From Power to Representation: the changing trade-off between control and representative legitimacy in the staffing of international organizations

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Abstract

While states seek to place their nationals in positions of influence within international secretariats, secretariats also need to be seen as meritocratic and representative if they are to be legitimated. When it comes to IO staffing, functional demands of IOs' work are widely recognized, but there is a trade-off between control by powerful states, on the one hand, and representative legitimacy, on the other. We offer theory and evidence that IOs need to strike a balance between these two competing pressures, and that the particular balance depends strongly on the public visibility of the IOs. Using panel regression, we analyze a new dataset covering states' representation in the international secretariats of 36 United Nations system bodies, in 1996-2015. The results are consistent with a trade-off between IO control and legitimacy in staffing patterns. Importantly, while meritocratic criteria matter across all IOs, the relative power of control and representative legitimacy varies. In less visible IOs power trumps representative legitimacy. In highly visible, exposed IOs, representative legitimacy replaces control as a key determinant of staffing patterns. Furthermore, the impact of public visibility of IOs has increased over time.

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1. Introduction

One of the most fundamental issues in the study of international organizations (IOs) has always been their positions towards their most powerful member states. To what extent are IOs the playthings of powerful states, as realist approaches expect (Mearsheimer 1994; Schweller and Priess 1997; Gilpin 2002), and to what extent are they responsive to generalized perceptions of legitimate practice (Christiano 2010; Grigorescu 2015:72–75; Rapkin, Strand, and Trevathan 2016)? If they ignore the wishes of their dominant members, the great powers, IOs risk losing political relevance.[2] If they chose to prioritize their most powerful members' interests too strongly, they lose credibility as impartial, meritocratic administrators of global affairs. They also lose their legitimacy in the eyes of the broader constituencies, other states than major powers and possibly also parts of domestic audiences from the most powerful members themselves. This dilemma is visible in the decision-making of IOs and in their policy output. But it equally concerns the inside of the IOs, their everyday work, and of course also their staff, or those who run the IOs from the inside. In their recruitment of staff, IOs face a trade-off between control by powerful states, on the one hand, and their own institutional legitimacy, on the other.

In this paper we address this major dilemma faced by IOs. Do they prioritize, in their staffing, the interests of their most powerful members? Or are they primarily responsive to broader legitimation demands? To answer these questions, we formulate and test a theoretical model elaborating the increasing importance of representation, or representativeness, as a factor influencing the composition of IO secretariats over the last decades. This reflects a broader trend towards diversity and representation in modern political and administrative bodies (Clayton, O'Brien, and Piscopo 2018). Existing approaches to IO secretariats see them either in power-driven terms, with states engaged in a struggle for informal influence within IO staffs (Novosad and Werker 2018; Stone 2013), or as reflecting functional demands of the IOs' tasks (Eckhard & Steinebach, 2018; Parízek, 2017). We do not doubt the roles of power and functionality in international secretariats. But we argue that both IO staff members and state representatives also have an interest in ensuring that IO secretariats respond to broader legitimation demands (Steffek 2003; Zürn 2004; Buchanan and Keohane 2006; Grigorescu 2015; Stephen 2015). We propose that to secure legitimacy as impartial administrators, IOs need to be seen not only as functional and meritocratic, but increasingly also as *representative* of the world population at large. While functional demands on IO secretariats

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[2] For the discussion of UNESCO as an interesting case, see Eckhard et al. (2018).

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composition may be generally accepted by all states, if they indeed want the IOs to deliver on their mandates, when it comes to representativeness a political conflict of interests arises. The demand for representative IO secretariats directly challenges the dominance of the powerful states and their ability to exercise control over the IOs. What results from these two competing demands is an insurmountable trade-off between control by powerful states, on the one hand, and broader institutional legitimacy, on the other.[4]

Moreover, we argue that different IOs are likely to strike a different balance between these competing forces. In line with the politicization of international institutions perspective and IOs' quest for self-legitimation in the eyes of wider publics (Zürn, 2014, pp. 59–61; Ecker-Ehrhardt, 2017), we propose that IOs that are highly visible are more likely to favour representative legitimacy relative to control. By contrast, less visible IOs that do not face strong external scrutiny are more likely to prioritize the representation of powerful states. A simple analogy to domestic politics and administrations can help. In domestic politics, transparency is often understood as a means to ensuring the political system does not illegitimately favour the interests of powerful actors at the expense of the wider public. Public visibility raises the odds of rule being exercised based on other principles than power and control (Hollyer et al., 2018).[5] We put forward that similar mechanisms may also play a role in IOs and in their secretariats, with regard to their relations to member states. Public visibility encourages impartiality and independent behaviour, while making the exercise of power and control more difficult.

We test these statements using a new dataset covering the staffing of the 36 United Nations bodies over the years 1996-2015. In spite of the high relevance of the issue of staffing of IOs, we are only now learning the most basic patterns of state representation in the secretariats of major IOs (Novosad & Werker, 2018; Parízek, 2017; Thorvaldsdottir, 2016). A systematic, long-term account of basic staffing patterns across different IOs is still missing. The bodies covered in our new dataset range from the by far largest United Nations Secretariat and well-known bodies such as UNICEF and the World Health Organization, to smaller

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[4] This assumption is very similar to the trade-off between 'competence' and 'control' emphasized by Abbott et al. (2018). Our study can be seen as an extension and empirical assessment of this "governor's dilemma" as it plays out in UN bodies. We differ, however, in seeing functional- and legitimacy-based demands as conceptually distinct, which would result in a "governors' trilemma" between control, legitimacy, and functionality. But for reasons we explain below, in our empirical analysis we subsume functionality under legitimacy.

[5] In domestic politics, though, the democratic or autocratic nature of the political regime may condition the effects of transparency on the political outcomes, however, as elaborated by Hollyer et al. (2018).

organizations such as the Universal Postal Union. The semi-manually created dataset amounts to around 60,000 observations, and is complemented with further large amounts of newly collected data on IOs' staff and activity in more than 1000 individual duty stations across the world. We also complement this quantitative data with evidence from a series of semi-structured interviews with Geneva-based top diplomatic staff.

Descriptively, we find that states systematically and sizably differ in their representation in the global bureaucracy. Using panel regression analysis, we find strong support for our propositions explaining these differences. First, in their staffing practices the IOs do appear to balance the desire for control by powerful states with functional meritocratic pressures and with the need to ensure broader legitimation through representative staff recruitment. In this compromise, the control of powerful states and institutional legitimacy play a substantively comparable role. Second, we find that the public visibility of an IO critically matters for where specifically it strikes the balance between control and representation. Our results suggest that the most publicly visible IOs are also those more consistent with recruitment based on representative criteria. Moreover, this important, yet surprising pattern appears to have grown over time. In the post-Cold War period, less visible IOs remain power-driven in their staffing, while highly visible IOs have grown increasingly representative of the population of world nations at large. Referring back to the fundamental dilemma of IOs introduced earlier, these findings will be surprising for the realistically oriented scholars. It is precisely these highly visible IOs that also tend to be the most powerful and prestigious ones, and where the pressures for control by powerful states are likely the strongest. Put simply, in the game of IO staffing, we see neither the continuation of the inherited status quo, nor a shift along the changing distribution of power in world politics. Instead, we see a shift away from power, towards representation.

