

Concert Governance: How Informal Intergovernmental Organizations Orchestrate Global Governance



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Abstract

Concert governance is a defining feature of contemporary international organization: just as the Concert of Europe shaped 19th century international politics, informal intergovernmental organizations (IIGOs) like the G7 and G20 steer 21st century governance of global issues ranging from financial stability to technology regulation. States use IIGOs to govern indirectly by leveraging their collective power and influence to orchestrate other international institutions. Even though the field explores *why* states choose informal intergovernmentalism, *how* IIGOs orchestrate global governance has not yet received systematic attention.

In this thesis, I study IIGO orchestration through a series of interrelated research articles. I first identify the *international origins* of IIGO orchestration, highlighting the increased international issue complexity and state actor heterogeneity as key factors. I then examine the *governance logic* of IIGO orchestration, which walks a fine line between exerting control over the multilateral system and undermining the competence of the universal organizations that form its bedrock. I establish theoretically that IIGOs can manage this balance through strategic regime design and show empirically that the G7 and G20 embed universal organizations in differentiated regime complexes to govern cross-border regulatory challenges. Finally, I analyze the *organizational foundations* of IIGO orchestration, which raise questions about the limits of informality for supporting the expansive state interactions that accompany the orchestration of global governance. I theorize IIGOs' functional scope and illustrate how the G20 adapted organizationally as it graduated from a crisis management vehicle to a global steering body.

By expanding the frontier of scholarly knowledge on IIGOs, the thesis also contributes more broadly to the study of indirect governance, regime complexity, and international institutions. While IIGO orchestration is consolidating as a pillar of global governance, this thesis provides a reference for academics and policymakers looking to study and shape multilateral responses to critical and emerging global issues.

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Contents

List of Figures	ix
List of Tables.....	ix
List of Abbreviations	xi
I. Introduction	1
From Concert Diplomacy to Concert Governance	1
International Origins: Why Do States Use IIGOs to Orchestrate Global Governance?	4
Governance Logic: How Do IIGOs Orchestrate Global Governance?	8
Theoretical Foundation: Why Do States Govern through Regimes with Overlapping Institutions?	10
Specification and Application: How Do IIGOs Manage their Orchestration Relationships with Other International Institutions?	12
Organizational Foundations: What Functions Can IIGOs Provide to Support State Interactions? ..	14
Contributions to the Literature	16
Organization of the Thesis.....	20
II. From Concert Diplomacy to Concert Governance: Why Informal Intergovernmental Organizations Orchestrate Global Governance.....	25
IIGO Orchestration in Contemporary International Organization	27
The Study of Informal Intergovernmentalism.....	32
The Rationale of (In)formal Intergovernmentalism.....	37
The Drivers of IIGOs' Centrality	43
Changes to Cooperation Problems: Issue Complexity	45
Changes to State Constellation: Actor Heterogeneity.....	49
Changes to Design Feasibility: Transportation and Communications Technologies	53
IIGO Orchestration as a Research Frontier.....	54
Bibliography.....	59
III. A Strategic Theory of Regime Design: The Governor's Dilemma and Institutional Differentiation	67
Theoretical Background.....	73
The Competence-Control Tradeoff.....	73
Control Elasticity of Competency Types.....	76
Explaining Regime Design through the Governor's Dilemma	80
The Governor's Choice for One Competency	80
The Governor's Choice for Multiple Competencies.....	85
Case Probes	90
Case Probe 1: The European Sovereign Debt Crisis Regime.....	91
Case Probe 2: The Anti-Money Laundering Regime	98
Case Probe 3: The Syrian Chemical Weapons Disarmament Regime.....	104

Conclusion.....	113
Bibliography	117
IV. Orchestrated Multilateralism: Informal Intergovernmental Organizations and the Design of Global Regulatory Regimes	127
From Postwar Institutionalism to Orchestrated Multilateralism	132
The Competence-Control Tradeoff as the Linchpin of Orchestrated Multilateralism	138
Strategic Regime Design: The Logic of Differentiation.....	141
Optimizing the Competence-Control Ratio: Enlistment of Complementary Institutions.....	142
Calibrating Competence and Control: Enlistment Choices along the Governance Cycle	146
Analyzing the Design of G7- and G20-Orchestrated Global Regulatory Regimes	154
The Global Market Integrity Regime: Countering Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing.....	155
The Global Financial Stability Regime: Strengthening the Financial Sector’s Regulatory Standards	167
Conclusion.....	179
Bibliography	182
V. Centralization without Independence: The Functional Scope and Organizational Anatomy of Informal Intergovernmental Organizations	195
What Is in an IIGO?.....	200
Theorizing the Functional Scope of IIGOs.....	205
The Property-Function Framework.....	206
Centralization vs. Independence.....	209
Exploring the Group of Twenty’s Inner Workings	215
Background: A Decade of Controversy around (In)formality	216
Changing Requirements: Mapping Member Interactions and Governance Relationships	219
Design Adaptation: Tracking Organizational Structure and Administrative Support	224
Centralization without Independence: An Anatomy of the 2017 G20 Presidency	231
Towards the Comparative Study of IIGO Models	236
Conclusion.....	240
Bibliography	243
VI. Conclusion	251
Summary of Arguments and Findings	251
Avenues for Future Research	254
Outlook.....	257
Bibliography (Introduction and Conclusion).....	259
Sources Cited (Consolidated)	264

List of Figures

III.1	<i>The governor's choice</i>	82
III.2	<i>Governor strategy: diversification</i>	84
III.3	<i>Governor strategy: differentiation</i>	88
IV.1	<i>The logic of differentiation in IIGO-orchestrated regimes</i>	153
V.1	<i>IIGO formalization and death vs. total number of existing IIGOs, 1987-2017</i>	203
V.2	<i>Number of issue areas and share of topics in G20 summit commitments, 2008-2017</i>	221
V.3	<i>Organizational structure of the 2017 German G20 Presidency</i>	232
V.4	<i>G20 face-to-face meetings during the 2017 German G20 Presidency</i>	234

List of Tables

III.1	<i>Summary of governor strategies</i>	90
V.1	<i>The fate of IIGOs, 1815-2017</i>	202
V.2	<i>The Property-Function framework of intergovernmental organizations</i>	207

List of Abbreviations

9/11	September 11 (2001) terrorist attacks against the United States
AFC	Asian financial crisis
AML/CFT	Anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism
BCBS	Basel Committee on Banking Supervision
BRICS	Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa Group
CC	Competence-Control
CEM	Clean Energy Ministerial
CERN	European Organization for Nuclear Research
COW	Correlates of War
CP	Competence
CT	Control
CW	Chemical weapons
DSM	Dispute Settlement Mechanism
EC	European Commission
ECB	European Central Bank
EFSM	European Financial Stability Facility
ESM	European Stability Mechanism
EU	European Union
Eurogroup	Member states of the European Union that have adopted the euro as their official currency
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
FIGO	Formal intergovernmental organization
FSAP	Financial Sector Assessment Program
FSB	Financial Stability Board
FSF	Financial Stability Forum
FSRB	FATF-style regional body
FWG	Framework Working Group
G20	Group of Twenty
G7	Group of Seven
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

GDP	Gross domestic product
GFC	Global financial crisis
Global Forum	Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes
Global Partnership	Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction
GPAI	Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICRP	International Commission on Radiological Protection
IEA	International Energy Agency
IFI	International Financial Institution
IGO	Intergovernmental organization
IIGO	Informal intergovernmental organization
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LCI	Low-cost institution
MAP	Mutual Assessment Process
MC	Multilateral Consultations
NCCT	Non-Cooperative Countries and Territories
NCJ	Non-Cooperative Jurisdiction
NPDG	Non-Proliferation Directors Group
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPCW	Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
P-A	Principal-Agent
P-F	Property-Function
PSI	Proliferation Security Initiative
RCG	Regional Consultative Group
ROSC	Report on the Observance of Standards and Codes
SSB	Standards-setting body
SPA	Strategic partnership agreement
TGI	Transnational public-private governance initiative
TGN	Transgovernmental network
UN	United Nations

UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
Vienna Convention	Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances
WFO	World Financial Organization
WHO	World Health Organization
WMD	Weapons of mass destruction
WTO	World Trade Organization

I.

Introduction

From Concert Diplomacy to Concert Governance

In June 2010, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs and now Prime Minister of Denmark, Jonas Gahr Støre, was interviewed by Germany's most prominent news magazine, *Der Spiegel*, in the run-up to the Group of Twenty's (G20) fourth leaders' summit:

SPIEGEL: The president of the European Central Bank, Jean-Claude Trichet, views the G-20 as being the main forum for steering the global economy.

Støre: It is for precisely that reason that one must be allowed to question its legitimacy. After World War II, we set up international organizations like the United Nations, the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund with clear responsibilities and clear mandates. We need to make them fit for the new realities in the world and for the new balance of power.

SPIEGEL: Isn't the G-20 an attempt to do precisely that?

Støre: The G-20 is a self-appointed group. Its composition is determined by the major countries and powers. It may be more representative than the G-7 or the G-8, in which only the richest countries are represented, but it is still arbitrary. *We no longer live in the 19th century, a time when the major powers met and redrew the map of the world. No one needs a new Congress of Vienna.*¹

In his remarks, Støre echoes the perception of the leaders' level G20 as a caesura for global governance. The heads of state and government of major economies created the G20 to coordinate a joint response to the 2008 global financial crisis. Yet, soon after, it became clear that the organization would far outgrow its initial purpose. In retrospect, even Trichet's seemingly ambitious vision of the G20 as the main forum for steering the global economy was comparatively modest. Just months after the *Spiegel* interview, the South Korean summit hosts envisioned the G20 as the "steering committee of the world."² French President Sarkozy

¹ Spiegel 2010, emphasis added.

² Rachman 2010.

proclaimed that “[t]he G20 foreshadows the planetary governance of the 21st century.”³ Policymakers outbid each other with hyperboles about how the G20 would transform global governance.

Yet the G20 really epitomized a more gradual and deep-reaching transformation of international organization. For decades, the locus of decision making had shifted away from formal (universal) intergovernmental organizations like the United Nations (UN), the International Financial Institutions (IFIs), and the World Health Organization (WHO)—the very foundations of postwar multilateralism—and towards informal intergovernmental organizations (IIGOs) like the G20. Unlike their formal counterparts, these IIGOs lack a binding legal basis and a permanent secretariat, staff, or headquarters.⁴ IIGOs do not replace formal universal organizations. By the very nature of their informal design, they possess minimal organizational capacity. Instead, IIGOs guide other organizations’ activities—traditionally in the economic realm but increasingly in fields ranging from global health to nonproliferation to technology regulation.⁵

I argue that IIGOs’ growing centrality as steering bodies represents a shift in the way that the system of postwar institutionalized cooperation works. We are witnessing the rise of *concert governance*: the institutionalized concertation of major powers to steer governance responses to global challenges. Just as the Congress of Vienna defined its age and was the first of a series of conferences that entered history as the “Concert of Europe,”⁶ IIGOs like the G7, the G20, and BRICS have developed into hallmark features of 21st century contemporary global governance. Like their ancestor organization, they balance interests among major powers.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Vabulas and Snidal 2021, 861–62; Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 197.

