERNATIONAL NORMS

In this section, we take our building blocks and construct several different norms. These norms have been widely, if somewhat indiscriminately, discussed in the regime literature. But our conceptualization permits us to make important analytical distinctions between them. There are three different kinds of norms that can be distinguished based on the presence or absence—or less dramatically the relative presence or absence—of the three variable
elements of norms: self-interest, sanctions, and deontology.\(^4\) (Recall that the assumption of behavioral regularity is a constant.)

The first kind of norm is what we label a “cooperative norm.” This has the following characteristics: (1) it corresponds to the self-interest of the actors, (2) no sanctions are necessary as the norms are self-enforcing, and (3) the deontological component is minimal. This appears to be the kind of norm that Keohane (1983) referred to above, because it is rational to follow the norm as it coincides with self-interest. Because states have little incentive to violate the norm, the role of sanctions is reduced. We refer to this as a self-sanctioning system because the failure to follow the norm immediately produces its own penalty. This is the reason that Henkin (1968) and others cite for the general observance of international law by most states, most of the time. Also, the long-term damage to a state’s reputation from violating norms is also an incentive to adhere to the desired behavior (Kaplan and Katzenbach 1961). The need for a centralized body is more to facilitate coordination than to punish; accordingly, international organizations do not need to be extremely powerful to fulfill their function.

The second type of norm is represented by a “hegemonic norm.” This is characterized by (1) at least partial conflict between self-interest and the norm, (2) sanctions are in the hands of a central actor—government or hegemon—and play an important role, and (3) there needs to be at least a moderate level of support for the norm on the part of the actors affected. This type corresponds to situations in which sanctions and norm-making power are concentrated in a few hands (Keohane 1980; Gilpin 1987); for example, most of the norms associated with the Bretton Woods system fall under this rubric. Sanctions are more important because there is some conflict between self-interest and norms, but some popular support is necessary because sanctions alone will not ensure compliance (as the collapse of some Communist governments illustrates).

The third type of norm is one that we call a “decentralized norm.” Its characteristics include (1) conflict between norms and self-interest, (2) sanctioning power is diffused and based on the willingness of individual actors to “pay” for sanctions (i.e., no central sanctioning body), and (3) the deontological aspect is important. This is a situation in which, despite the absence of central government authority and hegemons, the basis for cooperation exists even though there are strong temptations to defect. This has

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4. Taking the basic characteristics of norms, there are several other permutations that are possible. But we do not address this here because of space limitations, and also because such norms may not exist in international relations or receive little or no attention in the literature. Thus we concentrate on the three most prominent types of norms, which have the greatest implications and applications in international relations.
important implications for a theory of international norms. First, because there is no central authority or hegemon, the norm must be enforced by the actors involved. Sanctions can come from the powerful as well as the relatively powerless and can be motivated by self-interest.

A key theoretical and empirical concern is whether decentralized norms can have a behavioral impact in a situation of decentralized sanctions when the deontological component is absent. Are strategies such as reciprocity sufficient to create and maintain a decentralized norm? Some game-theoretic work tries to develop models of how pure self-interest and reciprocity are sufficient for developing norms (Snidal 1985b). Here sanctions are purely self-interested.

Another reason for sanctions comes from the deontological aspect of norms. Actors sanction violations because they desire a different state of affairs; they are willing to pay a price for that change. This desire is extraneous and left unexplained by behavioral approaches such as Axelrod (1986). To reduce sanctions to simple cost-benefit calculations is to look only at the circumstance of the sanctionee; to explain the actions of the sanctioner more is needed than a purely behavioral view. Thus a central part of a theory of decentralized norms is how certain values become central to the international community as a whole or to large parts of it.

In the remainder of the article, we focus on decentralized norms to the relative exclusion of the other kinds. This is not to imply that cooperative and hegemonic norms are not important. Yet, decentralized norms do represent an interesting theoretical case. Decentralized norms have the potential to modify behavior driven by self-interested or realpolitik concerns. Illustrative of this kind of norm is the literature on environmental regimes (Young 1989) or corporate codes of conduct (Sikkink 1986). Cooperative and hegemonic norms emphasize self-interest and therefore norms are presumed to have little independent effect. Implicit in this typology of norms are different theories as to how norms arise, how they spread, and how they influence behavior. Cooperative norms seem related to functional theories of regimes (Haggard and Simmons 1987) in which norms serve a needed function (common goal) for states such as those provided in many technical international organizations. Hegemonic norms are imposed from the top down and represent the interests of the hegemon. Decentralized norms can arise from the bottom up. Often small groups are the initial supporters; these norms then spread to other groups and then to the society as a whole. We remain agnostic about how decentralized norms may spread, but one possibility is through diffusion or contagion processes (e.g., the norm of democracy — see Starr 1991). Thus, as a practical consideration, different kinds of norms may require different
theoretical, measurement, and methodological strategies. In the space limitations imposed here, we are able to present only an extended analysis of one kind of norm.

THE METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL NORMS

In this section, we move from the conceptualization of norms, of which there is some work in international relations, to the methodology of norms, of which previous work is little better than nonexistent. We discuss issues in the analysis and measurement of international norms.

There has been little written on the methodology of studying norms, in particular its problems and perils. In international regimes literature, this is in large part because of the wide agreement on the case study approach as the principal mode of research (e.g., Lipson 1985; Ruggie 1982). It is rare to find a study (Kegley and Raymond 1990 is one example) that does not adopt it. From a theoretical point of view there is important work from a public choice perspective (Elster 1989a; Snidal, 1985a) but this provides few tools for the empirical examination of an individual norm.