The article proceeds as follows. First, we draw on existing literature and interview evidence to outline our model of IOs' staffing. Second, we present key descriptive insights about the patterns of IOs' staffing in years 1996-2015. Third, we use panel regression to assess our hypotheses, identifying the key factors influencing the patterns of staffing of IOs and systematic differences between highly exposed and less visible IOs.

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2. Theory: International Secretariats and the Control-Representation Trade-off

An important dimension of this has been the growth and expansion of international secretariats: the professional staff members employed by IOs. Today, the UN bodies have in total over 34,000 professional staff members and another close to 45,000 general services staff members. Between 2012 and 2015, these staff members spent approximately $4 billion US on air travel alone (Afifi 2017:iv). By one estimate from 2011, the total number of international civil servants active was between 150,000 and 200,000 (Schermers and Blokker 2011:355), constituting a large and often influential body of international administrators. In short, when we talk about the growth of IOs, we are also talking about the growth of a global bureaucracy (Knill and Bauer 2016; Heldt and Schmidtke 2017). But as we show below, states are represented extremely unevenly in international secretariats, both in absolute and in per capita terms. In the following, we build a theoretical model to account for this variation.

Control

In the contemporary study of IOs, the role of international secretariats is most frequently addressed using the principal-agent (PA) framework. In this perspective, the secretariats of IOs are agents created by principals, which are, in the first instance, powerful states (Hawkins, Lake, Nielson, and Tierney 2006). Principals wish to control the agent and prevent agency slack. Yet states differ in how much control they are able to exercise (Dijkstra 2015). Due to their resources and bargaining strength, powerful states will succeed in packing the secretariats with fellow nationals to ensure control over the output of the organization (Nielson and Tierney 2003; Stone 2011; Urpelainen 2012; Manulak 2017; Thorvaldsdottir 2016). In this vein, a recent study by Novosad and Werker (2018:2) treats state representation in IO secretariats as "a zero-sum dimension of power, the power to control international institutions". These generally intuitive findings are in line with our interview evidence. State representatives at UN organizations in Geneva we interviewed reported several reasons for which states seek to be strongly represented on IO secretariats: it facilitates access to information[8], it provides functional lines of

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[7] Biermann and Siebenhüner note that international bureaucracies can be but are not always part of IOs (2013:150).

[8] In total twelve interviewees mentioned this phenomenon: interviews, #2-12, 16.

communication between state representatives and IO staff[9], and it serves as a source of influence over policies[10] and project funding decisions.[11]

The observable implication of this approach is that the national composition of international secretariats should reflect primarily the desire for control of these bodies by especially the most powerful member states (Stone 2013; Manulak 2017; Novosad and Werker 2018). Secretariats will be staffed largely by nationals of the states that provide the IOs with the highest portions of their budgets and that had the strongest say in their institutional design (Dijkstra 2015; Grigorescu 2010; Stone 2011; Manulak 2017). Indeed, while international civil servants are bound to serve their organization and not to take instructions from member states (e.g. UN Charter, Art 100 (1)), until 1962, the United Nations calculated "desirable ranges" of representation for member states on the UN Secretariat solely on the basis of members' financial contributions.[12] Even today, this factor of pure economic power retains more than 50% of weight in the calculations (United Nations Joint Inspection Unit 2012). Also many IOs outside of the UN proper, such as the International Monetary Fund, are required to recruit staff from the states that provide the most funds to the organization (International Monetary Fund 2003). Almost universally, these financial contributions are based on formulas where GDP plays a predominant role, effectively directly linking staffing with the size of members' economies and power. Based on this reasoning, we develop the first hypothesis regarding the likely patterns of IOs' staffing.

> *H1: IOs' staffing patterns are likely to reflect the distribution of power amongst their state members.*

Legitimacy

While control by powerful states may constitute a 'default' hypothesis, control also comes with costs (Abbott et al., 2018). In particular, if IO staffing patterns violate widely held norms of appropriateness, they risk losing institutional legitimacy. Legitimacy refers to the degree to which the institutions' features

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[9] E.g. interviews #2 and #7.

[10] Interviews #3,7,and 13.

[11] Interviews #6,7,13, and 16. In addition, on the individual level private benefits and nepotism appear to play an important role in motivating individuals to seek jobs in the IO secretariats (interviews #3,4,7,9,10).

[12] See (Ziring et al., 2005, p. 141).

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and behaviour are seen as desirable, correct or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions (Franck 1990:24; Suchman 1995:574; Hurd 1999:381; Reus-Smit 2007:159; Zaum 2013:9; Stephen 2018:99). From a *strategic legitimation* perspective (Suchman, 1995), state representatives and IO managers have a common interest in maintaining organizational legitimacy in order to preserve their ability to confer legitimacy on policy outcomes (Claude 1966; Hurd 1999). Stacking international secretariats with the nationals of powerful states could easily result in a fundamental challenge to a secretariat's organizational legitimacy. In the end, it would also not serve the interests of the most powerful states either. From a (sociological) *institutionalist* perspective, IOs can themselves be understood as emanations of their cultural environments (Suchman 1995, 576; see also (Dimaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 1987). Regardless of whether legitimacy operates strategically or via deeply held convictions, both perspectives have the same observable implications: IO staffing patterns should reflect practices that ensure conformity with established social and cultural norms. We identify three standards that are widely perceived to be appropriate and desirable for recruitment in IO secretariats.

The first is meritocracy. Bureaucracies are supposed to recruit staff according to impartially applied rules that reward talent and effective performance. From a rational institutionalist perspective, IOs are created by states to deliver specific functions (Reinalda and Verbeek 1998; Heldt and Schmidtke 2017; Abbott and Snidal 1998). For IOs to survive and succeed in their strive for resources, they need first and foremost to perform these functions (e.g. Gutner and Thompson 2010). This functional demand implies a meritocratic approach to staff recruitment, i.e. the selection of the most-qualified candidates. This is seen as contributing to the secretariat's credibility, impartiality, and neutrality, critical resources for IO authority and a key reason that states create them in the first place (Abbott & Snidal, 1998; Barnett & Finnemore, 2004; Xu & Weller, 2008, p. 41). In the UN context, Article 101 of the Charter stipulates that "The paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity."[13] Also in our interviews, diplomatic staff report that general competence and educational qualifications are critical to hiring decisions in what they perceive as a basically meritocratic UN hiring system (interviews

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[13] According to a recent review of staff recruitment processes across the United Nations system, "A person's eligibility to compete for a post is determined primarily by the extent to which his/her educational qualifications, work experience, language proficiency and competencies meet the requirements of the post as set out in the vacancy announcement" (United Nations Joint Inspection Unit 2012:7).

