
Internationalizing the nation-state: Neorealist political economy and international space

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Résumé

With the increase of international economic exchanges a push towards international institutional integration occurred. With respect to international trade this has been materialized through the GATT/WTO framework. Yet, the latter turned out to be unable to properly tackle the issue of deep integration” (Lawrence, 1996) which notably consists in promoting trade in the context of nationally fragmented, diverging technical standards and regulations. While the neorealist approach (Amable and Palombarini, 2005) provides a fruitful explanation of institutional change within the national frame, it doesn’t fully take into account the impact of international economic integration, which is based on the relations between different spatial scales and their institutions. From the neorealist perspective of institutional change the deepening of international trade raises in particular the question of the compatibility of different nationally constituted institutions and their dominant blocs. Additionally, this question also allows to address the role of private institutions, which so far seem to have received rather scant discussion (Amable and Palombarini, 2009).

Therefore, this paper attempts to propose an extension of the framework of neorealist political economy to the issue of the international space. In order to account for the institutional challenges stemming from the growing importance of the international space it suggests to integrate insights from the Poulantzian perspective on the internationalization of the state” into the neorealist framework (Brand et al., 2011; Hirsch, 1997; Jessop, 2002). Through this integration the paper doesn’t only attempt to contribute to a better understanding of the role of spatially differentiated public and private institutions in contemporary capitalism, but it tries to conceptually reconnect insights from the Regulation school in France with the developments carried out by regulationists in Germany, who mainly focussed on states and institutions. Even though the paper is mainly theoretical the arguments are also informed by empirical findings related to the relevance of technical standards and regulations in contemporary international trade.

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