In the psychological and anthropological literature the problem of norms versus self-interest is often formulated as the contrast between attitudes and behavior. There the methodology is to survey participants about their attitudes and values after which these can be compared with behavior. For example, Cancian (1975) surveyed the attitudes of Mayans and their behavior and found that there was no relationship between the two. The basic technique was correlating statistically a dependent variable “behavior” with an independent variable “norm.”

The technique of correlating attitudes with behavior is based on the notion that norms prescribe consistent behavior. Nevertheless, given that self-interest can coincide with normative behavior, this approach can only demonstrate that norms do not influence behavior. That there is no regular correspondence between words and deeds is much stronger evidence for the irrelevance of norms than would be a strong correlation in arguing for their impact. Positive evidence is always subject to the counterargument that self-interested behavior corresponded to the norm. Thus the first methodological principle of studying norms is that:

Comparing only behavior to norms works only to show the irrelevance of norms, but cannot unambiguously demonstrate their positive impact.
INTERNAL VERSUS EXTERNAL APPROACHES

One frustrating aspect of studying norms is that a major concern is what goes on in people's minds. There are two fundamental approaches that attempt to deal with this problem. One approach, the "external" or "objectivist" approach (e.g., Goldmann 1970), avoids trying to get into individual minds. The opposite approach emphasizes this aspect and can be labeled "internal" or "subjectivist." This is not the forum in which to review all elements of these approaches, but these two positions have important methodological consequences.

One can illustrate the difference between the internal and external approaches by reference to an example of a driver at a stop light on a deserted street. The external approach considers the behavior of the motorist, arguing that self-interest (getting home expeditiously) prevails if she runs the light, thereby violating the norm/law of waiting until the light turns green. If, however, she waits, the conclusion is less clear. The fear of a policeman around the corner or a desire to follow the norm/law may be the motivating factor. One characteristic of this external approach is a corollary of the methodological principle given above: it is best used to show the irrelevance of a norm, but less well-suited to positive evidence of its impact.

The subjectivist approach on the other hand focuses on the thought processes of the driver. If the driver does not stop at the light, then perhaps there is little doubt to her rationale for action (or at least on the impact of the norm/law). The subjectivist approach would inquire about the reasoning of the driver if she stopped for the light (whether it was fear of being stopped by the police, and therefore a self-interest explanation, or whether a feeling of obligation to follow the norm/law was the motivation, thereby attesting to normative impact). As all anthropologists recognize, there are problems with accepting the "local informer's" account, but assuming good faith, this is stronger evidence for the positive impact of norms that can be marshaled by the external approach. From this, we derive our second principle:

External approaches can only indirectly infer the importance of a norm, whereas internal approaches have the potential to indicate direct connections between norms and behavior.

NORMS AND SELF-INTEREST

Since the original work of Morgenthau (1960), the basic assumption in international relations has been that nations struggle for power and to promote national interests. Thus, for anyone who wants to argue that norms
affect behavior, he must continually refute arguments that are based on self-interest. This is related to one problem with the external approach noted above, which is that it cannot provide direct evidence for the positive impact of a norm, but only negative. We are now in a position to amend that proviso: the external approach can provide positive evidence only if self-interest is taken into account in the analysis. Indeed, this applies not just to the external approach, but to any approach that has designs on providing positive evidence on the impact of norms on behavior. Thus our third methodological principle is:

To demonstrate the positive impact of a norm, it is necessary to control for self-interest.

This principle applies regardless of whether the methodology is case study, correlational, and/or survey research because it is a theoretical principle as well. In effect, self-interest is the null hypothesis in the study of international norms (it may be the reverse in anthropology). As Elster (1989b) notes, it is not possible to act altruistically at all times, but it is possible to be continually egoistic.

Above, we implicitly criticized Keohane’s (1983) conceptualization of regimes and norms. But Keohane makes an important point that there are a number of areas of cooperation in the world in which it is in the self-interest of states to cooperate. This is a key correction in our often too pessimistic view of international relations. Our goal here is different because we are interested in the independent effect of norms; indeed we are not interested in cooperation per se, but rather in conflict, the conflict between norms and self-interest.

In summary, comparing only behavior to norms is capable of showing the irrelevance of norms but not their positive impact. Similarly, external approaches to measurement can provide some evidence for the positive impact of norms only if one controls for self-interest.

ELEMENTS OF A MEASUREMENT THEORY OF INTERNATIONAL NORMS

We have already briefly alluded to the quite common technique of attitude surveys; one way to find out about norms is to ask individuals what they think and believe. One problem with this approach is that it focuses on individual beliefs and behavior, and hence downplays the social character of norms. The assumption is that if a large percentage of people holds a norm, then that norm is important in society. This creates the classic problem of moving from individual level values to statements about norms in society as a whole.
To our knowledge—admittedly far from complete—there have been no attempts to measure norms in international relations using the bottom-up technique of the survey or by content analysis of leader's speeches. We cannot underestimate the problems of this approach, but it does seem to have the advantage of identifying the subjective components of norms. Kegley and Raymond (1990) use a related approach in their measures of alliance norms. They argue that standard legal texts reflect the commonly accepted norms on the strictness of alliance treaties.