#1, 6, 9, 12). In this perspective, IOs can be expected to recruit staff perceived as competent. We cannot measure the supply of competent candidates directly. However, meritocratic staffing patterns would presumably favour countries with larger pools of personnel considered qualified for the job (Barnett and Finnemore 1999; Laiz and Schlichte 2016; Steffek 2016; Eckhard and Steinebach 2018).[14]

> *H2a: IOs' staffing patterns are likely to reflect the distribution of generally competent, highly educated applicants across countries.*

Meritocratic, functional legitimation also implies, secondly, that IOs should recruit staff with knowledge pertinent to an IO's work. Many IOs carry out work related to issues such as global health, food security, and economic development, which overwhelmingly involve field operations in low-income countries. The success of the IOs' projects are seen as requiring local expertise and understanding of the conditions in these countries (Tallberg et al., 2014; O'Brien et al., 2000; Parízek, 2017). Consequently, the suitability of candidates may be shaped not only by general qualifications, but also by epistemic factors such as local knowledge of countries where IOs are active (interviews #7, 8, 11). As one of our interviewees noted when referring to where international staff of IOs should come from, "you need to understand the country you serve in" (Interview #7). If recruitment reflected local knowledge of the places where IOs are operating, we would expect staff to be acquired from countries that host local operational activities.

> *H2b: IOs' staffing patterns are likely to reflect the distribution of local operational activity conducted by IOs across countries.*

Representative legitimacy

While the technocratic, meritocratic legitimacy outlined above has traditionally been central for bureaucracies of all types, over the last decades it has gradually been joined by new legitimacy requirements based on notions of representativeness. Nowadays, most IO staff are recruited "through a combination of merit and geography" (Xu and Weller 2008:39). The perceived intrusiveness of IOs has generated new demands for their legitimation in participatory and representative terms (Zürn 2000, 2004;

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[14] A recent study adds to this general competence also the possession of relevant professional experience as a factor (Eckhard and Steinebach 2018).

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Woods and Lombardi 2006; Dellmuth and Tallberg 2015; Grigorescu 2015; Stephen 2015, 2018; Rapkin et al. 2016). As summarized by Michael Zürn (2014:59), "Instrumental questions about problem-solving and effectiveness have become infused with procedural issues and normative aspects such as legitimacy, fairness, and equality."

Likewise, organizational sociologists and public administration scholars have examined the rise of new norms of 'representative bureaucracy' (Meier 1975; Meier and Wrinkle 1999; cf. Dolan, Rosenbloom, and Rosenbloom 2016). This norm requires administrative bodies to reflect the underlying population (so-called *passive* or *descriptive* representation) (Meier 1975:527–528; cf. Rapkin et al. 2016).[15] Closely related to this are new norms of workplace diversity and affirmative action programmes (Kelly and Dobbin 1998). In the international context of IOs, the primary notion of representativeness is naturally that related to that of staff members nationalities. Indeed, a number of our Geneva-based UN diplomatic staff interviewees reported a strong and increasing need for the UN organs to be seen as representative, with regard to the nationalities and regions of origin (Interviews #1, 11, 12). As one UN representative explained, "during the Cold war, the UN was seen as ... these occidental guys, everyone white and with a tie etc. Now there is diversification of the face of the UN... or the face that the UN has to have... Or is ideal to have, to be really representing its members" (Interview #6).

These representation and diversity requirements are often linked to powerful new expectations about gender equality. These are prominent not only in IOs, of course, but in virtually all modern organizations, including academia, and of course political bodies, where similar trends have been clearly visible over recent years and decades (Clayton et al. 2018). Interestingly, our interviewees have repeatedly and strongly tied gender balance closely together with national representation issues in IOs, as two faces of a broader diversification trend (Interviews #1, 6, 7, 16, 17). In contrast to the technocratic, "colour-blind" ideal type, these perspectives argue that it is necessary for bureaucracies to draw from the full range of social groups they administer in order to function appropriately.

There are two dimensions of national representativeness in relation to IOs: representation based on the sovereign equality principle and representation proportional to members' population sizes (United Nations Joint Inspection Unit 2012). The sovereign equality principle primarily pertains to that each state

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[15] Whether passive representation translates also into active representation depends on a number of factors, include the organizational context and individual attitudes (Sowa and Selden 2003; Dolan and Rosenbloom 2016:chap. 1).

should have at least some baseline representation in the UN bodies' staff. While of course especially the largest UN bodies do seek to ensure that most, if not all members are at least somewhat represented,[17] given that states range in their population sizes by up to five orders of magnitude this notion of representation is not really pertinent to our interest in the exploration of the composition of the secretariats. In contrast, treating the notion of representation from the perspective of population sizes is meaningful both conceptually and empirically. Empirically, precisely because states vary so fundamentally in their population sizes. Conceptually because if IOs are to work on the principle of independence and impartiality of their staff, the notion of representation based on population size is the most natural one. It corresponds to the ideal in which *a priori* a citizen from any country has the same chance as others of becoming a member of the staff. We pursue this logic in our third hypothesis of representative legitimacy:

> *H2c: IOs' staffing patterns are likely to reflect the distribution of population sizes, across*
> *countries.*

Exposure

Many IOs are likely to be resistant to representative legitimacy-based recruitment to the extent that they experience pressure from powerful members. This is in line with realist expectations (Stone 2011), with common intuitions of our interviewed diplomats from high-income, large donor countries (e.g. interviews #9, 12), as well as the two existing quantitative studies of staff compositions (Novosad & Werker, 2018; Parízek, 2017). Historically, and in many IOs until today, the pressures for representative legitimation may have been weak, especially if the IOs' secretariats conform to meritocratic functional criteria, as another source of legitimation. As long as they deliver on the desired output, IOs may hope not to be challenged due to the composition of their staff.

However, this is unlikely be the case with the IOs that today receive significant political and societal scrutiny. Especially the largest IOs are highly publicly visible, present on the ground in a number of countries, and they actively engage in media activities, constantly seeking legitimation opportunities in the eyes of as wide audiences as possible (Ecker-Ehrhardt 2017). We propose that these IOs with *high societal visibility* (exposure) will lean towards representative legitimacy rather than control by powerful

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[17] Interview # 15. For UN Secretariat, see e.g. report A/71/360, Table 19.

states. The reason is that highly visible IOs are more sensitive to legitimacy perceptions of global audiences and will seek to avoid negative press and politicization of their activities and internal composition (e.g. O'Brien et al., 2000). This can operate both via the reputation-enhancement mechanism of strategic legitimation, or due to an analogue of the 'watching eyes' phenomenon known in psychology, whereby the impression of being watched encourages pro-social behaviour (Haley & Fessler, 2005). After all, transparency is often seen in politics and political economy literature as a fundamental institutional quality, with important effects on how political bodies operate (see Hollyer et al., 2018). IOs are likely to be no exceptions to that (Grigorescu, 2007). As indicated by the institutionalization of public communication policies in many IOs, senior management and regular staff know they need to carefully attend to their public image (Ecker-Ehrhardt 2017, 2018). The composition of the staff is one of the obvious matters of their concern, especially in the light of the highly publicized criticism that challenged many IOs precisely along these lines in recent years and especially around the turn of the millennium (Stiglitz 2002). In line with this reasoning, we propose that visibility will alter the relative balance of control versus representative legitimacy.