⁵ See, e.g., Group of Twenty 2021; and Group of Seven 2021.

⁶ See, e.g., Elrod 1976.

However, the forging of peace through territorial settlements has given way to bargaining over how to manage global interdependencies.⁷

IIGOs are orchestrators by design. They do not command a hierarchical position vis-à-vis other institutions that would allow them to formally determine their governance activities.⁸ Nor can IIGOs engage in conventional delegation.⁹ As informal governors, IIGOs cannot grant authority to, or rescind it from, other institutions to act on their behalf—including universal organizations, which are bound to their state members as political principals.¹⁰ Rather, IIGOs steer other institutions, as intermediaries, through joint calls, convening and coordination, endorsements, and material assistance.¹¹ Their ability to orchestrate stems from their focality, underpinned by the (economic) power and influence of their members, as well as from the prospect of advancing agreement on issues gridlocked in established formal organizations.¹²

IIGO orchestration has thus become a matter of systemic importance for global governance. Accordingly, International Relations scholars have shown growing interest in—and sometimes concern about—the centrality of IIGOs as governance directorates. In recent years, the field has made significant advances in explaining *why* states have come to increasingly rely on IIGOs and, more broadly, on informal arrangements, to govern global issues. Meanwhile, IIGO orchestration—that is, *how* IIGOs steer global governance—has not yet received the same systematic attention. Work that inquires into how IIGOs manage governance relationships with other institutions and shape international regimes remains sparse. Even fewer contributions

⁷ Notably, major powers manage these interdependencies in an international political environment that, in the postwar era, has seen an unprecedented constitutionalization through international institutions and agreements. See Milewicz 2020.

⁸ On hierarchy as a governance mode, see Abbott et al. 2015a, 8–10; and Abbott et al. 2015b, 724.

⁹ For an exposition on the difference between orchestration and delegation, see Abbott et al. 2015b; and Abbott et al. 2015a.

¹⁰ Hawkins et al. define delegation as ‘a conditional grant of authority from a principal to an agent that empowers the latter to act on behalf of the former.’ Hawkins et al. 2006, 7; See also Nielson and Tierney 2003.

¹¹ Viola 2015b, 28; Cooper and Bradford 2010, 4.

¹² On the G20 as a focal point, see Cooper 2019; On gridlock in international organizations, see Hale, Held, and Young 2013b; and Hale, Held, and Young 2013a.

analyze IIGOs' inner workings and how they adapted organizationally during their astonishing graduation from crisis management vehicles to global steering bodies.

In this thesis, I study the phenomenon of concert governance through a series of articles addressing interrelated research questions. To set the scene, I begin with a review of the *international origins* of IIGO orchestration, reviewing explanations of why states increasingly choose to advance cooperation through informal intergovernmentalism. I then move to uncharted territory, investigating how IIGOs orchestrate global governance. I study the *governance logic* of IIGO orchestration, that is, how IIGOs manage governance relationships with other international institutions to govern issues of global scale and with major distributive implications. Finally, I explore the *organizational foundations* of IIGO orchestration, specifically how IIGOs' inner workings support the expansive state interactions that accompanied their transformation from ad hoc crisis vehicles to permanent steering committees.

Overall, by progressing from the macro-origins to the micro-foundations, the set of research articles collected in this thesis provides a comprehensive appraisal of IIGO orchestration as a key pillar of contemporary global governance. More broadly, the thesis thereby aspires to contribute to the more nuanced picture of international organization that the informal governance literature has recently begun to paint.

International Origins: Why Do States Use IIGOs to Orchestrate Global Governance?

The creation of the leaders' level G20 was the culmination of a deeper-running transformation of international organization. Notably, the successive emergence of IIGOs like the G7, the G20, and BRICS as steering committees is embedded in a larger shift towards informal

intergovernmentalism.¹³ In recent years, international cooperation scholarship—building on earlier contributions on institutional design and soft law—has clarified states’ rationale for using IIGOs.¹⁴ On that basis, I distill three key trends in international politics that, since the 1970s, have driven states’ greater reliance on IIGOs for steering global governance.

First, the structure of *cooperation problems* has changed. International issues that states encounter have become “harder” in that they are broader in scope and penetrate deeper into the domestic policy sphere.¹⁵ Reducing barriers to international trade, enhancing financial stability, or maintaining international peace increasingly requires adjustment to policies “behind” rather than “at” the border, blurring the lines between international and domestic policy spaces.¹⁶ Furthermore, global challenges like climate change are inextricably linked with other issues such as international security and development in the Global South and cannot be adequately responded to without consideration of these interlinkages.¹⁷

Formal organizations struggle to advance cooperation on these issues without IIGO orchestration. Cooperation problems defy the thematic silos in which formal organizations and their international bureaucracies operate. The complexity and distributive implications of coordinating policies “behind” the border further renders procedures designed to generate binding multilateral agreements too slow and inflexible.¹⁸ IIGOs like the G20 more easily bridge thematic silos as they are not constrained by a legally defined mandate. In combination with their facilitation of interactions at the highest political levels, this creates opportunities for

¹³ On the informalization of intergovernmental cooperation, see generally Westerwinter, Abbott, and Biersteker 2021; Vabulas and Snidal 2021; Roger 2020; and Roger and Rowan 2021.

¹⁴ See, especially, Vabulas and Snidal 2013; Vabulas and Snidal 2021; Roger 2020; and Sauer 2019; See also Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001; Koremenos 2016; Abbott and Snidal 1998; Abbott and Snidal 2000; and Lipson 1991.

¹⁵ Hale et al. define these ‘harder problems’ based on their extensity (scope of problems has increased) and intensity (problems penetrate more deeply into societies). Hale, Held, and Young 2013a, 227.

¹⁶ See, e.g., Zürn 2010, 82–85.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Keohane and Victor 2011, 9–12; On the link of climate change with international security, specifically, see, e.g., Scott 2015.

¹⁸ Eccleston, Kellow, and Carroll 2015, 298.

linking issues and enlarging the zone for agreement.¹⁹ Moreover, negotiations in IIGOs entail neither the prospect of institutional permanence nor a legally binding agreement as the necessary endpoint. For that reason, and in addition to the greater confidentiality that they afford, IIGOs lower hurdles for advancing engagement even on intractable and divisive issues.²⁰

Second, the *constellation of states* required to address global issues has changed. Membership of key postwar institutions has grown considerably, and members represent a significantly larger span of economic development and political systems. Since the birth of the postwar multilateral system, the number of states in the international system—and, with it, membership of key international organizations—has more than tripled.²¹ Furthermore, the core group of states required to address global issues has expanded and become more heterogeneous. Since the 1970s, successive economic crises, the breakdown of the Bretton Woods system, and Germany's and Japan's resurgence as major powers have weakened US preponderance and increased the necessity for collective management of the global economy and, increasingly, international security issues.²² However, the economic growth of (former) developing countries, especially China, and their fuller integration into the world economy since the 1990s has had a particularly substantial impact on the global distribution of power.²³

This change in the constellation of states has affected formal organizations' ability to facilitate cooperation. The larger number of states and greater likelihood of diverging interests among them raise the costs of negotiating formal agreements.²⁴ Another implication is that postwar institutions' authority and legitimacy have come to be challenged due to the growing

¹⁹ On issue linkage and the zone for agreement, see Sebenius 1983, 292.

²⁰ See Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 209–13; Cf. Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001.

²¹ Correlates of War Project 2017.

²² See Putnam and Bayne 1987; and Penttilä 2003; It is also in 1975 that Germany and Japan were included in the newly formed Group of Seven (G7) of major (Western) industrialized countries. Group of Seven 2015, 7.

²³ In addition to an almost two-digit average annual GDP growth since the opening up of its economy in 1978, China integrated into the world economy more fully in the early 2000s, notably through its accession to the WTO in 2001. World Trade Organization n.d.

²⁴ Hale, Held, and Young 2013a, 226–27; Olson 1971, 48; See also Kahler 1992.

discrepancy between the de jure influence in formal organizations and the de facto distribution of power.²⁵ Under these circumstances, IIGOs can serve as exclusive clubs to further common interests among like-minded actors.²⁶ However, their advantages regarding facilitating cooperation amidst diverging interests is just as important. As flexible arrangements, they more readily adapt to changing power constellations and eschew institutional momentum that enshrines a mismatch between influence and power.²⁷ This makes IIGOs attractive venues for circumventing contested (formal) decision-making processes and crafting agreement among major states. Because IIGOs preserve greater state autonomy and confidentiality, state members are also less reluctant to explore common ground on divisive issues.²⁸ Moreover, IIGOs allow states to engage with sensitive issues without the prospect of being legally bound by and locked into fixed institutional processes. Amidst uncertainty and in a rapidly evolving international environment—notably during accelerated power shifts—this facilitates the exploring of possible agreements.²⁹

Lastly, the *design feasibility* of informal arrangements has changed. The above trends have driven states' demand for IIGOs to advance agreement and steer multilateral governance efforts. However, the rise of IIGOs as central pillars of global governance is also closely related to technologies that have made their informal design a feasible choice in the first place. Compared to formal organizations, which operate on a “hub-and-spoke” model with centralized headquarters and permanent state representatives, IIGOs require member states to sustain a high volume of direct communication between officials based in capitals and to facilitate frequent international travel.³⁰ Shifting international negotiations and decision making to IIGOs on today's scale would have been difficult and costly without significant advances in

²⁵ See, e.g., Kruck and Zangl 2020; Stephen and Zürn 2019; and Vestergaard and Wade 2015.

²⁶ Viola 2015b, 23.

²⁷ Vabulas and Snidal 2020, 42.

²⁸ Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 211.

²⁹ Ibid., 195; See also Vabulas and Snidal 2020.

³⁰ Manulak and Snidal 2021, 193–99.

transportation and communications technologies.³¹ In short, states' greater demand for IIGOs has coincided with technological developments that make informal design more viable and effective.

Over the past decades, IIGO orchestration has thus consolidated as an integral component of contemporary international organization. Meanwhile, the complexity of global issues, the heterogeneity of key states, and technological advancement continue to impact the international institutional fabric. Unsurprisingly, therefore, states have not ceased to expand the steering function of IIGOs to new areas. Having intensified IIGOs' role in domains like climate change and global health over the past years, states are now set to use them to address the vast space of emerging technologies governance.³² IIGO orchestration, therefore, stands out as an important but little explored research frontier for international cooperation scholarship.