A top-down external approach focuses on a fundamental characteristic of a norm, which is that it prescribes uniform behavior. The strength of a norm is the extent to which behavior corresponds to the prescription; the weakness is the extent to which behavior diverges. Most of the regime literature focuses more on trends, for example that nontariff barriers are increasing and the free trade norm is decreasing. A behavioral approach to measuring a norm involves identifying behaviors that correspond to the norm and those that violate them.

The approach to measurement that we propose is a modified version of the external approach, correcting for some of its flaws. The first component of our model is determining behaviors that are congruent with the norm as well as those that violate its prescriptions. As we have noted, there is still a significant leap in inference from behavioral consistency to the norm itself. Indeed, if we stopped here, behavioral regularity of any variety might be identified as a norm. Thus we add a second element. In addition to the external approach, we propose to examine the political and deontological history of the norm from a more subjectivist and philosophical point of view. One essential element to substantiate the long inference from behavior to norm is the extent to which a behavioral measure corresponds with the history of the norm as represented by historical treatises, philosophical works, international treaties, and so forth. This does not try to unlock the minds of leaders, but rather searches for public and recognized actions that illustrate changing conceptions of international politics. The importance of the deontological component in the measurement of a norm varies according to the type of norm. We have emphasized that it is important for decentralized norms. But, for cooperative norms, this component is not necessary and for hegemonic norms, its role is reduced.

The third element of any measurement approach is represented by the idea that, although norms change, they do so usually quite slowly and the weight of the past is strong in determining the current status of the norm. For these reasons, norms have a strong historical dimension. Partially, it is through the changes in norms over time that we can investigate their impact; but more important, the norm of today is rarely dramatically different from the norm
of yesterday (but different nonetheless). Indeed, current behavior has the effect of strengthening or diminishing the strength of the norm in the future (depending of course on whether the behavior is consistent with the prescription or not). Thus there is a recursive relationship between the norm and the behavior. Norms are a dynamic phenomenon because the past influences the present, but behavior in the present changes the norm. Any measurement model must allow for the weight of the past and also for the effect of the present on the future. A measurement problem will be dealing with the usually slow, but changing strength of a norm over time. Again, how to measure change will depend on the type of norm. For cooperative norms, the emphasis is naturally on changing interests and for hegemonic norms it is on the power of the hegemon. Below, we give an example of how to detect change in decentralized norms.

Finally, the measurement of norms must include some indication that the strength of the norm varies according to the actor it is supposed to influence; that is, its strength at the international level may not be reflective of how widely accepted it is in the state whose behavior is supposed to be affected. This is similar to customary international law in which states that repeatedly act in a different manner than the prescribed one and state their nonacceptance of the law are not bound by that law. The degree of acceptance may also vary across different states at the same point in time (note above that we suggested that the strength of the norm already varies across time). Thus, in assessing the impact of the norm on behavior, one must include measurements of strength at both the international and national levels.

In summary, the principal aspects of our measurement approach are:

1. Identification of behavior strengthening or corresponding to the norm.
2. Verification that the deontological history corresponds roughly to the behavioral measure.
3. Incorporation of historical stability of norms with the possibility of change in strength.
4. Reflection of the varying degrees of acceptance by the actors whose behavior is supposed to be influenced by the norm.

THE NORM OF DECOLONIZATION

With what might be called a proto-theory of international norms, we move now to apply this to a particular norm as an illustration of the aforementioned principles and guidelines.

From the three types of norms described, we take the decentralized norm of decolonization for illustration purposes. This is done in part because this
kind of norm has often been isolated from the regime literature. In addition, the modal situation in international relations is one of decentralized sanctioning power, as hegemons are more like leaders than central government authorities. The sample norm that we describe, measure, and whose impact we assess is the norm of decolonization or national self-determination. This norm prescribes that the holding of colonial or dependent territories is wrong and that such territories should be granted their freedom through peaceful means. As we describe below, this norm is well accepted today; but in 1800, it was just being developed as an outgrowth of the American and French revolutions with the notion that national self-determination for Caucasian-settled colonies was appropriate. Obviously, not all norms start from a minority position only later to become universal (to which could be added examples such as slavery [Ray 1989] or mercenary armies [Thomson 1990]). Each norm has its own history, evolution, and impact on state behavior. Thus, in using the decolonization norm, we do so to illustrate our basic theoretical approach. We do not argue that the development of the decolonization norm is typical, nor can we say that all norms have as much impact (or as little) as this norm.

In choosing the decolonization norm as the focus, we have a number of concerns and qualifications. In a rather one-sided fashion, we are concerned with decolonization, but not colonization. Although these are no doubt related, we are interested in the prescriptive norm, not the proscriptive one. The decolonization prescribes a certain behavior vis-à-vis dependent territories. This prescription at first applies only to white European-settled colonies, but gradually is extended to all types of colonies. Practically, this means that in the empirical section, we look only at cases of national independence and ignore the acquisition of new territory by colonial powers.

The norm of decolonization is a good example of a decentralized norm. It is clear that the norm prescribing independence for colonial territories may conflict with political and economic interests. Neocolonialist theories are based on the idea that this conflict was minimal, that the political and economic benefits could be retained while granting independence. But it is not self-evident that self-interest always coincided with the decolonization, and therefore this norm provides a good test case of the intersection and divergence of norms and self-interest.