Hence we formulate our third hypothesis, conditioning the applicability of H2c:

> *H3: The degree to which IOs strike a balance in favour of representative legitimacy, relatively to control, is likely to be higher in IOs that are more visible and hence more subject to (potential) politicization pressures.*

We should note that while our representative legitimacy H2c hypothesis goes directly against the 'realist' power and control H1 hypothesis, the conditioning effect theorized in H3 further reinforces the clash. Publicly exposed IOs are also typically the large, well-resourced ones, possessing political authority. It should be these IOs in which powerful states would have the strongest stakes in their control. Our hypotheses H2c and H3 presuppose that the combination of visibility and broader representative legitimation pressures will be able to trump these considerations of powerful states.

3. Empirical Examination: Descriptive Analysis of the staffing of UN bodies, 1996-2015

To test these hypotheses, we study the staff composition of 36 bodies of the United Nations.[18] The biggest of the bodies consists of the staff members of the United Nations Secretariat (now totalling more than 11,000 professional staff members). The next biggest are the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) with around 3,600 professional staff members, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the World Health Organization (WHO). A full list can be found in Table A2 in the appendix. Our selection is driven by the availability of a uniquely comprehensive data source for these bodies over a period of 20 years at a level of detail necessary for the testing of our hypotheses. While the UN system does not reflect the entire universe of IOs, our dataset covers many of the most powerful and widely known ones.[19]

The data for states' representation is based on the United Nations Chief Executive Board for Coordination (CEB) Personnel Statistics reports for years 1996-2015. In each report, Table 12, spreading typically across some 90-100 pages, contains information on the representation of each UN member's citizens in the staff of each of the 36 UN bodies. Each of the tables with data on staffing has been semi-manually translated into calculable form. This amounts to more than 60,000 data points capturing the number of staff members, measured at country-year-IO level.

Our data distinguishes, for each country-year-IO, the professional and general services staff. For clarity: our core interest in this article is country representation *on international professional staff only*, i.e. staff hired through the centralized global system, rotating across duty stations and regions of the world. This is the staff that may be subject to geographical distribution rules and constitutes the 'secretariat', 'administration' or 'bureaucracy' as often understood in the theoretical literature.[20] In contrast, *general*

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[18] The UN system includes all bodies generally known to be parts of the UN family, but it does not include several notably global IOs, such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank group both formally UN specialized agencies, and World Trade Organization (see http://www.unsystem.org/content/un-system).

[19] It could be objected that IOs in the United Nations system will be particularly exposed to normative pressures (Tallberg et al. 2014:743). Yet our data shows significant variation amongst UN bodies, suggesting they cannot all be treated alike. Moreover, our finding (below) that visibility makes a difference emphasizes that exposure can be a necessary catalyst for legitimation pressures.

[20] Recently, research on the general services staff and also national professional staff has also emerged, however (cf. Eckhard and Fernández i Marín 2018). Our professional staff category we focus on only includes *international*, not *national* profession staff, appointed for one year or more, and it excludes all persons 'employed under special contractual arrangements' (e.g. CEB/2015/HLCM/HR/19, p. vii, a)).

services staff includes locally hired workforce, such as administrative staff, translators, technicians, and drivers. The data source also contains information on the number of general services staff working in field offices, the more than 1000 individual locations in which the various UN bodies have their offices. Based on this, we created another dataset of local (decentralized) activity of all the individual bodies, also across the 20 years. This dataset, amounting to more than 120,000 observations, enables us to measure directly the amounts of decentralized 'boots-on-the-ground' activity of the IOs. It provides us with the total number of professional as well as general services UN staff working anywhere in the world and hence also a robust measure of the amount of the local activity performed by the IOs.

One limitation is that the data source does not provide separate data for different levels of staff seniority. To address this, we were able to collect additional partial data on graded positions in the UN Secretariat and the WHO, the two largest IOs in our dataset, for a more limited period of time from 2006 and from 1999, respectively. As we show in the appendix to this article, the simple unweighted count of professional staff we use in the analysis is strongly correlated (with r>0.95***) with grade- or seniority-weighted positions. This also corresponds to the results reported earlier by Parízek who identified no systematic difference in staffing patterns across hierarchy levels, in terms of the staff national compositions (2017), although his results were only based on cross-sectional, not panel data. Hence, while we do not have systematic evidence on seniority-weighted staff composition, the available evidence did not support our initial intuition that senior positions are distributed differently amongst member states.

The data reveal several interesting descriptive observations. First, we observe a prominent trend towards increased numbers of professional staff overall, in line with previous studies of a rise in the number of international staff over time (Vaubel, Dreher, and Soylu 2007). Between 1996 and 2015, the number of professional staff working in the UN bodies rose from around 18,000 to 34,000. We also observe an increase in general services staff, from around 30,000 in the mid-1990s to around 50,000 in the mid-2010s.

Second, states differ enormously with regard to their representation in UN administrations, both in absolute terms and in relation to their populations.[21] For example, between 1996 and 2015 the United States accounted on average for around 2,400 positions at the UN, while China accounted for only 420 (about the same as Belgium). Representation was also highly unequal in per capita terms. Australia, the

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[21] We describe this data in detail below. This does not include the locally hired general services staff. It only includes the staff appointed to professional positions through the universal global hiring system where, in principle, all nationals compete in one global contest for positions.

Republic of the Congo, Italy and Senegal all had around 20 staff members per million citizens. Denmark or the Netherlands around 60. In contrast, Russia, Egypt, and Ethiopia achieved only around three staff members per million citizens, across the period. States systematically and sizably differ in their representation in the global bureaucracy. Figure A2 and Table A3 in the appendix give a full description of these data.

Third, and in line with similar previous quantitative studies (Novosad & Werker, 2018; Parízek, 2017), the data show a dominance of the UN system by citizens from OECD countries. In 1996, the then OECD members accounted for 54 percent of all professional staff in the UN system. By 2015, this share declined somewhat to 51 per cent. In fact, 9 out of the 10 biggest losers of relative representation, over the twenty years, have been OECD members. By far the biggest loser over the decades has been Russia, however, losing around 40% of its share on the professional staff between 1996 and 2015. Moreover, while a power-oriented perspective might expect that the major gainers would be rapidly growing countries such as China, in fact the most staff representation has been gained by smaller developing countries, such as Kenya, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, while several other OECD countries (especially Spain and Italy) have also done well. India has risen strongly in its position, but perhaps most surprisingly, China has not increased its share in the global UN bureaucracy at all.