Governance Logic: How Do IIGOs Orchestrate Global Governance?

In global governance, there has thus been a gradual shift in the focality of decision making to key IIGOs. Political processes and agreement in IIGOs frequently set the direction for and advance global governance through key international institutions. Formal universal organizations like the UN, the IFIs, or the WTO continue to form the backbone of the multilateral system. They possess the organizational capacity to manage substantive operations like multilateral surveillance on a global scale. Crucially, as rules-based organizations that are mandated to serve their universal membership rather than an exclusive set of major powers, they command the political credibility and legitimacy required for advancing policies with broad international support. The activities of postwar multilateral institutions and the political

³¹ See *ibid.*, 187–190; See also Abbott and Faude 2020, 7.

³² The G7, especially, is striving for a central role in the realm of technology governance. See, e.g., Group of Seven 2022; Group of Seven 2021.

processes of IIGOs like the G20 are, therefore, closely intertwined—and orchestration forms the connective tissue between the two. This renders the *governance logic* of IIGO orchestration—how IIGOs manage their governance relationships with other international institutions—an essential element of capturing and explaining the contours of contemporary global governance.

At the heart of IIGO orchestration lies a dilemma. Many critical issues, such as climate change, financial instability, and emerging technologies, are global in scope but also come with significant distributive implications. This can create competing requirements. Distributive conflict between IIGO members and other states raises the risk that pre-agreed IIGO consensus is diluted, changed, or even blocked in universal organizations. It thus creates incentives for IIGOs' powerful members to, either formally or informally, tighten their grip on these organizations and pass over other states. At the same time, especially amidst distributive conflict, the effective governance of issues that are global in scope renders universal organizations that enjoy broad international support and a reputation for credibility and legitimacy particularly crucial. The result is a difficult tradeoff. Tightening control over universal organizations undermines the perception of their independence and rules-based functioning, which underpins the very competencies that IIGOs require to translate their agreement into effective governance.

IIGOs, in short, walk a fine line between maintaining the multilateral system's "orderly flux" and undermining the universal organizations that form its bedrock. How do IIGOs manage their governance relationships with other international institutions? I develop my analysis of the governance logic of IIGO orchestration in two steps. First, I lay a general theoretical foundation. IIGOs' orchestration dilemma reflects a fundamental constraint in indirect governance: the competence-control (CC) tradeoff. Therefore, I begin by demonstrating how governors (e.g., IIGOs) can design international regimes to mitigate this tradeoff vis-à-vis intermediaries (e.g., other international institutions). I then specify and apply

my theoretical argument to IIGOs. I show how the G7 and G20 are balancing competence and control by (re)shaping international regulatory regimes.

Theoretical Foundation: Why Do States Govern through Regimes with Overlapping Institutions?

IIGO orchestration renders indirect governance dynamics a critical component of understanding how global governance works. When a governor (e.g., states or groups of states) enlists intermediaries (e.g., international institutions) to govern a target, it faces the so-called *governor's dilemma*: an inherent tradeoff between the competence that a governor can receive from an intermediary and the control that it can exert over the latter.³³ Competence-Control (CC) theory captures this constraint, which spans a wide range of governance relationship modes, including orchestration.³⁴ Thus, whereas the CC tradeoff represents a key constraint in IIGO orchestration, it is also a more general feature of international regimes, where states, or group of states, rely on institutions' competence to govern on their behalf. Therefore, I develop a general theoretical argument about how states manage their governance relationships to address the CC tradeoff.

I argue that deliberate regime design, specifically the creation of greater complexity through institutional overlap, is a principal way for states to mitigate the CC tradeoff. Existing contributions find that states guard against intermediary slack or “drift” by combining multiple institutions to nurture competition and erect checks and balances among them.³⁵ When governors navigate the CC tradeoff, however, the challenge they encounter is not how to exert control in the face of information asymmetries that cause drift or slack.³⁶ Instead, the critical question is whether and when to tighten control over intermediaries. States, therefore, must

³³ Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 6–7; See also Abbott, Zangl, et al. 2020.

³⁴ See Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b; and Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020a.

³⁵ See Biermann and Rittberger 2020; Henning 2019; Moschella 2020; and Hodson 2015.

³⁶ As Abbott et al. note, “[i]mportantly, the governor’s dilemma is based not on information asymmetry, but on power.” Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 4.

address the CC tradeoff differently. I contend that states do so by enlisting institutions not as competing substitutes but as complements, that is, as primary providers of different competencies. Thereby, they can leverage the presence of multiple intermediaries to adjust the level of control for different types of competencies that they require. Overall, therefore, I distinguish two basic strategies for addressing governor challenges in indirect governance: *diversification*, aimed at mitigating intermediary drift and slack, and *differentiation*, which serves to obtain a preferred combination of competence and control.

Differentiation is a viable strategy for mitigating the CC tradeoff because of the varying *control elasticity of competency types*. CC theory identifies four basic competency types: expertise, capacity, credibility, and legitimacy.³⁷ Control elasticity captures the varying sensitivity of these competencies to governor control.³⁸ In other words, while control affects all types of competencies, intermediaries' ability to provide these different types degrades at varying rates in relation to control. For example, a governor that needs issue-specific expertise or organizational capacity can plausibly rely on a closely controlled intermediary (lower control elasticity). By contrast, a governor that seeks to lend credibility to its commitments or to enhance the legitimacy of its actions will benefit little from enlisting an intermediary without substantial independence (higher control elasticity). To govern effectively, governors will typically require more than just one type of competency—and thus encounter different control elasticities. Differentiation breaks the governor's dilemma into several smaller CC tradeoffs (one for each intermediary). The ability to thereby choose an individual level of control (that is, intermediary) for the different competencies sought can yield a preferable CC combination and thus mitigate the tradeoff.

³⁷ Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020a, 620; Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 3.

³⁸ More specifically, the control elasticity of competencies captures how the level of competence that an intermediary can provide changes in response to a change in governor control.

To illustrate the broad applicability of my theoretical argument, I conduct case probes of three distinct regimes from the economic and security realms: the European debt crisis, global anti-money laundering, and Syrian chemical weapons elimination regimes. I show that, in these regimes, the tradeoff between competence and control was a key factor in the Eurogroup's, the G7's, and the UN Security Council's respective decisions to create regime complexity by combining multiple institutions. I also find that these regimes exhibit a differentiation between institutions' governance contributions that reflects my theoretical expectations. Notably, institutions with greater independence were primarily enlisted for—and constrained to—governance activities that require a high degree of credibility or legitimacy, whereas better controlled ones were used where these competencies were less crucial.

Specification and Application: How Do IIGOs Manage their Orchestration Relationships with Other International Institutions?

The identification of differentiation as a regime design strategy to mitigate the CC tradeoff forms the theoretical foundation for analyzing IIGO orchestration. IIGOs' function as steering committees, we have seen, hinges on their ability to navigate the delicate tradeoff between competence and control in their governance relationships with other international institutions, particularly formal universal organizations. I thus specify and apply my theoretical insights to IIGOs, and specifically the G7's and G20's orchestration of global regulatory regimes.

I start by building on the previously laid theoretical foundation. I argue, first, that when IIGOs face a steep CC tradeoff—that is, when they require universal organizations' competencies to govern an issue effectively but also seek a high level of control as they anticipate resistance in the respective organization(s)—they *differentiate* between governance contributions. As opposed to simply relying on universal organizations to operationalize governance, IIGOs embed them into a larger regime complex together with club institutions. Compared to universal organizations, these club institutions—given their smaller and more homogenous

membership—are more controllable and anticipatory of IIGOs' preferences. The basic logic of differentiation in IIGO-orchestrated regimes is intuitive: IIGOs cede control to universal organization only when necessary and tighten it through club institutions where possible.

However, this argument only provides a coarse picture of how IIGO orchestration shapes international regimes. Second, therefore, I concretize my argument by refining expectations about IIGOs' enlistment choices in relation to the governance cycle. I show that IIGOs' competence requirements and control demands vary depending on whether it is the setting, implementation, or enforcement of governance rules that is concerned. I assert that when the CC tradeoff is steep, IIGOs will leverage universal organizations' credibility and legitimacy for advancing *implementation* with broad international support, including through technical assistance and monitoring. In turn, I contend that IIGOs draw on club institutions for the expertise and capacity needed for the *setting* and *enforcement* of rules, where control considerations tend to prevail over competence requirements.

I probe my argument empirically through an in-depth analysis of two principal G7/G20-orchestrated global regulatory regimes: market integrity and financial stability. Both issue areas confront the G-groups with a steep CC tradeoff. Their effective governance requires the widespread application of regulatory standards by states, increasing the importance of universal organizations' competencies for garnering broad international support. At the same time, these standards come with asymmetric distributive implications, mainly between the G-group members and excluded (developing) countries, raising the risk of resistance in universal organizations and, thus, the demand for control. I demonstrate that in both cases, the G-groups shaped differentiated regimes to mitigate this CC tradeoff. Rather than relying on the IFIs, the G-groups established club institutions—the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the Financial Stability Forum/Board (FSF/B)—to provide the expertise and capacity for standards setting and enforcement against noncompliant jurisdictions. The FATF and FSF/B-

orchestrated activities, in turn, formed the respective frame within which the IFIs were embedded to advance universal implementation through technical assistance and monitoring.

Organizational Foundations: What Functions Can IIGOs Provide to Support State Interactions?

The consolidation of IIGOs as orchestrators has not only altered how important parts of global governance work but also induced a drastic change in states' functional demands on them as organizations. The G7, the G20, and BRICS, most notably, were created as vehicles to manage international financial turmoil without concrete ambitions for organizational permanency.³⁹ As states started looking to these IIGOs to steer the governance of an expanding range of international issues, the demands on them have changed accordingly. IIGOs have come to facilitate extensive and multilevel interactions among member states as well as with other international institutions continuously throughout the year. Even as they orchestrate formal organizations for substantive governance activities such as technical assistance, these interactions go well beyond what IIGOs were originally designed to support.

In this light, the resilience of IIGOs is remarkable and puzzling. Scholarship stresses IIGO advantages such as flexibility and speed but associates functions that support sustained and extensive state interactions, for example negotiation stability, with formality.⁴⁰ Even as demands on IIGOs change, however, states display remarkable reluctance to formalize and respond with the creation of a permanent secretariat. Because IIGOs provide political guidance to other organizations, their inner workings have repercussions well beyond their immediate organizational realm. A concrete concern is that the informal design of IIGOs like the G20 is not fit for purpose and could even amplify problems that stem from a lack of coordination and

³⁹ For the initial leaders' summit declarations, see, respectively, Group of Six 1975; Group of Twenty 2008; and Brazil-Russia-India-China Group 2009.