Also typical of decentralized norms, the decolonization norm relied on sanctioning power diffused throughout the international system. From the most powerful to the least, there were actors that supported the norm. The United States and the Soviet Union tended to back revolutionary movements and sometimes punished, by political and economic means, those that did not comply. Smaller states exercised political influence through actors such as
the United Nations in order to condemn those states that did not give up colonial territory peacefully. In a self-reinforcing fashion, the strength of the norm increased the level of sanctions, which increased the effectiveness of the norm.

In the next two sections, we discuss the evolution of the decolonization in a more general sense, and then present a concrete behavioral measure. We adopt the external approach for measuring this norm. We will be sensitive to changing ideas about decolonization, but the inferential leap from external behavior to norms remains. Ideally, we would include data on attitudes in different colonial powers, but these are not available. We argue that the changes in the behavioral measure and the evolution of ideas about decolonization are roughly parallel, the trends in the behavioral measure corresponding generally to what we know from the political and intellectual history. The concluding sections are devoted to ascertaining the impact of the decolonization norm on the level of military conflict during the transition of dependent territories to independence. We argue that even controlling for self-interest and realpolitik alternate explanations, the decolonization norm was a significant factor in peaceful transitions of power. In this way, we provide a complete exposition of how the theoretical and methodological principles of international norms above can be applied to a sample case.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE DECOLONIZATION NORM

The idea that dependent territories have a right to self-determination and eventually independence is one that is largely accepted today, and indeed one aspect of this acceptance is that decolonization is usually considered an issue of the past and relatively noncontroversial.\(^5\) This value has its roots in the liberalism of the 19th and 20th centuries.\(^6\) John Stuart Mill, Edmund Burke, and others stressed the right of people to choose their own form of government. At the time, however, this right was thought to exist only for the more developed European-based societies; meanwhile, states were in the midst of acquiring colonies, not relinquishing them. Nevertheless, the American Revolution revealed that self-government was possible, albeit only obtained by means of the sword. The assistance of the French and the recognition of the new state by others signified the acceptance of a territory that had fought for its independence. The British also came to recognize that

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\(^5\) In fact, decolonization is not completely a dead issue as there were still 43 dependent territories left in 1989 according to Glassner and de Blij (1989).

\(^6\) For a discussion of the various origins of decolonization, see Chowdhuri (1955).
many of its colonies would one day rule themselves; the "experiments" with self-government in Canada demonstrate this recognition.

Prior to World War I, colonial powers began to think of colonial domination as part of a "sacred trust" in which they sought to protect the native populations and serve the world community. This view was paradoxically evident in the agreements at the Berlin Conference in the late 19th century that divided the African continent among the colonial powers. This illustrates that norms can develop even in the face of seemingly contradictory behavior of another variety. In this instance, the norm of decolonization applying to the disposition of established dependent territory was developing at the same time that states continued to acquire new dependent territorial possessions. The agreements then, and subsequently, suggested that colonial domination may only be temporary, although no one felt that decolonization would happen anytime soon (Hall 1948). The first real cracks in the colonial system would happen as a result of World War I.

It had been common practice in previous wars for the victorious power(s) to incorporate some of the territory of the defeated states into its (their) own. After World War I, some of this certainly occurred, but perhaps for the first time, the victorious coalition decided to put some of those areas on the path to self-rule. The League of Nations Mandate System was the international action that removed dependent territories from colonial domination and provided a means for them to attain independence peacefully (Upthegrove 1954). The international community noted that dependent territories had an impact on all nations from an economic and political standpoint and, therefore, the community of nations had an interest in protecting the well-being of those territories.

Decolonization under the Mandate System, however, was quite limited. First, it applied only to the former dependent territories of Germany and Turkey, the defeated powers in the war. The territories of Britain, France, and others on the winning side were not covered under the arrangement. Second, the territories would not immediately receive their independence, but would pass through a transitional phase (whose length depended on the level of development) under the tutelage of another state; in some ways, this arrangement resembled the previous colonial administration. Nevertheless, the notion that dependent peoples should be free to determine their own government was finally receiving tangible recognition on the international level.

The United Nations and its International Trusteeship System was a major turning point in the development of an international norm of decolonization. The U.N. Charter explicitly recognized a right of "self-determination of

7. See also Article 22 of the League of Nations Covenant.
peoples” and expanded on the League mandate system with the development of the Trusteeship Council. Similar to its predecessor, the Trusteeship System placed “non-self-governing” territories under the protection of certain states that would then prepare those areas for eventual independence. But the U.N. system and the principles underlying it had the potential to apply to all dependent territories, not merely those lost in the previous war. The United Nations could not and would not seize existing dependent territories, but the moral justification for colonial domination became much less tenable.

The 25 years after the founding of the United Nations witnessed a tremendous number of territories gaining their independence, most through peaceful means. France and Britain voluntarily gave up most of their colonial possessions, seemingly responding to the emerging international support for decolonization around them. Various U.N. resolutions echoed this sentiment. Perhaps none was more important than General Assembly Resolution 1514 passed in 1960. This resolution equated colonial domination with a violation of human rights, and stated that such domination is contrary to the U.N. Charter. Over time, this resolution and the principles contained in it have been cited consistently, both in U.N. resolutions and in opinions of the International Court of Justice. Decolonization was the predominant issue cited in U.N. speeches in the decade following the passage of the Resolution 1514 (Kay 1970). Some legal scholars have argued about whether decolonization has become so embedded in international society that it can be said to constitute a “peremptory norm of international law,” thereby giving it legal standing (Shaw 1984). Regardless, the belief that decolonization is wrong is firmly entrenched in international society.