Fourth, in line with our hypothesis about IO exposure (H3), the patterns of states' representation are also not uniform across IOs. The left chart in Figure 1 depicts, purely descriptively, the share of staff from OECD countries, but separately for IOs with high and low levels of exposure.[22] While both groups of IOs start at a very similar level, there is a clear decreasing trend in the highly visible IOs (full line). By contrast, the share of OECD countries has been steady or even marginally rising amongst the less visible IOs (dashed line).

To increase the generalizability of our observations, we collected additional, if partial data on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), two of the highest profile IOs outside of the UN system proper.[23] We are unable to include these institutions in our explanatory

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[22] More specifically, it shows the share of staff from the set of countries that were members of OECD at the end of 1994, before the start of our observation period.

[23] In spite of our best efforts, we were unable to identify a source of data on the staffing patterns of the World Bank, and our requests to the World Bank were not successful. According to our exposure data, all these three IOs – IMF, WB, and WTO, would belong to the ten most-exposed IOs overall.

analysis due to lack of fully comparable data. Yet the partial descriptive evidence suggests that the trends identified above are also present in the IMF and the WTO. The right chart of Figure 1 replicates the analysis from the left chart, showing the share of OECD member on the professional staff of these two bodies. While the trend in the IMF (bottom) seems to correspond very closely to the overall observed pattern in the highly exposed IOs of the UN system, the WTO (top) also shows a strongly declining trend, but from an extreme height of close to 80%. We refrain from making strong claims on the basis of this partial and only descriptive evidence, but it appears that the model of staffing we are about to test in the following section could also apply outside of the UN system IOs.

Figure 1: The development of UN (left) and IMF and WTO (right) staff distribution, 1996-2015
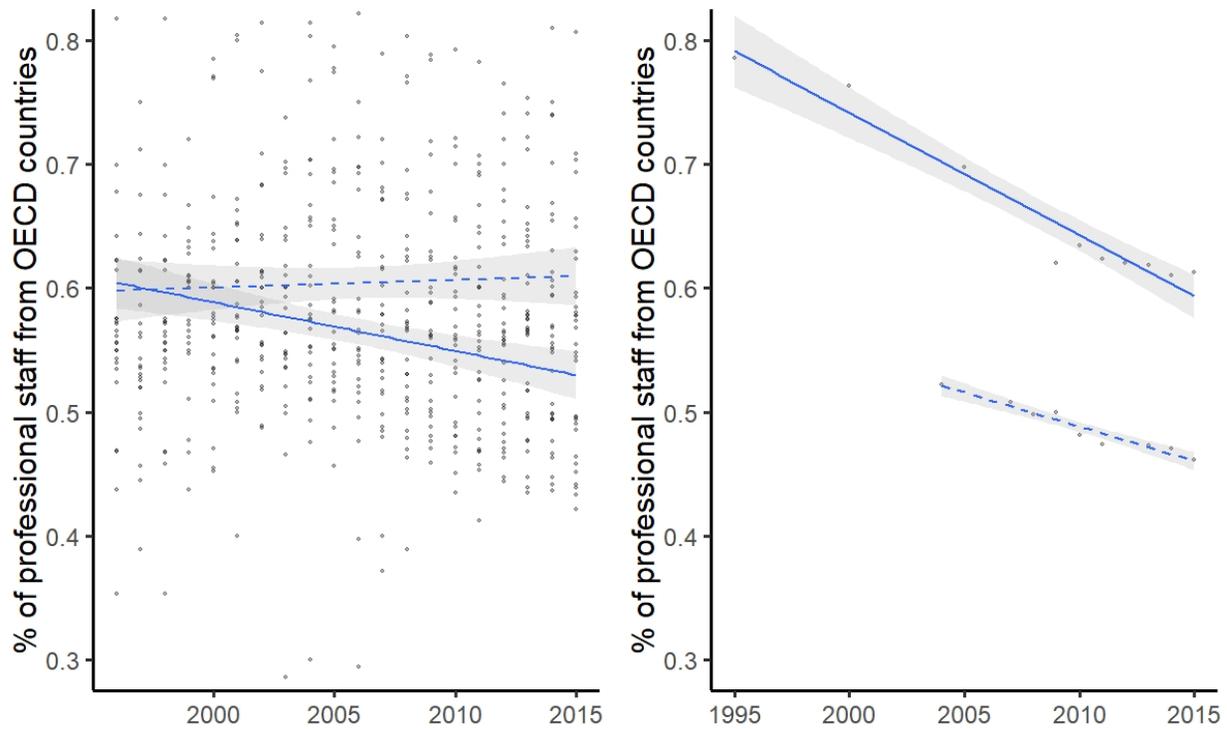
Note: The left chart shows the share of OECD countries on the UN professional staff, separately for highly exposed (downward sloping blue line) and lowly exposed IO (upward sloping/flat red line). The right chart gives the share of OECD countries on the professional staff of the IMF (bottom) and the WTO (top).

4. Empirical Examination: Explaining the staffing patterns

To assess our hypotheses relating to the balances different IOs strike regarding control and legitimation, we turn now to a series of panel regression models. The dependent variable in the models is defined as the sum of professional staff from each individual country across the subsets of highly exposed or lowly exposed IOs or, in some models, across all IOs combined.[24] This variation across state representation on IOs' staff is what we will seek to explain. The reason for the aggregation from the level of individual IO-

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[24] Thus, the number of observations in our analysis is reduced typically to around 3000 country-years, for all the UN members over the period of 20 years, subject to data availability.

states is that many IOs in our dataset have very small secretariats in which no sense of proportionality to countries' characteristics could be achieved, for purely numerical reasons, if they were analysed separately. In fact, 15 out of the 36 bodies have professional staff of less than 200 and full 26 bodies (72%) have staff of less than 500. Especially to model the patterns of staffing in the less visible, often smaller IOs, aggregating data from a larger number of bodies is necessary.

Operationalization

According to hypothesis H1, states' representation will be determined primarily by their economic power. We measure this conventionally with countries' Gross National Income (GNI) (data from World Bank 2017). GNI is also strongly correlated with regular as well as voluntary budget contributions.

According to hypothesis H2a, staff will be recruited based on merit. At the aggregate level at which we work, we approximate this with the supply of university-educated candidates, as captured in tertiary education enrolment statistics, that is, with the share of a state's population with university education (World Bank 2017).[25]

The second legitimacy-based hypothesis (H2b) expects staffing to reflect the amount of local operational activity performed by the IO bodies in individual states. Following Parízek (2017), we measure IOs' local activity as the number of their *general services* staff working in individual countries.[26]As mentioned earlier, the data for this variable come also from the UN Chief Executive Board for Coordination reports, although form their different parts.

The third legitimacy-based hypothesis reflects our theoretical argument about the increasing normative pressures to make IO secretariats more representative of the global population (H2c). The observable implication in terms of staffing outcomes is that representation will be based increasingly on the size of member states' populations (data from World Bank 2017).

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[25] We have been unable to identify a variable that would capture IO-suitable talents supply, with data available across all countries and over a 20 years period.