⁴⁰ See Abbott and Snidal 1998, 10–12; See also Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 211.

problematic overlaps among international institutions.⁴¹ This points to the *organizational foundations* of IIGOs as a key dimension of concert governance and refocuses the relationship between (in)formality and function in international institutions. It raises the following questions: what functions can IIGOs plausibly provide to support state interactions and, notably, how can they do so without a permanent secretariat?

I address these questions in two parts. In a first step, I theorize IIGOs' functional scope by leveraging key insights from the institutional design literature. I develop a Property-Function (P-F) framework, which splits the broad notion of formality into two key organizational properties (P) and relates these to functions (F) that an organization can provide. I distinguish between two organizational properties: centralization, which describes the existence of an organizational structure and administrative apparatus, and independence, which refers to the autonomy and, relatedly, neutrality with which an organization can act.⁴² Formal intergovernmental organizations' functional scope is defined by the presence of both organizational properties (to varying degrees). Absent legal personality and permanent headquarters and staff, IIGOs lack independence from member states. However, they may plausibly achieve some level of centralization. Through the P-F framework I infer that, given sufficient centralization, IIGOs can support state interactions through several key functions, namely the enhancement of negotiation stability, information dissemination, and issue linkage.

Yet even as recourse to the theoretical literature clarifies IIGOs' functional scope for supporting state interactions, there is little insight into how these informal organizations can achieve centralization without the establishment of a permanent secretariat or staff. In a second step, therefore, I explore how IIGOs develop organizational centralization without the genesis of independence. Focusing on the G20, I examine its organizational anatomy below the leaders'

⁴¹ Vabulas 2019, 68; Viola 2015a, 113.

⁴² Abbott and Snidal 1998, 9.

level summits that inform popular and, to a significant extent, scholarly perceptions of IIGOs. Following an account of the changing functional requirements regarding the G20, I trace the G20's gradual adaptation of its organizational structure and administrative apparatus through three principal mechanisms: a troika that uses a rotating Chair system, the designation of Sherpas and their teams, and the use of information technology. Finally, I provide an initial assessment of how this “centralization without independence” facilitates state interactions within the G20 by dissecting its organizational structure and operations during the 2017 German Presidency. In addition to demonstrating that IIGOs dynamically respond to changing functional requirements with centralization mechanisms, the case also offers a first look at how this affects state cooperation, including through the stabilization of repeated interactions and the cross-issue linkage of transgovernmental work streams.

I contextualize my findings and champion a conceptual shift away from the dichotomy *between* informal and formal IGOs (“organization without delegation”) to the study of the function and design spectrum *within* the IIGO category (“centralization without independence”). I suggest several vectors to guide future analyses of states’ choice between IIGO models, notably functional effectiveness, organizational pathologies, and cost structure. I emphasize that further research accounting for the variety of organizational and administrative models that now underpin IIGOs can contribute to a fuller understanding of states’ preference for informal intergovernmentalism.

Contributions to the Literature

To shed light on the complex phenomenon of concert governance, the research articles in this thesis develop new approaches that draw on and bridge multiple—often only loosely connected—strands of international cooperation scholarship. Thus, beyond expanding the frontier of scholarly knowledge on IIGOs, these articles also contribute more broadly to the study of indirect governance, regime complexity, and international institutions, particularly with

a view to the consequences of power shifts for the functioning of the postwar multilateral system.

Above all, the thesis advances the study of *informal intergovernmentalism*. Amidst institutional gridlock and power shifts, policymakers look to IIGOs like the G7 and the G20 as governors for critical emerging issues. IIGOs' modus operandi as orchestrators renders the challenges of managing their governance relationships, notably with established universal organizations, a crucial dimension of contemporary global governance. The articles make several theoretical contributions. I bridge the gap between existing, primarily empirical, accounts of IIGOs' relations with other international institutions and theoretical insights from the literature on indirect governance. I identify the tradeoff between competence and control in indirect governance relationships as a fruitful prism through which to theorize the hurdles that IIGOs, as orchestrators, face when steering global governance and highlight institutional overlap and regime complexity as a strategy to mitigate this tradeoff. I further contribute to the literature by assessing IIGOs' potential and limitations as focal organizations in the multilateral institutional system. I develop a new framework for studying their functional scope, gauging the extent to which they can facilitate an expanding set of state interactions and serve as permanent platforms for consensus crafting and multilateral orchestration.

I also make several empirical contributions to the literature on informal intergovernmentalism. I demonstrate how regime design strategies play out in key international regimes, including those for market integrity and financial stability. For specialist scholars, this introduces a new angle for explaining institutional creation and regime design patterns in these issue areas. Importantly, the empirical insights gained are set to remain relevant as the regimes I analyze are now referenced as possible blueprints for the governance of emerging international issues. Instances include, for example, the recently created G7-led Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence and the proposal to create a Data and Technology Forum based on the

model of the G20-led Financial Stability Forum/Board.⁴³ I also dissect the G20's organizational anatomy at a level of detail that permits systematic insights into the mechanisms used by IIGOs to adjust to changing functional requirements and the cooperative interactions that they structure on a continuous basis.

However, the research articles bundled in this thesis also speak to a broader set of scholarly debates. The first is that on *indirect governance*. Over the past few years, a new wave of scholarship has mapped the spectrum of indirect governance modes, including orchestration, and has identified the tradeoff between competence and control as a fundamental dynamic characterizing the governance relationships between governors and intermediaries.⁴⁴ My focus on IIGOs as orchestrators extends the empirical basis supporting Competence-Control theory. Most notably, however, I present a rigorous discussion of strategies available to governors for mitigating the CC tradeoff. CC theory already recognizes—but does not expand on—the availability of multiple intermediaries as an important structural variable.⁴⁵ My work advances the first fully developed theoretical argument about regime strategies available to governors to optimize the balance between competence and control. Crucially, the scope of my argument goes well beyond the IIGOs that form the focus of this thesis. In fact, I show that regime design was central to addressing a potentially prohibitive tension between competence and control in regimes as diverse as those governing the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons and the European sovereign debt crisis.

Second, the articles introduce a new angle for thinking about the emergence and implications of *international regime complexes*. The governance of international issues, and indeed the provision of global public goods, increasingly depends on the performance of regime complexes, that is, the amalgamation of multiple “elemental” regimes or institutions, as opposed

⁴³ See, respectively, The Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence n.d.; and IBM 2021.

⁴⁴ See Abbott, Zangl, et al. 2020; and Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020a.

⁴⁵ Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020a, 628–29; Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 19–20.

to single organizations.⁴⁶ This has led to a lively scholarly debate regarding the origins and ramifications of regime complexes.⁴⁷ Crucially, their performance depends on how the elements of a regime complex are arranged and managed. In this thesis, I present an indirect governance approach to regime design that provides a novel perspective on why and how regime complexity develops. This approach highlights the CC tradeoff—and resulting actor incentives—as an important source of regime-level patterns and drivers of complexity. Furthermore, it draws attention to orchestration as a mode of indirect governance that creates order in international regimes without a formal hierarchy between institutions.⁴⁸ More generally, I show that—in addition to regime strategies that contest status quo multilateralism⁴⁹—complexity can also result from states’ attempt to contain the eroding effects of power shifts on the multilateral institutional system.

Third, the articles in this thesis contribute to scholarship on *international institutions*. In particular, they speak to the large body of scholarship on the origins and evolution of the postwar multilateral system.⁵⁰ I show that, in parallel to the slow-moving *internal* reform of formal multilateral organizations—a main focus of the existing literature⁵¹—states also restore institutional equilibrium *externally* by punctually moving consensus formation to more adaptable IIGOs that then orchestrate governance activities carried out by these multilateral organizations. I thereby direct scholarly attention to the ways in which states combine formal and informal intergovernmentalism to defend their interests in the multilateral institutional system. This growing importance of IIGOs in orchestrating global governance is also a counterpoint to the

⁴⁶ See, e.g., Raustiala and Victor 2004; Keohane and Victor 2011; Alter and Meunier 2009; and Alter 2022.

⁴⁷ For a recent overview of the debate, see Gómez-Mera 2021; and Alter 2022.

⁴⁸ Whether international regime complexes are, by definition, non hierarchical remains an active scholarly debate. Compare, e.g., Alter and Meunier 2009; and Alter and Raustiala 2018; with Henning and Pratt 2020.

⁴⁹ See, e.g., Morse and Keohane 2014; and Helfer 2009.

⁵⁰ See, e.g., Ikenberry 2012; Ikenberry 2001; Keohane 1984; Milewicz 2020; Lipsky 2017; Schweller and Pu 2011; Mearsheimer 2019; and Prantl 2014.

⁵¹ See, especially, Stone 2011; and Ikenberry 2001.

notion of the decline of the state as the principal actor in international politics.⁵² In many areas, including the global regulatory regimes examined in the thesis articles, nonstate parties play an important role in the definition of rules. Yet even as formal intergovernmental organizations are seeing a period of heightened gridlock and contestation, the rise of IIGO orchestration, if anything, signals a tightening of powerful states' grip on global governance

Many have voiced their belief that IIGOs like the G7 and the G20 will wither away. Even more have pointed to failed opportunities for these bodies to initiate more sustainable economic growth, mitigate the effects of global climate change, or curb the spread of a global pandemic—often justifiably so. Yet IIGO orchestrators are anything but disappearing, and, for International Relations scholars, are set to remain a critical object of investigation. Despite a first wave of scholarship on informal intergovernmentalism, International Relations, as a discipline, has not directed the attention at this phenomenon that it requires. This collection of research articles, I hope, raises awareness of the role of IIGOs and the deeper transformations that they signal to those interested in international cooperation—as scholars or policymakers.

Organization of the Thesis

Mirroring the introductory discussion in this chapter, *chapter I*, the organization of the thesis follows a logical progression from the international origins to the governance logic to the organizational foundations of IIGO orchestration (see Table 1). In *chapter II*, I lay the groundwork for the study of IIGO orchestration and revisit scholarly arguments about why states choose formal or informal intergovernmental organizations to address cooperation problems. I then distill several key trends described in the literature that explain why IIGO orchestration has become so central to global governance. I end this review chapter by moving

⁵² See, e.g., Zaring 2010; and Turk 2014.

from the “why” to the “how,” problematizing the governance logic and organizational foundations of IIGO orchestration as new frontiers of scholarly research.