The decolonization norm and its development illustrate the conceptualization of international norms noted above. First, it was not always in the self-interest of colonial powers to relinquish control over dependent territories. The strategic, and, more commonly, the economic payoffs from those possessions in many cases would suggest that self-interest dictates holding on to them. Secondly, the evolution of the norm illustrates the historical character of the process in which extensions of the norm are difficult to reverse. Third, sanctioning power was diffused throughout the international system, with the superpowers, Third World states, and the United Nations all involved in supporting the norm to various degrees and with different mechanisms. Finally, the decolonization norm is based on a belief that subjugation of peoples is morally wrong, not that it is economically unprof-

8. Article 1, section 2.
itable. The basis of the norm in liberal theory and the development of the norm in the context of human rights after the Second World War convey this moral aspect.

**MEASURING THE DECOLONIZATION NORM**

Applying the measurement criteria noted above, we look first at the behavior of all states in the international system to assess the strength of the decolonization norm. There are two indicators of the norm that address the behavioral aspects of its development. One is the extent to which dependent territories gained their freedom (the number of previous cases at any given point in time); as more dependent territories gain their independence, the norm is strengthened. To identify these instances, we turn to a list of all territorial changes in the international system since 1816 (Goertz and Diehl 1991a). From that list, we identify the subset of cases that involve the entry of a new state into the international system following a period as a dependent territory under the domination of an colonial power. As instances of decolonization become more common in the system, they become more accepted and the norm of decolonization is strengthened. When there are few instances of territories becoming independent, there are few expectations and certainly little feeling of obligation that colonial powers should relinquish their holdings.

The second behavioral indicator is the proportion of the previous independence cases that involved military conflict. One can infer that if an independence occurred peacefully, the norm of decolonization is strong and is strengthened more than by cases in which the independence was simply the result of military victory. As the proportion of independences involving military conflict declines, the legitimacy of resisting decolonization efforts also lessens, and colonial powers are under increasing pressure to transfer sovereignty peacefully. As more states give up territories peacefully, the decolonization norm on the international level is strengthened.

Taken together, these two indicators have several desirable elements. First, the measure includes elements that are increasing (but not uniformly) and elements that may increase or decrease. The strength of the international norm at any given time \( t \) is dependent on previous behavior of all states in

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10. If the independence was accompanied by fighting between organized forces of both sides (indigenous and colonial military forces) within 1 year of independence, then military conflict is considered to have taken place. Thus, for example, violent encounters between the military and demonstrators are excluded.
the international system. To the extent that the behavior at time \( t \) corresponds to the norm, that norm is strengthened or weakened, at the same time being affected by it. To put it another way, the cumulation of behaviors at \( t - 1 \) and before (the norm) affect state behavior at time \( t \). The behavior at time \( t \) will modify (reinforce or weaken) the norm, which in turn affects behavior at \( t + 1 \) and beyond. Finally, international norms are the creations of states and most importantly the major powers in the international system. This is reflected empirically in our measure by the important number of cases involving the major powers, most notably France and the United Kingdom, that have a strong impact on the evolution of the norm.

To see whether these two indicators capture the development of the norm over time as described in the previous section, we normalized each indicator and plotted their average over time.\(^{11}\) The patterns evident in Figure 1 are largely consistent with the development of the norm described above and patterns of decolonization described elsewhere (Strang 1991). The initial jump in the indicator around 1816 is a statistical artifact using that year as the base year and assigning its value as zero. After 1816, the decolonization norm developed slowly, as previously described, in the 19th century. But the 20th century reveals a rapid strengthening of the norm. World War I represents a slight strengthening of the norm as the League of Nations Mandate System is created. After World War II, however, the norm experiences an almost exponential increase in its vitality as more dependent territories received their independence peacefully, and the norm becomes firmly established in the international community.

Although our approach and indicators seem to do a good job of matching the historical development of the decolonization norm, there are several qualifications. The indicators cannot pick up significant counter trends. In this instance, there was significant empire building (in Asia and Africa) at the time the decolonization norm is strengthening. As we indicated above, the colonization of dark-skinned peoples continued to be permissible. Thus new colonization is not incompatible in the short term with the continuing development of the decolonization norm.

In addition, one of the indicators (previous independences) increases monotonically. Used alone, this could imply that a norm could only be strengthened and never weakened. Fortunately, in the final model, we combine this indicator with several others to foreclose this possibility. Finally, it

\(^{11}\) The y axis represents an average of two indicators converted to a common scale: the percentage of previous independences involving military conflict and the number of independences in the system (since 1816) in a given 5-year block divided by the total in the system in the period studied (\( N = 119 \)).
might be argued that the indicators look only at decisions by the colonial power and ignore norm-generating behavior by indigenous groups; more generally, this means that the influence of those potentially affected by the prescribed behavior is ignored.

Looking at the decolonization norm at the international level is only the first step in assessing its impact on state behavior. Norms influence behavior only to the extent that they are accepted by the state that they hope to influence. Thus, to see if the decolonization norm affects France in 1950 for example, we must assess that particular state’s prior behavior with respect to the norm. Accordingly, we use the same two indicators as above (number of previous independence cases and proportion of military conflict in those cases), but do so at the state, rather than the international level. For example, although Britain and France may face the same international norms in 1960, the unique national experience of each country will make its propensity to follow that norm different (and thus their scores on the state level indicators
will be different). Domestic political factors and others condition the acceptance and impact of an international norm. Adding these two indicators at the state to those at the international level allows us to ascertain what influence (if any) the decolonization norm exercises on particular states at given points in time.