[26] We stress that this variable for local IO activity in states captures the size of the *locally hired* technical staff, such as drivers and secretaries. In contrast, our dependent variable deals with the professional staff, hired globally and assigned to duty stations across the world.

Finally, to test hypothesis H3 we distinguish IOs by their degree of public visibility. The most obvious way to approach this concept is to consider the overall general attention the organization receives, in any given year. To assess this, we use two indicators of visibility, based on the number of 'hits' that a particular organization's name (full official name in English) receives in a relevant source. The first source is the global media database Factiva, covering newspapers, magazines, blogs, and podcasts from around 32,000 sources from 200 countries.[27] We use data form this source in our core models. Secondly, in robustness tests, we substitute Factiva with simple Google search. Our procedure for visibility measurement then divides the bodies into two approximately equally sized groups, along the yearly median values of exposure: one for the more prominent bodies, and one for the less publicly visible ones.[28] In the models, this is captured with the dummy variable *Exposed*, scoring 1 for the relatively more publicly visible half of bodies and 0 for the rest. Table A2 in the appendix gives the exposure scores for all the IOs.

Controls

In the analysis, we also control for several possibly influential factors that lie outside of our theoretical framework. One is the political regime of the countries. Democracies tend to systematically show more positive attitudes towards IOs than other regime types (Boehmer and Nordstrom 2008), and this tendency may be projected also into their citizens' chances of being hired by the institutions' secretariats. We operationalize regime type using the polity score of the Polity IV dataset (Polity IV Project 2017). Second, our interview evidence indicates that English language competency is an empirically relevant factor in recruitment for almost all IO professional positions.[29] Consequently, we also include in our analysis a dummy variable for countries where English is an official language.[30] In addition, we control for country

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[27] https://www.proquest.com/products-services/factiva.html

[28] See the appendix for more details and for robustness tests. Alternative search procedures on Factiva and Google, based on abbreviations were tested, with the full organizations names giving clearly superior results, filtering out possible ambiguities with organizations' abbreviations such as the WHO.[28] For Google search, the search procedure was replicated in different browsers, on different IP addresses, at different times, providing highly consistent results (with correlation above r=0.95***).

[29] E.g. Interviews # 1, 2, 6, 11.

[30] http://opendata.rug.nl/datasets/5c6ec52c374249a781aede5802994c95_0?uiTab=table

institutional power position within the UN, by introducing a dummy variable for the five permanent members of the UN Security Council.[31]

Method

Our choice of modelling technique is driven by the predominance of inter-country variation, rather than variation over time, in our core explanatory factors of interest. Especially in the case of both economic and population size, the difference between the largest and smallest states are enormous, up to five orders of magnitude (a factor of 100 000). In contrast, only rarely do states experience internal developments that would change their individual scores radically over a relatively short time.[32] As we are primarily interested in modelling this cross-country variation, we opt for a random effects design rather than fixed effects approach. The reason is that a fixed effects approach effectively erases most of the meaningful variation in our data. However, as it turns out, the between-component of the variation in our data is so prominent (accounting for between 80% and 90% of variation) that a standard random effects design approximates a fixed effects specification anyway, due to the very high lambda (λ) coefficient of partial de-meaning in the random effects equation (Wooldridge, 2006, p. 490). This means that a standard random effect approach would also, like the fixed effects design, imply that most of our variation we seek to model would be lost.

To compensate for this, we adopt a modified 'within-between' random effects design developed by Bell and Jones (2015), based on the older Mundlak's formulation (Mundlak 1978). In recent years, this approach has been receiving increasing application in political science and international relations literature (e.g. Ward and Dorussen 2016; Grossman and Lewis 2014). It solves a core analytical problem where we seek to retain information about developments over time but where there are principal persistent differences across states with regards to a number of key variables of potential interest, such as country size or power we mentioned (Bell and Jones 2015:149). The elegance of this approach lies in that it explicitly models both the between-component and the within-component of variation in the panel

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[31] As an alternative, we also used a dummy for founding UN members.

[32] There are exceptions. The economic size of China and some other countries has grown tenfold over last decades, but changes of such magnitude within states are rare. Even such dramatic developments are incomparable in magnitude with the stable differences across states.

data. This is achieved by running a random effects model in which each predictor is included in the equation in two variants. The first variant is the country mean, across the entire period, as is familiar from cross-sectional models. The second variant uses the de-meaned values, that is, the individual yearly deviations from country means, as in a fixed effects model. The country means are then used to estimate explicitly the between-effect (variation across countries), while the de-meaned scores provide the estimate of the within effects (variation within countries, over time). In the robustness tests reported in the appendix, we also provide results from simple pooled models as well as from a series of cross-sectional OLS regressions.

Results

In Table 2, we present a total of six random effects panel regression models. In each model, we report standardized beta coefficients, so it is possible to directly compare the relative size of the effects of the individual predictors on staffing. The first two models only include the four predictors of interest: economic size (*GNI*), *Population*, *University enrolment*, and *Local IO activity*. Each of these is represented in the equation by both its cross-sectional ('between') and its de-meaned (over-time, 'within') component. Recall that we are interested not only in the overall relevance of the four predictors; we also expect systematic differences across IOs based on their level of public exposure. To account for this, we start by presenting models that map the staffing patterns in lowly exposed (Model 1) and highly exposed IOs (Model 2) separately. Later on, we also integrate all the bodies into a single analysis, modelling differences between highly visible and lowly visible bodies with interaction terms.

Models 1 and 2 show strong support for each of the hypotheses developed earlier. First, both models show a systematic cross-sectional ('between') effect of *Local IO activity* and of education levels in countries (*University enrolment*). These reflect the intuitive view that IO secretariats need to reflect the functional needs of the IOs. Both models also show a positive effect of country economic growth on the growth of representation on the staff (variable *GNI (log) (within)*). Where the models differ, however, is in the cross-sectional effects of economic power and population size. Consistent with our hypothesis about the effect of IO exposure (H3), highly and lowly exposed IOs show very different patterns of staffing. In lowly exposed IOs (Model 1), cross-country differences in economic size (*GNI (log) (between)*) are a very strong predictor of staffing, with a standardized coefficient of 0.4. In contrast, in highly exposed IOs (Model 2) no such effect on staffing is present. The exact opposite is true, however, when it comes to

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Population sizes, as reflecting the representative legitimation needs. In less exposed IOs (Model 1), *Population* size is not associated with the representation on staff. In highly exposed IOs (Model 2), in contrast, the cross-country ('between') variation in *Population* sizes is by far the strongest predictor of staffing, with a standardized beta coefficient of around 0.4. Both these differences, highlighted in bold in Table 2, are closely in line with our hypothesis H3.