TABLE 1. *Organization of the thesis*

Chapter	Title	Type	Guiding Question
I.	Introduction		
	International Origins		
II.	From Concert Diplomacy to Concert Governance: Why Informal Intergovernmental Organizations Orchestrate Global Governance	Review Article	<i>Why do states use IIGOs to orchestrate global governance?</i>
	Governance Logic		
III.	A Strategic Theory of Regime Design: The Governor’s Dilemma and Institutional Differentiation	Research Article	<i>How do IIGOs orchestrate global governance?</i>
IV.	Orchestrated Multilateralism: Informal Intergovernmental Organizations and the Design of Global Regulatory Regimes	Research Article	
	Organizational Foundations		
V.	Centralization without Independence: The Functional Scope and Organizational Anatomy of Informal Intergovernmental Organizations	Research Article	<i>What functions can IIGOs provide to support state interactions?</i>
VI.	Conclusion		

Having set the scene regarding the origins of IIGO orchestration, I explore the aforementioned frontiers in the form of a collection of three research articles. In chapters III and IV, I analyze the governance logic of IIGO orchestration, that is, how IIGOs orchestrate global governance while walking a fine line between exerting control over the multilateral system and undermining the independence and unique competencies of the universal organizations that form its bedrock. In *chapter III*, I develop the theoretical foundations for investigating IIGO orchestration by demonstrating the relationship between the CC tradeoff and strategic regime design. My central claim is that *differentiation*—the complementary enlistment of multiple

institutions—is a key way for states to mitigate the CC tradeoff. I illustrate the broad relevance of my theoretical argument through several case probes, notably the European sovereign debt crisis, global anti-money laundering and terrorist financing, and Syrian chemical weapons elimination regimes.

In *chapter IV*, I specify and apply this theoretical argument to IIGO orchestration. I contend that IIGOs will leverage universal organizations' credibility and legitimacy as independent organizations to advance broad *implementation*, including through technical assistance and monitoring, but draw on the expertise and capacity of like-minded club institutions—that are more anticipatory of their preferences—for the *setting* and *enforcement* of rules. I demonstrate the presence of these patterns in the design of G7/G20-orchestrated regulatory governance, specifically through case studies of the global market integrity and financial stability regimes. Tailoring my broader argument about indirect governance and regime design, I thus introduce the first theoretical framework explaining the logic of IIGO-orchestrated international regimes.

In *chapter V*, I explore the organizational foundations of IIGOs. IIGOs' centrality as steering bodies renders their ability—and limitations—to support expansive state interactions central to global governance. I build on the institutional design literature to define the functional scope for supporting state interactions without the creation of independence—legally, through a treaty, and organizationally, through a permanent secretariat. I contend that the ability of IIGOs to enhance negotiation stability, information dissemination, and issue linkage is not *per se* limited by their informal design. Rather, it is determined by whether and how states adapt IIGOs' organizational anatomy to create centralization. Circling back to the influential case of the G20, which introduced this thesis, I demonstrate that this IIGO adapted to changing requirements and developed centralization mechanisms for supporting interactions among member states and with external actors and institutions. My discussion lays the basis for further

inquiries into the potential and limitations of different organizational models *within* the IIGO category.

In *chapter VI*, I summarize the articles' combined insights into how IIGOs orchestrate global governance and situate them in the context of broader scholarly debates and current policy concerns. I stress the continued—indeed growing—centrality of IIGO orchestration and highlight avenues for future research that could expand our disciplinary knowledge of this phenomenon. I finish by highlighting the wider relevance of my findings for cross-cutting debates about power and legitimacy in International Relations and their potential to inform policy-oriented analyses around the governance of pressing emerging international issues.

II.

From Concert Diplomacy to Concert Governance: Why Informal Intergovernmental Organizations Orchestrate Global Governance

During the Covid-19 pandemic, states turned to the Group of Twenty (G20) —an informal intergovernmental organization (IIGO) lacking a legal foundation and a permanent secretariat or headquarters—to rapidly coordinate national responses to this global health emergency.¹ The importance of the G20 and, indeed, other IIGOs, however, goes beyond the management of acute crises. Although they were formed as vehicles to contain the fallout of financial turmoil, they have come to operate as platforms for regular coordination on an expansive range of issue areas. The G20 is the main organization where major established and emerging powers craft agreement on key international issues.² The Group of Seven (G7), with its smaller and more homogenous membership, is adding emerging concerns such as the responsible development of artificial intelligence to its already expansive thematic portfolio.³ The Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) group serves as a coordinating body for its members on issues governed by a wide range of established organizations, including the United Nations (UN), the International Financial Institutions (IFIs), and the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as recent institutional creations such as the New Development Bank.⁴

The most striking feature of these IIGOs is their concert-like character. In view of the G20, then-Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre deplored what he perceived as the emergence of a “new Congress of Vienna” and a return to “the 19th century, a time when the

¹ See Group of Twenty 2020.

² Vabulas and Snidal 2020, 47; See also Fioretos and Heldt 2019, 1104.

³ The G7 was the driving force behind the creation of the GPAI. See The Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence n.d.

⁴ See Larionova and Shelepov 2019; Berger, Leininger, and Messner 2017; and Cooper and Farooq 2013.

major powers met and redrew the map of the world.”⁵ Zaring finds that “the G20 is not a legal or technocratic institution at all; it is a modern-day Concert of Europe.”⁶ “Like the Concert,” he explains, “it embodies the classic international relations paradigm of heads of state making international policy for their subjects.”⁷ In the same vein, Penttilä, in his study of the G8’s role in international security, notes that “[t]he G8 bears great resemblance to the 19th century Concert of Europe.”⁸ And reflecting more generally on the character of IIGOs, Slaughter determines that “[t]hey are not alliances or even treaty partners.”⁹ Rather, she contends, “[t]heir closest equivalent in traditional diplomacy is perhaps the ‘concert,’ as in the Concert of Europe of 1815.”¹⁰

These IIGOs have consolidated as central pillars of the multilateral institutional system. In addition to facilitating coordination of national policies, they provide political guidance to and steer governance activities by other international institutions.¹¹ IIGOs’ “orchestration” of other international institutions is based neither on formal hierarchy nor on a grant of authority to act on their behalf.¹² Instead, they leverage their focality—which is mainly a product of their members’ economic and political weight and their ability to advance political consensus—to steer other institutions, including through joint calls, convening and coordination, endorsements, and material assistance.¹³ Major power concertation does not exhaust the variety of—often narrow and issue-specific—roles that IIGOs play in international politics. Yet it has arguably been the most characteristic and, certainly, most consequential feature of IIGOs

⁵ Spiegel 2010.

⁶ Zaring 2010, 477.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 485.

⁸ Penttilä 2003, abstract.

⁹ Slaughter 2004, 37.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 37–38.

¹¹ See Viola 2015b; Cooper 2019; and Kirton 2010.

¹² On orchestration, see Abbott et al. 2015a; and Abbott et al. 2015b.

¹³ Viola 2015b, 28; Cooper and Bradford 2010, 4; On the G20 as a focal point, see also Cooper 2019.

throughout history—from the Concert of Europe, which is widely considered to be the first IIGO, to the G20 as the latest comparable manifestation of postwar concertation.

Concert governance thus crystallizes as a central feature of contemporary international organization. IIGOs like the G7, the G20, and BRICS—akin to traditional *concert* diplomacy—facilitate engagement and consensus among major powers. However, from their position of being embedded in the postwar system of global *governance*, they orchestrate international regimes that govern complex interdependencies among states. Important parallels to the Concert of Europe aside, contemporary IIGO orchestration differs substantially from the role of their ancestor organization and is specific to postwar international relations. Why do states use IIGOs to orchestrate global governance? How has contemporary concert governance emerged? And what questions does this raise for scholars of international cooperation?

In this review article, I consider these questions in light of the current state of the field. To that end, I review the still relatively small but flourishing literature on informal intergovernmentalism that has made significant strides over the past decade or so in conceptualizing, measuring, and explaining IIGOs. I also condense relevant insights from the broader pool of scholarly knowledge on institutional design, informal governance, and soft law, which adds important parts to the puzzle that is the origins of IIGO orchestration. The origins of IIGO orchestration are complex because it is a phenomenon that has been situated in the unprecedented growth of economic interdependencies and international institutionalization since the mid-20th century. The rise of IIGO orchestration is thus best understood as the result of the interaction of several—partially interlinked—trends. Overall, I find that scholarship puts particular emphasis on three such trends: changes in the scope and depth of cooperation problems, increased heterogeneity of major states, and technological advances improving the feasibility of informal design.

I structure this review article in three parts. I begin with an account of the scholarly observations of—and sometimes surprise at—the consolidation of IIGO orchestration in contemporary international organization. In the main part of the article, I situate this phenomenon in the literature on international cooperation and institutions. Starting from the discipline's (re)turn to the study of informality in global governance, I explore the scholarly discussion around states' rationale for choosing informal design. This informs my subsequent analysis of the rise of IIGOs from a marginal phenomenon in the immediate postwar era to a key characteristic of today's governance of global issues. In the last part, I finish with a brief look at new frontiers of IIGO research that have the potential to contribute more broadly to international cooperation scholarship: the governance logic of IIGO orchestration, especially how it shapes international regimes, and the organizational foundations of IIGOs, notably their functional scope and the institutional adaptation that has occurred in response to changing demands placed on them.

IIGO Orchestration in Contemporary International Organization

During the 2008 financial crisis, the G20, which previously gathered finance ministers on an annual basis, was elevated to the level of heads of state and government and took the lead in structuring the global policy response.¹⁴ The G20 not only served to coordinate its members' policies but also orchestrated the work of other international institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS), and the Financial Stability Board (FSB).¹⁵

The G20's orchestration of global crisis governance was perceived by many observers as a watershed moment for international organization. First, it recalibrated perceptions about

¹⁴ See Group of Twenty 2008.

¹⁵ See *ibid.*

the scope of a technocratic management of global interdependencies through (regulatory) transgovernmental networks (TGNs).¹⁶ Looking back, Turk finds that “much of the soft law that has been generated by networks following the 2008 Crisis, including Basel III, has been: (a) an elaboration of policies that were formulated by the G20; (b) subject to the G20’s approval, and (c) drafted by organizations, such as the FSB, that were established pursuant to G20 directives.”¹⁷ Eccleston et al. similarly note that “while the detailed content of the financial reform agenda and precise nature of emergency economic settings were established through existing trans-governmental networks, the G20LF acted as a de facto executive forum providing coordination and much needed political authority to ensure a decisive response.”¹⁸ Reflecting on scholarly perspectives before the crisis, Zaring concludes that “[n]etworks are a form of international governance that many people, including me, had held out as particularly promising and actually effective ... their leaving response coordination to the G20, a political organization, is sobering.”¹⁹ The G20’s key role in the wake of the financial crisis demonstrated the limits of a “technocratization” of global governance.