In order to integrate the indicators, we employ the econometric/statistical technique LISREL (Hayduk 1987; Long 1983). LISREL is used for structural equation models, in which multiple indicators are used to measure the variables in the model (in this case, the decolonization norm) and then the relationships between those variables are estimated (here, between the decolonization norm and military conflict in cases of national independence). We begin by specifying the concept of the decolonization norm as a latent variable. We then use confirmatory factor analysis among the measured indicators (i.e., the four indicators noted above) in order to estimate the latent variable (the decolonization norm). There are several benefits to this technique. First, we gain a more complex and, we believe, more accurate measure of the decolonization norm than any of the four indicators separately. Unlike other studies that use multiple indicators, we estimate an explicit empirical weighting scheme for each indicator's relationship to the combined norm measure. Second, LISREL is particularly valuable in deriving measures of intangible concepts such as norms (in contrast to a nation's trade balance) that cannot be measured directly. Finally, the estimates of the parameters of the measurement model give us some idea of how well the combined-norm variable is measured rather than assuming a priori that the measurement error is negligible.

The success of our attempt to measure the norm of decolonization is a function of the ability of the four indicators to capture the latent variable: the decolonization norm. The results of our measurement model are presented in Figure 2.

We turn our attention to the four indicators of the latent variable, the decolonization norm. The numbers in parentheses at the far edges of Figure 2 are the $R^2$ values between the indicators and the latent variable (the decolonization norm). The $R^2$ values are generally quite good (all above 0.40), denoting that the indicators are reasonably good measures of the latent norm variable (the measurement error for each indicator is denoted by the number above the $R^2$ value). The occurrence of national independence, both at the international level and with respect to the experience of a particular colonial power, is more related to the norm's variable than is the frequency of violence associated with those instances of independence. This is not to imply that when a colonial power fights to hold onto its possessions, the decolonization norm is not weakened, but rather that the effect of a new state joining the
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Measurement error
(measurement R²)

.17
(.83) → # Independences—System ← .91

.28
(.72) → Conflict—System ← .85

.19
(.81) → # Independences—Nation ← .90

.63
(.37) → Conflict—Nation ← .61

Decolonization
Norm

Figure 2: Measurement Model for Decolonization Norm

... world community has a greater effect, whether it gained independence through violent means or not.

Next, we note the coefficients in the measurement model, which are the numbers along the directional arrows between the indicators and the latent variable. The results reported were obtained by unweighted least squares (ULS) because the variables in this model were not normally distributed. The same analyses were performed by maximum likelihood (ML) with very similar results; this is evidence of the stability of the relationships.

The coefficients are all in the expected direction, with those for the violence indicators being negative and those for the number of previous independences being positive. This means that the norm of decolonization is strengthened as more dependent territories gain their independence, but weakened as more of those cases involve military conflict; this is consistent with our theoretical expectations. Further, all the coefficients from the maximum likelihood analyses are significant at the .01 level. Given these results, we believe that our measurement model has been quite successful in estimating the norm of decolonization at the time of the 119 cases under study.

THE IMPACT OF NORMS ON STATE BEHAVIOR

We now return to the issues raised in the first part of this article: the relationship between norms, self-interest, and power politics. In cases of
decentralized norms, those three factors are present and sometimes confounded. We argued that norms must be kept conceptually distinct from self-interest, but empirically they will often coincide. Thus, to study the impact of norms on behavior, one must also simultaneously control for the influence of these other factors.

The particular behavior that we have in mind to test the impact of the decolonization norm is military conflict at the time of independence. As the norm of decolonization develops over time and as independence movements become more legitimate, we would expect there to be less military conflict over independence. Thus our hypothesis is simple: The stronger the norm of decolonization, the less likely is military conflict in the transition to independence.

The dependent variable in the model—military conflict—is one of those used to measure the norm variable. But this does not result in a tautological relationship. The norm as we have modeled it is the behavior from t₀ to t - 1 and thus does not include the independence in question at time t. The independence at time t contributes to either strengthening or weakening the norm at t + 1. Some might suggest that there is a problem of autocorrelation because the dependent variable is military conflict and is also (lagged) part of the norm variable. We do not believe this to be a problem given (a) there are other indicators besides military conflict included in the norm variable and (b) the norm variable includes more than military conflict at time t - 1; the whole history of conflict from 1816 until time t is included.

At the time of independence of any given dependent territory, the development of the decolonization norm at the international level and at the state level indicates the strength of the norm at that particular point in time and space. The correlation between the strength of the norm and the extent of military conflict at the time of independence is −.6 and statistically significant. This strong correlation means that at those points in time and space when the decolonization norm was stronger, there was less military conflict over independence. This is suggestive that the decolonization norm had an impact on the likelihood of military conflict at the time of independence (i.e., it influenced some colonial powers to relinquish their colonial holdings peacefully).