Table 2: Panel regression ('within-between' random effects) results

	Dependent variable:					
	Staff number(log)(std)					
	Unexposed IOs	Exposed IOs	All IOs	Unexposed IOs	Exposed IOs	All IOs
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
GNI(log)(within)	0.073** (0.024)	0.152*** (0.028)	0.111*** (0.020)	-0.007 (0.025)	0.058* (0.026)	0.032' (0.019)
GNI(log)(between)	**0.423*** (0.088)**	**0.098 (0.117)**	0.331*** (0.074)	0.429*** (0.101)	0.149 (0.103)	0.297*** (0.075)
Population(log)(within)	0.029 (0.023)	0.0005 (0.020)	0.011 (0.016)	-0.037 (0.033)	-0.068*** (0.020)	-0.056** (0.018)
Population(log)(between)	**0.025 (0.086)**	**0.426*** (0.100)**	0.239*** (0.073)	0.140 (0.113)	0.394*** (0.099)	0.263*** (0.074)
University enrollment(within)	0.027' (0.014)	0.003 (0.013)	0.015 (0.010)	-0.006 (0.014)	-0.030* (0.014)	-0.019' (0.010)
University enrollment(between)	0.162** (0.056)	0.246*** (0.074)	0.144** (0.047)	0.111' (0.063)	0.197** (0.071)	0.153** (0.048)
Local IO activity(log)(within)	0.049*** (0.013)	0.036' (0.020)	0.046*** (0.011)	0.048*** (0.012)	0.034* (0.017)	0.048*** (0.010)
Local IO activity(log)(between)	0.497*** (0.061)	0.292*** (0.074)	0.360*** (0.048)	0.440*** (0.059)	0.294*** (0.077)	0.377*** (0.047)
Polity(within)			0.009* (0.004)	0.002 (0.004)	0.006 (0.004)	0.004 (0.003)
Polity(between)			0.030*** (0.005)	0.028*** (0.007)	0.032*** (0.007)	0.031** (0.005)
UN P5			0.431** (0.133)	0.342' (0.202)	0.484** (0.187)	0.410** (0.136)
English official lang			0.319*** (0.058)	0.264** (0.085)	0.382*** (0.080)	0.323*** (0.060)
Exposed			0.832*** (0.081)			0.843*** (0.071)
GNI(log)(between)*Exposed			**-0.185* (0.087)**			
Population(log)(between)*Exposed			**0.173' (0.101)**			

Yearcount (Yrc)				0.028*** (0.007)	0.032*** (0.005)	0.030*** (0.004)
GNI(log)(between)*Yrc				-0.003 (0.004)	**-0.009** (0.003)**	**-0.006** (0.002)**
Population(log)(between)*Yrc				0.002 (0.006)	**0.010** (0.004)**	**0.006' (0.003)**
GNI(log)(between)*Population(log)(between)			-0.046 (0.055)	-0.016 (0.074)	0.031 (0.058)	0.009 (0.046)
GNI(log)(between)*Population(log)(between)*Exposed			0.025 (0.068)			
GNI(log)(between)*Population(log)(between)*Yrc				-0.002 (0.003)	-0.005* (0.002)	-0.003' (0.002)
Constant	-0.535*** (0.042)	0.271*** (0.058)	-0.808*** (0.050)	-1.050*** (0.096)	-0.301*** (0.091)	-1.140*** (0.067)
Observations	2,789	3,280	5,288	2,488	2,800	5,288
R^2	0.274	0.378	0.385	0.325	0.487	0.428
Adjusted R^2	0.272	0.377	0.383	0.320	0.484	0.426
Note:				'p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001; country-clustered (Models 1-3) or country-IO exposure-clustered (Models 4-6) robust standard errors in brackets		

Model 3 integrates both sets of IOs – lowly and highly exposed – into a single analysis, where the differences across highly and lowly exposed IOs are modelled as interaction terms between the dummy variable *Exposed* and the two core predictors where we expect a difference, economic power (*GNI(log)(between)*) and population size (*Population(log)(between)*). To allow for the modelling of such interactions, each country-year is included in the models twice, once for all lowly exposed IOs, and once for all highly exposed IOs.[33] Our theoretical framework (H3) would expect the interaction to be positive for *Population* and negative for economic power. In highly exposed IOs (variable *Exposed* equal to 1) *Population* should be more important than in lowly exposed IOs, and the reverse should hold for economic power (*GNI*), if our theoretical model is correct.

Once again, the model confirms our expectations. All of the predictors (in their cross-country, 'between' variants) show the expected overall effects on staffing: countries have more nationals on the professional staff of IOs when they are more economically powerful, when they have larger populations, when they have, on average, a more educated population, and when they host the IO's operational activity. The strongest predictor of staffing across all IOs, by a small margin, is their local operational activity, where a

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[33] This is also why the number of observations in this model is close to double than that in Models 1 and 2.

one standard deviation (SD) increase in activity of an IO in a country is associated with a 0.36-SD increase in its representation on staff. Education levels show a weaker overall effect of around 0.14.

Critically for our theoretical argument, there are systematic differences across highly and lowly exposed IOs. In highly exposed IOs the relevance of economic power is significantly lower and the relevance of population size significantly higher. In lowly exposed IOs (variable *Exposed* equal to 0), economic size is a strong predictor (coefficient size of 0.33), but this effect more than halves when we move to highly exposed IOs, as indicated by the 0.19 negative coefficient on the interaction term (*GNI(log)(between)*Exposed*). For population, the reverse is true, where the size of the effect grows from 0.24 to 0.41 as we move from lowly to highly exposed IOs, again as indicated by the coefficient of 0.17 on the interaction term (*Population(log)(between)*Exposed*). The difference between the types of IOs which was visible in the results from Models 1 and 2 is also supported by hits integrated, comprehensive Model 3.

The substantive significance of these differences is visualized in Figure 2. Figure 2a (left) shows the predicted values of staffing as given by country economic size for highly exposed (flatter dashed line) and lowly exposed (steeper solid line) IOs. Figure 2b does the same for population size, which is a stronger predictor of staffing in highly exposed IOs (steeper dashed line) than in lowly exposed IOs (flatter solid line).