Second, states’ turn to the G20 underscored the limitations of formal IGOs (FIGOs) like the IMF. The IMF, specifically, had been unable to address several key sources of the financial crisis, including inadequate prudential regulation and growing macroeconomic imbalances.²⁰ More fundamentally, states’ resort to the G20 reflected a continued lack of political clout for formal institutional change or creation. Just as they had after the Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s, calls for the creation of World Financial Organizations equipped with an extended mandate to, among other things, establish prudential supervision principles

¹⁶ Just a few years prior to the onset of the crisis, for example, Anne-Marie Slaughter argued that networked governance is a ‘key feature of world order in the twenty-first century.’ Slaughter 2004, 1.

¹⁷ Turk 2014, 126.

¹⁸ Eccleston, Kellow, and Carroll 2015, 300.

¹⁹ Zaring 2010, 478.

²⁰ See Gutner 2016; and Faruqee and Srinivasan 2012.

fell on deaf ears.²¹ This shift of the locus of decision making away from formally agreed and near-universal processes to the informal and exclusive G20 was indeed seen as a paradigm shift. Støre deplored it as nothing less than “one of the greatest setbacks since World War II,” cautioning against “a further creeping devaluation of the responsible world organizations, if decisions like those of the World Health Organization or the World Trade Organization were in the future effectively made in advance by the G-20.”²² The G20’s actions in the financial crisis were thus perceived by some as a sign of things to come in other issue areas as well.

The prognosis about the G20’s expansion proved accurate. The pace at which the G20 consolidated as a “global steering committee”²³ is striking. Only a year after its creation, the G20 transitioned from an ad hoc gathering of political leaders to address the financial crisis into a self-declared “premier forum for international economic cooperation.”²⁴ Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy enthusiastically opined that “[t]he G20 foreshadows the planetary governance of the twenty-first century.”²⁵ A senior Australian diplomat described the G20 as “potentially the most significant new diplomatic initiative in the world since the founding of the United Nations.”²⁶ Indisputably, over the last decade, the G20 has shattered its initial confinement to the financial and economic realm, extending its reach into the governance of global issues as diverse as energy and climate, health and pandemic preparedness, and the nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction.²⁷

Even as the G20’s centrality took many observers by surprise, IIGOs had gradually consolidated as orchestrators over decades. If anything, the creation, and subsequent upgrading, of the G20 to the level of heads of state and government represented the latest instance of a

²¹ For examples of such proposals after the 2008 Global Financial Crisis and 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, see, respectively, Eichengreen 2009; and Eatwell and Taylor 2001.

²² Spiegel 2010.

²³ Bradford and Lim 2011, 4; See also Cooper 2010; Graaf and Westphal 2011.

²⁴ Group of Twenty 2009.

²⁵ Rachman 2010.

²⁶ Bosco 2011.

²⁷ See, e.g., Group of Twenty 2021.

series of shifts towards IIGOs as focal points within the multilateral system. Kahler points out that “[e]ven in the early years of the postwar era ... [w]here multilateral institutions flourished, they were typically supported by minilateral cooperation among the Atlantic powers, a ‘disguised’ minilateralism that provided the essential frame for a multilateral order.”²⁸ From the 1970s, however, this disguised minilateralism became more institutionalized in the form of the G7 and thus a permanent and visible pillar of the postwar institutional system.²⁹ At that point, the international system had transitioned from having a peak in US power to its preponderance among a number of lesser but increasingly crucial powers, including Germany and Japan. “The current world order,” Snidal explained in 1985, “is well explained by the incentives of the major Western economic powers to maintain it.”³⁰

In its core domain—global financial governance—the G7 quickly assumed a significant political steering function. In this domain, “[s]ince the 1970s, the number of international bodies, their geographic reach, the amount of work done by each, and mechanisms for coordinating their work have all continually grown.”³¹ Notably, as Porter remarks, “[t]he technical work done by these bodies has been linked more directly to political authorities as the G7/8 has become actively involved in monitoring, endorsing, and helping to shape their work programs.”³² The G7 also commands great influence over the IFIs. As Baker explains, “[w]hile the Managing Director is supposed to communicate the rest of the world’s interests to the G7, it is more common for the G7 to attempt to use the IMF and the Managing Director to express their views to the rest of the world.”³³ The G7’s summits became key moments in the diplomatic

²⁸ Kahler 1992, 686.

²⁹ As Fioretos notes, ‘it was not until the emergence of the G5 and G7 that informal minilateralism became an institutionalized and arguably integral feature of the international monetary system.’ Fioretos 2019, 1139; For the first leaders’ declaration of the G7 (then G6) in 1975, see Group of Six 1975.

³⁰ Snidal 1985, 612.

³¹ Porter 2009, 5.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Baker 2006, 136.

calendar and the joint declarations of its members focal points for other international institutions.

The G7 also gained centrality as a forum for global economic governance broadly speaking. Since “the 1970s and increasingly thereafter,” as Dervis and Özer observe, “the G–7 have organized themselves to be the real governing *directoire* of the economic and financial sphere of the international system.”³⁴ As such, the G7 began “to caucus and largely set the governance agenda for the Western international political economy in the 1980s and 1990s.”³⁵ Finally, especially towards the turn of the millennium, the G7 absorbed more issues ostensibly unrelated to its original financial mission, including key security concerns such as terrorism and nonproliferation.³⁶ By the early 2000s, the G7 had emerged as a “master transgovernmental coalition ... offering strategic direction to a series of more specialist and partially autonomous junior transgovernmental networks that engage in technical problem solving.”³⁷ In fact, Gstöhl notes that the “new world order” identified by Slaughter “is not only the result of transgovernmental networks of disaggregating states, but it is also a product of informal core groups such as the G8 attempting to ‘steer’ global politics, in particular through international institutions.”³⁸

Since the 1970s, we have thus witnessed the institutionalization of a shift in decision making away from universal organizations and towards concerts of major powers. Indeed, “historical developments suggest that the Crisis-inspired rise of the G20LF does not amount to a fundamentally new approach to global governance, but rather a deepening of established trends.”³⁹ Concert governance has become so deeply embedded in the multilateral system that

³⁴ Dervis and Özer 2005, 86.

³⁵ Eccleston, Kellow, and Carroll 2015, 301.

³⁶ See Dobson 2007; and Baker 2006.

³⁷ Baker 2006, 140.

³⁸ Gstöhl 2007, 33.

³⁹ Eccleston, Kellow, and Carroll 2015, 301.

governance processes between IIGOs like the G-groups, universal organizations like the IMF, and regulatory bodies like the BCBS appear to almost naturally interlink. I will now proceed to examine IR scholarship's turn to the study of informal intergovernmentalism, its explanations for states' preference for informal design, and the trends it identifies as having contributed to IIGOs' rise in the postwar multilateral system.

The Study of Informal Intergovernmentalism

Even as IIGOs have gradually consolidated as an integral element of the postwar multilateral system, orchestrating intergovernmental organizations and an expanding mesh of transgovernmental networks, they have long played a marginal role in IR scholarship. As Slaughter eloquently describes it, the paradigm of international institutions, for many years, has been “the multilateral international convention, negotiated over many years in various international watering holes, signed and ratified with attendant flourish and formality, and given continuing life through the efforts of an international secretariat.”⁴⁰ In other words, much of the attention has been absorbed by formal organizations and agreements such as the UN, the IMF, and NATO.

This focus on formal intergovernmentalism is reflected in the conceptualizations, measurement, and data on which much of international cooperation scholarship has built. The most widely used dataset, Pevehouse et al.'s Correlates of War (COW) International Organization dataset, only includes FIGOs. “To qualify as an IGO,” Pevehouse et al. state, “an international institution must have the following characteristics: (1) be a formal entity, (2) have states as members, and (3) possess a permanent secretariat or other indication of institutionalization such as headquarters and/or permanent staff.”⁴¹ Other major efforts at

⁴⁰ Slaughter 2000, 177–78.

⁴¹ Pevehouse et al. 2020, 494.

mapping the international institutional system preserve the same focus on formality. Volgy et al. “define intergovernmental organizations as entities created with sufficient organizational structure and autonomy to provide formal, ongoing, multilateral processes of decisionmaking between states, along with the capacity to execute the collective will of their members (states).”⁴² Similarly, Shanks et al. define IGOs as “those associations established by governments or their representatives that are sufficiently institutionalized to require regular meetings, rules governing decision making, a permanent staff, and a headquarters.”⁴³

Given that these scholarly efforts took place as states’ intensifying use of IGOs was well under way, the exclusive analytical focus on formality is surprisingly narrow, especially compared to earlier scholarship. As early as 1935, Potter argued that “it is not the legal elements in the situation, the mutual rights and obligations of the parties, much less the text expressing that legal element, that constitutes the organization, but the union of states, partly juristic but also largely practical in nature.”⁴⁴ Even Wallace and Singer’s pioneering 1970 article quantifying intergovernmental organizations—the basis for the COW IO dataset—defines IGOs in a broader manner. It advances neither a strict legalistic understanding of IGOs nor the requirement of a permanent secretariat, staff, or headquarters.⁴⁵ In fact, the authors explicitly include international organizations with secretariats “supplied by a single member,” “various members on a rotating basis,” or “another organization.”⁴⁶ The oldest comprehensive resource of international organizational life, the *Yearbook of International Organizations* (formerly the *Annuaire de la vie internationale*), published since the early 20th century, also catalogues both formal and informal public international organizations.⁴⁷ In short, early scholarship was cognizant of

⁴² Volgy et al. 2008, 839.

⁴³ Shanks, Jacobson, and Kaplan 1996, 593.

⁴⁴ Potter 1935, 218.

⁴⁵ Wallace and Singer 1970, 245–49.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 246.

⁴⁷ For a biography of the *Yearbook of International Organizations*, see Saunier 2019.

states' use of a range of intergovernmental arrangements that are either not legalized or do not possess a permanent secretariat or headquarters.

Despite the overwhelming focus on FIGOs, international cooperation research has, of course, not been unaware of informal intergovernmentalism. Attention to IIGOs, however, has often been implicit. As Roger and Rowan observe, “the ‘true’ population of IOs that both scholars and policymakers seem to have had in mind when they study and speak about these institutions has been broader.”⁴⁸ Particularly the G7 and, later, the G20 have been the objects of analyses describing the negotiations and objectives in these bodies as well as evaluating their performance. Many of these analyses are informed by authors' experiences as policymakers. Notable examples include Putnam and Bayne's and Penttilä's book-length studies of G7 governance of, respectively, the global economy and international security.⁴⁹ In addition, the University of Toronto's G7 and G20 research groups⁵⁰ have played a key role in documenting these bodies' governance processes and assessing their deliverables.⁵¹

However, the systematic conceptualization, theorization, and measurement of IIGOs has only developed in the wake of a growing interest in informality in international politics and law. One such interest has been in “soft” law.⁵² Notably, Abbott and Snidal have discussed the choice between hard and soft law in international agreements, with the latter being characterized by weaker obligation, precision, and delegation.⁵³ Klabbers even presented an attempt to “make an inventory of the various types of entities that might be classified, for various reasons, as soft organizations.”⁵⁴ There has also been an interest in transgovernmental relations, which

⁴⁸ Roger and Rowan 2021, 7.