Nevertheless, correlation is not causation and norms are only one influence on behavior. One could argue that this is a case in which self-interest coincided with norm-guided behavior, in statistical terms a spurious correlation. One might suggest that some dependent territories had little economic value and that the value for all dependent territories declined over time (especially after 1945), paralleling the development of the decolonization norm. Thus it might be in the self-interest of colonial powers to relinquish
dependent territories peacefully. The self-interest concerns that were not important in measurement are now critical in assessing the impact of norms on behavior. To control for the influence of self-interest, we add to our analysis the importance of the economic relationship between the dependent territory and the metropole. We use the indicators exports to and imports from the dependent territory as a percentage of the colonial power’s total exports and imports to capture one aspect of this economic self-interest. This reflects the importance of the dependent territory in terms of the metropole’s foreign trade. The second aspect of the economic importance of a territory is its intrinsic value, as measured by its area and total population (Goertz and Diehl 1990). Our expectation is that when self-interest is high, the colonial power will more actively resist efforts at independence. Inclusion of these factors in the model will allow us to sort out the effects from self-interest versus those from the decolonization norm.

Another concern that must be controlled for relates to the realpolitik. As we noted above, the power politics orientation downplays the significant influence of normative concerns in state behavior, but believes that power concerns are the dominant (if not the solitary) influence. Accordingly, we wish to include a power decline variable in our analysis to assess the impact of such concerns on the propensity of states to give up dependent territories peacefully. Our expectation is that colonial powers will be more vulnerable to violent losses of territory in a period of relative decline; in a period of power ascendancy, the colonial power is unlikely to lose any dependent territory, much less as a result of military encounters (Doran and Parsons 1980). As indicators, we look at the change over the 10 years previous to the independence of the colonial power’s percentage of the total colonial system (all imperial/colonial powers) for: (1) gross national product (GNP), (2) military expenditures, and (3) military personnel. This permits us to assess the relative decline of the state in question vis-à-vis the appropriate referent group—other colonial powers.12

In the following analysis, we use the LISREL framework to combine the indicators for each of the factors in our model: the decolonization norm, both aspects of self-interest (trade and intrinsic value), and power decline.13 Thus we are able to assess the impact of these factors on the propensity for military

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12. Data are taken from Goertz and Diehl (1991a).
13. Because the dependent variable is dichotomous, the usual approach would be to use probit/logit analysis. In fact, this was attempted, but it proved impossible to reconstruct all the latent variables generated by LISREL for use in such analysis. Thus an approximation of the probit analysis, a linear analysis using unweighted least squares (ULS) was performed in LISREL. In many previous studies, the results of linear regression were not normally different from probit; partial probit analyses done with portions of the model confirmed this expectation in this instance. Consistent results were also obtained in using maximum likelihood estimates.
conflict in 119 cases of national independence. The results of the analysis are
given in Figure 3.

The left portion of Figure 3 gives the results of the measurement models;
we discussed the measurement model for the decolonization norm above.
The measurement models for self-interest and power decline were equally
successful. Here we are concerned with the righthand portion of the figure,
which reveals the impact of each factor on the likelihood of military conflict.
The use of ULS does not produce significance tests, but maximum likelihood
does and this permits us to use the t statistics as evidence for the significance
of the coefficients. The t statistics are given in parentheses next to the
coefficients. The standardized structural coefficient of the decolonization
norm variable is −.59 indicating that as the norm becomes stronger, there is
less military conflict (as hypothesized). The variable is also statistically
significant as indicated by the approximate t statistic of −3.76. Several of the
other variables also had a significant impact on military conflict. The self-
interest of the metropole was significant as the colonial powers were more
likely to fight when the colony was economically important. Further, states
in decline were likely to resist independence with military force, as expected.
Only the intrinsic importance of the territory was not a significant factor.
Overall, the model accounted for 50% of the variance in the incidence of
military conflict.

The results present powerful evidence that norms have an important
influence on state behavior, at least in this limited test case. The decoloniza-
tion variable is significant even controlling for self-interest and realpolitik
concerns. Consistent with Strang’s (1991) findings, economic and political
factors cannot fully account for patterns in decolonization, especially the
explosion in the number of cases after 1960. Further, an examination of the
standardized coefficients reveals that the norm variable was an important
influence on whether the independence would be accompanied by military
conflict. This means that even given economically important territory and
taking into account some realpolitik concerns, the norm of decolonization
was still a significant influence, and perhaps the most important influence in
this limited test, on state behavior.

There are several problems, however, with drawing inferences about
norms and their impact, both with respect to this case and stemming from the
approach in general. In our measures of self-interest, we looked only at the
economic importance of the colony and not at its strategic or other impor-
tance. In this case, there was actually little variation in the measures of
strategic importance of the colonies and, accordingly, it has little impact on
the propensity for conflict (Goertz and Diehl 1991a). More generally, how-
ever, there is the common problem that less tangible aspects of self-interest
Figure 3: LISREL Model of Military Conflict and National Independence

NOTE: $R^2 = .50$; adjusted goodness-of-fit index = .96.

*Significant at .05.
(historical or political values) will be difficult to measure. Second, we did not include the costs of holding onto the territory in a calculation of self-interest; this may be considerable in some cases and less so in others as the existence and strength of indigenous military challenges varied widely; but the mere existence of such movements already indicates an unwillingness to grant independence quickly. It might be very difficult to assess the future costs of not following norms (especially in the absence of explicit and guaranteed sanctions by the international community), but these may be important in identifying self-interest.