Figure 2: Marginal effects of economic power and population size in highly exposed (dashed) and lowly exposed IOs (solid lines)
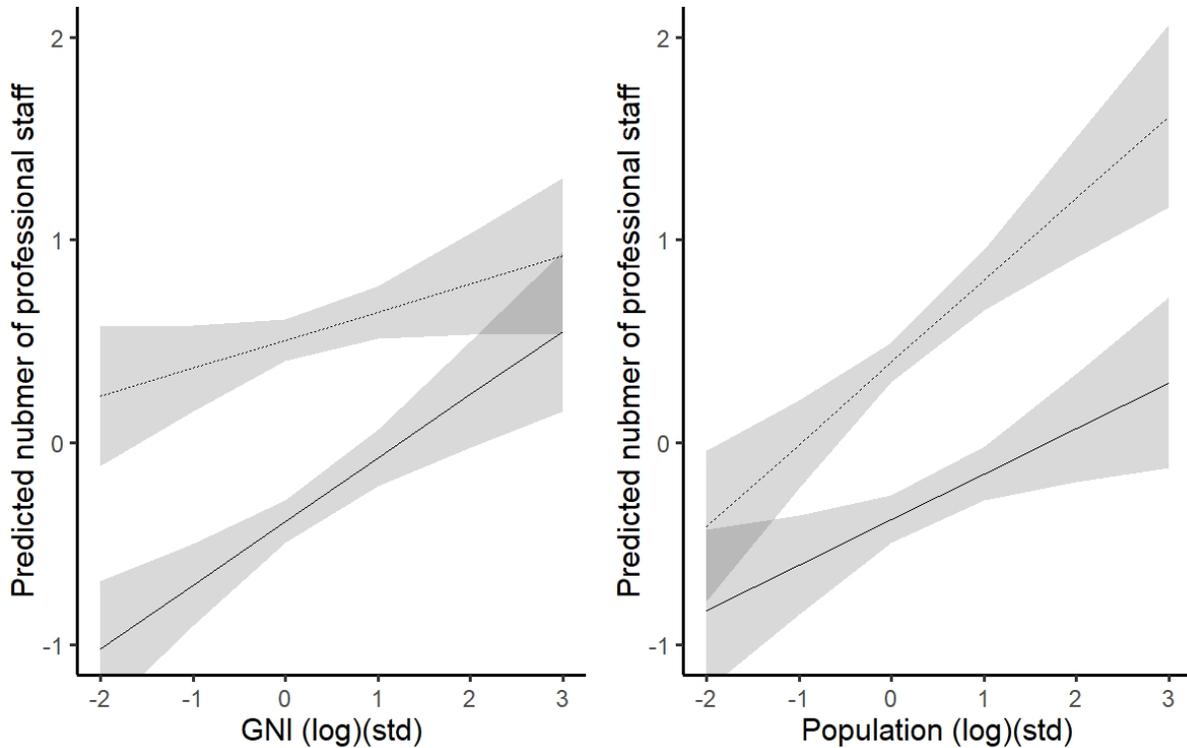
Note: Based on results extracted from Model 3.

In Models 4-6 we continue with the same setup from Models 1-3, but we explicitly introduce the temporal dimension. We test whether the effects of power and population change over time. Specifically, using two interaction terms of a yearcount (time, *Yrc*) variable, we explicitly model the expected declining relevance of pure material power (*GNI (log) (between) * Yrc*) and a corresponding increasing relevance of representative legitimation needs (*Population (log) (between) * Yrc*). In addition, all the models also include a series of control variables.

Models 4 and 5 look at lowly exposed IOs (Model 4) and highly exposed IOs (Model 5) separately. AS expected by our theory, in highly exposed IOs (Model 5) we see a change over time, as both the interaction terms show a significant effect. Economic power grows less relevant for staffing patterns over time, with a negative sign. Representative legitimacy, as reflected in the effect of country population, grows more relevant, with a positive sign on the interaction term. In lowly exposed IOs in Model 4, no such change

over time is visible. These results provide further support for our theory, and they are also in line with the descriptive evidence presented earlier in Figure 1. All the other substantive results reported earlier remain unchanged. The control variables also show the expected effects. In both lowly and highly exposed IOs, countries enjoy more representation when they are more democratic (*Polity (between)*) and when *English* is their official language. In highly exposed IOs, furthermore, holding a permanent seat in the UN Security Council, as a manifestation of institutional power, is associated with significantly higher representation on staff.[34]

Finally, Model 6 again integrates both highly and lowly exposed IOs into one analysis. The negative interaction term on the *GNI(log)(between)*Yrc* variable shows the declining relevance of economic power as a predictor of staffing. The reverse is true for population size, with a positive sign on the interaction term *Population(log)(between)*Yrc*, albeit only at a 10% confidence level. It should be noted, however, that these results are driven by the dominance of the large highly exposed IOs. So while the equation gives us an overall perspective when we are interested in all IOs in our sample combined, it hides the variation we previously explored in Models 4 and 5.

As we indicated earlier, in the appendix to this article, we present the results of a long series of robustness tests (Table AX). These pertain to our choice of the specific analytical technique for our panel regression estimation, variable specifications, as well as alternative explanations for the cause of the variation across IOs (i.e. the effect of other factors than public visibility on IO staffing). We also include a series of supplementary tests addressing specific limitations of our data, including the absence of systematic evidence on hierarchy-weighted representation on staff. Our core results prove to be robust in all these additional tests.

5. Conclusions

In this article, we sought to map and explain the patterns of staffing of IOs. We have shown that the national origins of IO staff cannot be explained simply as an epiphenomenon of great power influence,

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[34] Note that this is not the factor that would drive the insignificance of GNI as a predictor of staffing. This is best visible in Model 2 in which economic size is also not significant, with almost exactly the same coefficient size, even though the dummy variable for UN SC P5 membership is not included.

nor can it be attributed to the need to conform to functional demands only. Both control and functional, meritocratic legitimacy play a role. Yet, these traditional concerns are joined by new representative legitimacy demands, whereby IOs increasingly seek to resemble, in their staff composition, the distribution of their members' populations at large. Power and function are complemented with representation, as determinants of IO staffing. Importantly, though, different IOs strike a different balance between control and legitimacy. Those under the radar of public scrutiny are more likely to favour the selection of staff from economically powerful countries. Highly visible, publicly exposed IOs, in contrast, favour especially representative legitimation pressures over control. These findings go directly against intuitions especially realistically oriented scholars might have about the composition of the IOs' administrations. In highly exposed IOs, powerful actors seem to be losing the control of staffing outcomes.

Furthermore, we need to highlight that these differences also appear to have become more prominent over time. The secretariats of highly publicly visible IOs have become increasingly representative of the global population at large, and less reflective of the distribution of power in the international system. The association of state power with representation in IO secretariats has declined over time, relative to representation legitimation requirements. Those who attribute a great role to legitimacy demands in explaining international organizational behaviour, as well as believers in apparently meritocratic and representative administration, can take heart from these findings.

Yet, we are faced with an apparent paradox. At the same time that IOs have been supposedly becoming more important, powerful states have been relatively losing control over them. Thinking about our findings somewhat critically, it seems that they also point at potential dangers for the future. Clearly, given the extremely high representation of the few most wealthy and powerful nations in IOs' secretariats, historically, a shift towards increased representativeness is almost certainly a move in the right direction. If that trend continues, IOs will use their autonomy in internal matters, and their secretariats will grow increasingly representative of their membership, where the representation will be based on the populations of their members, not on the wealth of those who still dominantly finance them. The major imbalances inherited from the past gradually disappear. If certain thresholds are surpassed, however, it may happen that IOs start (or continue) to lose support from and interest of their most powerful members, often the largest donors. As we draw towards the end of 2010s, the core institutions of the global order find themselves increasingly under fire from their members. Both from the established powers, recently especially the United States, and from the rising powers, often seeking to challenge the status quo. In our analysis, neither of these sides is winning the zero-sum game of representation on staff

(Novosad & Werker, 2018). Instead of witnessing the continuation of the status quo, or a shift along with the changing distribution of power, we find a shift away from power, towards broader representation. How this will play out for the work of the IOs in the future remains to be seen.

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