⁴⁹ See Putnam and Bayne 1987; and Penttilä 2003; See also Bayne 2005.

⁵⁰ G7 Research Group 2021; G20 Research Group 2022.

⁵¹ For related books on the G7 and G20, see, e.g., Kirton, Daniels, and Freytag 2001; and Kirton 2016, 20; For a comprehensive documentation of the G7 and G20 summits produced by a member of the University of Toronto research groups, see Hajnal 2007; and Hajnal 2014.

⁵² See, e.g., Abbott and Snidal 2000; Guzman 2008; Zaring 2005; and Boyle 1999.

⁵³ Abbott and Snidal 2000, 422; See also Abbott et al. 2000.

⁵⁴ Klabbers 2001, 404.

frequently intersect with informal intergovernmental processes. Slaughter's contributions on the proliferation and types of TGNs,⁵⁵ building on the work that Keohane, Nye, and others had pioneered in the 1970s,⁵⁶ have been key in uncovering this essential layer of international cooperation. Finally, a strand of research preceding the focus on IIGOs as stand-alone organizations has been that on informal governance within FIGOs. It has greatly contributed to the field's understanding of how, even within highly formalized organizations, informal processes develop alongside formal arrangements and can become constitutive to institutional equilibrium.⁵⁷

IIGOs, however, have only been clearly defined and studied in relation to their formal counterparts over the past decade. Vabulas and Snidal were the first to advance a conceptualization of IIGOs, defining them as “(i) high-level associations of three or more states based on (ii) explicitly shared expectations but without a formal treaty that (iii) hold recurrent meetings but without any formal institutional arrangement such as a secretariat.”⁵⁸ They thus define IIGOs directly in contrast to Pevehouse et al.'s definition of FIGOs, which forms the de facto standard in the discipline.⁵⁹ This way of defining IIGOs has the advantage of clearly highlighting commonalities and differences with their formal counterparts.

IIGOs are analogous to FIGOs in that they are recognizable as organizations that facilitate interactions among member state representatives through their own organizational structure, decision-making procedures, or conventions.⁶⁰ However, IIGOs also differ in important ways. First, IIGOs are not constituted by a legally binding agreement such as an international treaty and are instead created through soft law instruments such as memoranda of

⁵⁵ See, e.g., Slaughter 2004; and Slaughter 1997.

⁵⁶ See, especially, Keohane and Nye 1974; and Holsti and Levy 1974.

⁵⁷ See, e.g., Stone 2013; Stone 2011; Kleine 2014; Kleine 2013; and Libman and Obydenkova 2013.

⁵⁸ Vabulas and Snidal 2021, 861; See also Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 197.

⁵⁹ Vabulas and Snidal 2021, 861.

⁶⁰ Roger and Rowan 2021, 7.

understanding or joint declarations.⁶¹ Second, IIGOs lack a secretariat or headquarters that operate with some independence from member states. Instead, organizational structure and administrative support depend entirely on arrangements that either leverage bureaucratic capacities of other organizations or of (member) states.⁶²

The conceptual work on IIGOs has also sharpened the distinction between different arrangements within the spectrum of informality, including TGNs and transnational public-private governance initiatives (TGIIs). In contrast to TGNs, IIGOs are high-level associations of states. Whereas TGNs are characterized by the networked interactions of working-level bureaucrats, legislators, or judges,⁶³ the substantive involvement of high-level political representatives—typically at the ministerial and even heads of state and government level—is a crucial element of IIGOs and makes them deeply political organizations.⁶⁴ TGIIs represent a category of informal arrangements that are defined by the joint involvement of states and private actors.⁶⁵ By comparison, while IIGOs may engage in outreach activities aimed at nongovernmental actors, they are fundamentally interstate arrangements.⁶⁶

The systematic integration of IIGOs in international cooperation research, and particularly their conceptual delineation from FIGOs, forms the basis for arguments about states' preferences for informal intergovernmental design. I will now proceed to examine these arguments and their usefulness for explaining the rise of IIGOs, especially regarding their growing role as orchestrators.

⁶¹ Vabulas and Snidal 2021, 861.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 861–62; Whereas Vabulas and Snidal's distinction of IIGOs from FIGOs through the absence of legalization and the lack of an independent secretariat or headquarters is the prevailing conceptual approach in the literature, it is worth noting that Roger and Rowan suggest a modification that focuses only on legalization. As they explain, in their dataset, 'greater emphasis is placed on an institution's legal nature under international public law. As a result, IOs may be regarded as informal even if they possess secretariats, provided their constitutive agreements are indeed non-binding.' Roger and Rowan 2021, 13.

⁶³ Slaughter 2004, 10–11; Raustiala 2002, 4–5; Keohane and Nye 1974, 43.

⁶⁴ Vabulas and Snidal 2021, 861; Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 199.

⁶⁵ Westerwinter 2021, 141.

⁶⁶ Vabulas and Snidal 2021, 861; Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 197.

The Rationale of (In)formal Design

Scholarship has advanced multiple—largely complementary—explanations of why states choose to create and cooperate through IIGOs as opposed to through formal organizations. Contributions generally assume that states act rationally, that is, that they choose to rely on IIGOs because their design is best suited to attaining valued goals.⁶⁷ However, the angles from which they seek to explain why it is sometimes rational for states to use IIGOs differ. They include functional reasons, power political calculations, and domestic constraints. In addition, some authors have highlighted that states may prefer informal settings because they give rise to unique interpersonal dynamics.

The most prominent starting point in the IIGO literature is that states choose informal design for *functional reasons*, that is, because it can best resolve the cooperation problems that they encounter. IIGOs are identified as having several key advantages. IIGOs, it is argued, are an optimal choice where flexibility and speed are important.⁶⁸ They also preserve greater control of information and, thus, confidentiality.⁶⁹ Cost is another factor that distinguishes IIGOs. Informal design preserves states' autonomy and lowers sovereignty costs.⁷⁰ Abbott and Faude more broadly conceptualize informal arrangements as “low-cost institutions” to explain their rapid proliferation.⁷¹ IIGOs do, however, come with significant cost in terms of states' investment of personnel resources. As Stone et al. remark, “[i]t may be true that states find the expenses of letterhead, office buildings, and salaries trivial, but they cannot regard as trivial the investment of high-level time and talent in negotiations.”⁷² IIGOs' regular involvement of high-

⁶⁷ On rational choice in International Relations research, see, e.g., Kydd 2010; and Snidal and Tamm 2018.

⁶⁸ Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 209–11; Sauer 2019, 952–53; See also Lipson 1991, 500.

⁶⁹ Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 210–11; Carlson and Koremenos 2021, 104–8.

⁷⁰ Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 210.

⁷¹ Abbott and Faude 2020, 3.

⁷² Stone, Slantchev, and London 2008, 354.

level representatives and their use of national bureaucratic capacity means that they come with substantial opportunity costs of that kind.

FIGOs are very much a mirror image of IIGOs' functional advantages. Due to their legalization and the presence of a permanent secretariat, FIGOs tend to be status quo oriented and slower.⁷³ They also create greater sovereignty costs for states.⁷⁴ While this arguably makes them less adept at reacting to crises, they are better suited to managing routine problems and lowering the long-term transaction costs of repeated engagement.⁷⁵ It is further argued that they have particular strengths when it comes to providing a stable negotiation environment and the organizational capacity to manage ongoing implementation and substantive operations such as the pooling of assets.⁷⁶ FIGOs are also better equipped to address the high risks of opportunism. As legalized bodies, they can be used by states to reach binding commitments and fix terms with precision.⁷⁷ Their capacity to mobilize international staff to monitor compliance can also generate information that is perceived as sufficiently credible and neutral to create international reputational or domestic audience costs for defectors.⁷⁸

In functionalist accounts, IIGOs thus crystallize as particularly suitable for coping with rapid transformations and managing situations of high uncertainty, including crises, as they are easily adjustable to new circumstances and enable lower reaction times.⁷⁹ In summary, “[s]tates opt for less formality by using IIGOs when the advantages of lower sovereignty and negotiation costs, flexibility and speed outweigh the need for enforcement, commitment, consensus, and the bureaucratic centralization.”⁸⁰ Through this functionalist lens, the relevance of these

⁷³ See Fioretos 2017; Jupille, Mattli, and Snidal 2013; and Mahoney 2010.

⁷⁴ Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 212.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 211–12.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 211; Cf. Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001; and Abbott and Snidal 1998.

⁷⁷ Lipson 1991, 501.

⁷⁸ For a theoretical exposition, see Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001, 790, who argue that ‘the informational capacities of international organizations to expose states’ behavior can influence the activities of even the most powerful states by imposing international reputational costs or, sometimes, domestic audience costs.’

⁷⁹ Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 211–12; Sauer 2019, 952–53.

⁸⁰ Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 219.

respective advantages for addressing a cooperation problem determines the choice between informal and formal designs.

Functionalist explanations of why states create IIGOs are rooted in arguments from the soft law and institutional design literature. In the study of soft law, as Shaffer and Pollack note, functionalist approaches are “nearly ubiquitous.”⁸¹ In their seminal article on hard and soft law in international politics, Abbott and Snidal argue that “international actors choose softer forms of legalized governance when those forms offer superior institutional solutions.”⁸² They list several advantages of soft law. Soft law “avoids some of the costs of hard law,”⁸³ especially restrictions on states’ behavior and their sovereignty.⁸⁴ Furthermore, “softer legalization is often easier to achieve than hard legalization,” presents “more effective ways to deal with uncertainty,” and “facilitates compromise, and thus mutually beneficial cooperation, between actors with different interests and values, different time horizons and discount rates, and different degrees of power.”⁸⁵ Another key contribution, by Lipson, identifies “speed, simplicity, flexibility, and privacy” as hallmarks of informal agreements, which makes them better adapted “to meet uncertain conditions and unpredictable shocks” because “[i]n complex, rapidly changing environments, speed is a particular advantage.”⁸⁶ This functionalist approach also permeates the institutional design literature, which postulates that states rationally vary the characteristics of institutions to best match the cooperation problems they face.⁸⁷ In many ways, the research on legalization and institutional design has thus translated into current understandings of why states choose to cooperate through IIGOs.

⁸¹ Shaffer and Pollack 2013, 197.