A third difficulty arises in any longitudinal, large \( N \) study: parameter shifts over time. Here, it is quite conceivable that major power interests shifted over time (corresponding to the decolonization process which was one of its results). Major powers no longer needed to directly control territories in order to exploit them, when neo-colonial instruments would do just as well without the accompanying costs (Betts 1985). The interests and capacities of Britain and France were dramatically altered by their World War II experiences. Further, as Russett (1985) notes, the United States made decolonization a price for postwar economic aid. Assessing the impact of a norm on behavior requires a careful consideration of alternative explanations and, in some cases, the empirical evidence may provide little guidance on which explanation is most reasonable.

Of course, there are limitations to inferring motivation from behavior, and we recognize that we cannot say for sure whether states were primarily motivated by the norm to give up their territories or for some other reason. This is also not to say that international norms will be important in all contexts. But our analysis does demonstrate the potential for a norm to modify state behavior when economic or security concerns might dictate otherwise.

**CONCLUSION**

In the first part of the article, we proposed four criteria that are important in distinguishing different types of norms: (1) behavioral regularity and consistency, (2) its relationship to self-interest, (3) the importance of a system of sanctions, and (4) its relationship to morality and deontology. The first condition is not relevant in distinguishing between different kinds of norms, but in distinguishing norms from other kinds of behavior, notably self-interested behavior. Depending on the relative presence or absence of the last three criteria, different kinds of norms can be constructed. We investigated
a norm involving a significant conflict between self-interest and the norm, a system of sanctions, and an important deontological component. This particular kind of norm we characterized as “decentralized” because the sanctioning power is diffused throughout the system. This contrasts with the centralization of hegemonic norms and the self-enforcing character of cooperative norms. Our effort was then to establish guidelines on how to measure decentralized norms and assess their impact on behavior.

We developed several guidelines for the empirical measurement and methodology of international norms. Our measure was based on the actual behavior of states, rather than merely their rhetorical pronouncements; importantly, however, we argue that an “external” measure should produce patterns that are consistent with both state behavior and diplomatic statements. This insures that the norm is not merely an abstract prescription, but a behavior that has been internalized by the actors in the international system. Also important is that the measure must reflect that the norm can be present in varying degrees over time and across different actors. Thus, when one speaks of a norm at a given point in time, it may not have the same configuration of strength as a decade or more later. Further, the degree to which that norm is accepted by individual actors varies, and, therefore, one can expect a differential effect on behavior according to that acceptance.

With respect to the example of the decolonization norm, our measure is able to capture both the international component of the norm at various points in time, thereby capturing the sensitivity of states to the behavior of other states in the system, but also the degree to which the colonial power in question has behaved in accordance with it (thereby indicating its acceptance). We are not prepared to argue that our measure of the decolonization norm is definitive nor that the guidelines above are the only reasonable approach. We have alluded to another “internal” approach to measure norms that is also valid (although not without its problems), and different kinds of norms may require different measurement strategies.

Norms and their impact on behavior cannot be studied apart from issues of power and self-interest. It is only by controlling for these two factors that we can see the actual impact of norms on behavior. This is probably the fundamental theoretical and methodological principle underlying the study of norms in international relations. The tendency in international relations research has been to emphasize the strategic aspect of behavior to the exclusion of the normative aspect (or in a few cases the reverse of this). Only when we study their interrelationship, can we begin to get a true understanding of behavior.
Our analysis of the decolonization norm demonstrated that self-interest and power politics concerns had a significant influence on state behavior. But even controlling for these, the decolonization norm had a significant and strong impact in limiting military conflict in cases of national independence.

Our cursory treatment of cooperative and hegemonic norms does not mean that they do not deserve study in their own right. The emphasis on cooperative norms corrects the one-sided notion that the international system is mostly or essentially conflictual. One indicator of increasing cooperation in the system is the dramatic growth in the number and breadth of international organizations and their activities. Hegemonic theory, although correctly stressing the importance of power in creating regimes, ignores the important need for broader support of the regime by states other than the single hegemon. The methodology of measurement and testing the importance of these kinds of norms may be quite different from the scheme developed for decentralized norms. What we have presented here is only the beginning of a theory of international norms. What is left is to integrate the role of international organizations and international law as well as to look at the role that norms may play in the context of an international regime. We then can discuss how norms differ across security, economic, and other regimes.

Although we have specifically not proposed a theoretical framework for regimes, there are some implications of our analysis for regime theory. To the extent that regimes are treated as a single norm, then our analysis and guidelines are directly applicable. To the extent that multiple norms and other structures constitute a given regime, we have identified a framework and mechanism for identifying, measuring, and testing key component parts. Thus, in our view, analyzing regimes empirically must begin with an understanding of the norms that are part of their fabric.

We hope that our efforts here are the beginning of more systematic and empirical efforts to measure international norms and assess their impact on international behavior. There are several promising lines of research that are concerned with the effect of norms, most notably those related to democracy and war (Maoz and Russett 1991), ecological regimes, peaceful resolution of disputes (Wynn 1991), and peaceful territorial changes (Kacowicz 1992) to name a few. Each of these bodies of literature and dozens more could benefit by systematic theorizing and testing of the impact of international norms on behavior.

Traditional models of international relations may not be able to capture such effects, and understanding international norms may be essential if we are to fully understand state behavior. As Elster notes, "norms provide an
important kind of motivation for action that is irreducible to rationality or indeed to any other form of optimizing mechanism" (Elster 1989a, 15).

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