⁸² Abbott and Snidal 2000, 421; Compare this to Vabulas and Snidal’s assertion regarding IIGOs that “[d]ifferent issue areas—with different underlying cooperation problems—are best addressed by different levels of institutional formality.” Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 212.

⁸³ Abbott and Snidal 2000, 423.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 422.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 423.

⁸⁶ Lipson 1991, 500–501.

⁸⁷ See Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001; Koremenos 2016; and Abbott and Snidal 1998.

Although the literature on informal intergovernmentalism emphasizes the functional reasons for states choosing IIGOs, scholars have advanced several alternative explanations for this. These remain predominantly within the rationalist paradigm but emphasize different drivers of IIGO usage. Informality, it is frequently highlighted, can be a product of *power political* calculations. Formal institutions and agreements put greater constraints on unilateral action by states.⁸⁸ Even though formal rules tend to disproportionately favor powerful states, small members can benefit from the constraints that FIGOs impose on the unilateral action of the former.⁸⁹ In turn, informality leaves greater leeway to powerful members to impose their will on others. Stone has shown that powerful states leverage informal processes when their core interests are affected in international organizations.⁹⁰ Cogan more broadly contends that “informal agreements largely take account of, and reallocate authority to match, the differences in power and interests that pervade the international system when those differences cannot be acknowledged formally.”⁹¹ The choice to cooperate through IIGOs, in short, can thus be driven by power political concerns and conflicting interests between states.

Another explanatory angle that has recently been advanced is that of *domestic politics*. Scholars of regulatory and standards institutions have highlighted how informal arrangements and soft law have important political implications because they create winners and losers and provide new resources to some domestic groups while disempowering others.⁹² They have also highlighted the relevance of domestic political factors such as the existence of independent regulatory agencies for jurisdictions’ participation in transgovernmental networks.⁹³ IIGO research has built on this insight to highlight the domestic sources of states’ preference for

⁸⁸ See Martin and Simmons 1998; For a discussion on the constraining effects of international legal commitments in the case of the IMF, see Simmons 2000; Von Stein 2005; and Simmons and Hopkins 2005.

⁸⁹ See Ikenberry 2001.

⁹⁰ Stone 2011, 9–48.

⁹¹ Cogan 2009, 212.

⁹² See, e.g., Newman and Posner 2018; and Bütte and Mattli 2013.

⁹³ E.g., Bach and Newman 2014, 402–3.

informality. Roger, for instance, has shown that domestic politics and institutions in powerful states—especially the lead of independent regulatory agencies—can make informal intergovernmentalism more likely.⁹⁴ Accordingly, he speculates that the “growth of informality has likely been a product of important shifts occurring within the domestic political arenas of powerful states, shifts that have subsequently projected outward and reshaped the legal foundations of global governance.”⁹⁵ This argument also links back to discussions in the soft law literature. Lipson, for instance, remarked that informal agreements’ “lower profile has important consequences for democratic oversight, bureaucratic control, and diplomatic precedent.”⁹⁶ He stresses, among other things, the implications of avoiding public debates about agreement ratification and the role of inter-agency bureaucratic politics.⁹⁷

In addition to the underlining by some scholars of the role of functional advantages, power politics, and domestic constraints, several others have emphasized the role of *interpersonal dynamics* in informal intergovernmental settings. High-level political summit meetings are one of the key characteristics of IIGOs. These informal meetings are less bound to diplomatic protocol and offer greater confidentiality. IIGOs thereby create space for interpersonal dynamics that can be de-emphasized in highly formalized and bureaucratic organizational settings. Face-to-face diplomacy among political leaders can lead to what Wheeler has called a “leap-to-trust,” a building of trust that can change the possibilities for cooperation and, potentially, even become instrumental in bridging the divide between fierce enemies.⁹⁸ In a similar vein, Holmes, studying personal interactions among leaders in a variety of 20th century contexts, found that they were key to addressing the difficult task of parties reassuring each other about their intentions.⁹⁹ Mitzen’s analysis of the Concert of Europe, arguably the closest historical analogy to modern-

⁹⁴ Roger 2020, 51–77; Roger and Rowan 2021, 11.

⁹⁵ Roger 2020, 52.

⁹⁶ Lipson 1991, 500.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 500–501.

⁹⁸ See Wheeler 2018.

⁹⁹ See Holmes 2018.

day IIGOs, has made the case that it is here where “collective intentions are produced and maintained by talking together.”¹⁰⁰ These arguments echo contributions from international law, where scholars have contended for some time that informal networks foster interpersonal relationships and reputational effects that further cooperation and strengthen compliance.¹⁰¹

While these approaches emphasize different rationales for states’ use of IIGOs, they can be usefully understood as complementary. Vabulas and Snidal, for instance, stress that “choices are driven not only by consideration of increasing efficiency through institutionalized cooperation but also by considerations of distribution and power among states.”¹⁰² Roger similarly emphasizes that “these [are] complementary approaches, which highlight additional causal pathways and underline the diversity of the political processes at work.”¹⁰³ Even where their causal explanations differ, they point to similar advantages of informal design that incentivize states to choose IIGOs. Notably, these various political processes that determine states’ preference for informal intergovernmentalism have simultaneously been affected by several deep-running trends in international politics. In the next section, I turn to these drivers of IIGOs’ centrality.

The Drivers of IIGOs’ Centrality

Since the 1970s, IIGOs have become a phenomenon that has grown in importance and visibility. We have seen that a select group of IIGOs has consolidated as a key pillar of the postwar multilateral system, orchestrating global governance activities by international institutions and regulatory networks. Moreover, the number of less prominent, often highly issue-specific, IIGOs has increased substantially. Meanwhile, scholarship on IIGOs has

¹⁰⁰ Mitzen 2013, 7.

¹⁰¹ E.g., Slaughter 2004, 198–200; Raustiala 2002, 55, 81.

¹⁰² Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 219.

¹⁰³ Roger 2020, 52.

advanced from static comparisons of IIGOs and FIGOs to the study of these temporal trends. Moreover, the broader literature on international cooperation offers insights into key trends that are raising the demand for the types of advantages that informal design provides.

The rise of concert governance by a select set of IIGOs is embedded in a larger proliferation of informal intergovernmental arrangements. Albeit states' use of IIGOs reaches back to at least the early 19th century, more than three-fourths of IIGOs have emerged since the 1970s, with accelerated growth rates since the 1990s.¹⁰⁴ IIGOs, as Roger and Rowan summarize, “have grown increasingly common and have become more deeply involved in the governance of many pressing issues, particularly since the end of the Cold War.”¹⁰⁵ By contrast, FIGOs have seen a stagnation during that time period.¹⁰⁶ In their survey of the (formal) international institutional landscape, Volgy et al. conclude that “[f]ocusing on FIGOs and constellations of organizations created since 1989 indicates a substantial diminution in the capacity and/or willingness of global states to fashion new organizations to meet the challenges of the post-Cold War international system.”¹⁰⁷ FIGOs remain at the heart of interstate cooperation, in terms of both their sheer number and the indispensable role of universal organizations like the UN, the IFIs, and the WTO in the provision of global public goods. At the same time, it is evident that forces are at play that challenge FIGOs' ability to govern global issues (alone) and to promote greater reliance on IIGOs.

This informalization of the international institutional fabric reflects several key trends in international politics that affect both the demand for certain informal designs and the feasibility of supplying these. I focus on two demand-side factors that transpire most clearly across a wide range of scholarly contributions: increases in the scope and depth of cooperation

¹⁰⁴ Vabulas and Snidal 2021, 860; Roger and Rowan 2021, 10.

¹⁰⁵ Roger and Rowan 2021, 4.

¹⁰⁶ Vabulas and Snidal 2021, 860; Roger and Rowan 2021, 10.

¹⁰⁷ Volgy et al. 2008, 848.

problems and changes in the constellation of states that are elemental to sustaining effective global governance, notably their greater heterogeneity. FIGOs—the central tenet of postwar institutionalism—struggle to formulate speedy and effective responses under these circumstances. I also highlight the recent attention to supply-side factors, especially advancement in the means of transportation and communication available to states and their representatives.

Changes to Cooperation Problems: Issue Complexity

One key trend that is driving states' use of IIGOs is changes in cooperation problems. Over time, the complexity of issues that states encounter has increased in terms of both their scope and the depth of their penetration into domestic politics.¹⁰⁸ This development is, in part, endogenous to the success of postwar institutionalism in fostering denser political, economic, and societal interdependencies.¹⁰⁹ Yet it has also led to challenges that are considerably less tractable.

After the world wars, states, and the international organizations they created, were first and foremost concerned with problems “at the border.” The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)—the predecessor of today's WTO—was created, as its name suggests, to further international trade through the reduction or elimination of tariffs.¹¹⁰ The IMF's mandate for overseeing the international monetary system centered principally on the maintenance of the fixed exchange rate between currencies.¹¹¹ And the UN Security Council (UNSC) was focused

¹⁰⁸ Hale et al. define these ‘harder problems’ based on their extensity (scope of problems has increased) and intensity (problems penetrate more deeply into societies). Hale, Held, and Young 2013a, 227.

¹⁰⁹ See Hale, Held, and Young 2013a; and Hale, Held, and Young 2013b.

¹¹⁰ World Trade Organization n.d.

¹¹¹ International Monetary Fund n.d.

on “the maintenance of international peace and security”¹¹² by regulating the use of force between states, which then still accounted for the lion’s share of armed conflict.¹¹³

Today, the depth of cooperation problems that these institutions address has increased. Advancing international trade through the WTO, for example, implies to a significant extent addressing “behind-the-border” barriers,¹¹⁴ that is, “non-tariff barriers that operate inside countries rather than at the border, but that nonetheless can restrict or discriminate trade.”¹¹⁵ Similarly, the large volume of international financial flows has made countries’ vulnerability to others’ domestic financial and economic policies a key issue. Accordingly, the IMF has shifted from its original role as the guardian of exchange rates to having a much more comprehensive function of surveillance of the global economy and members’ national policies.¹¹⁶ The UNSC has evolved its conception of threats to international peace and security and state sovereignty, “deriv[ing] from a newly perceived link between domestic stability and international security.”¹¹⁷ This has found expression in the evolution of UN peacekeeping operations, which have increasingly become authorized to use offensive force—and to do so without the consent of the country that is being intervened in—in response to intrastate conflicts that purportedly put international security at risk.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, measures that tackle new existential challenges, like the transition to a global low-carbon economy, also reach deeply into domestic policies.¹¹⁹

In parallel, the scope of many cooperation problems has increased. Whereas trade negotiations used to focus on tariff reductions, they now routinely encompass agreements on a range of interlinked social and environmental issues such as labor standards, environmental

¹¹² United Nations 1945.

¹¹³ Hageboutros 2016, 10.

¹¹⁴ On ‘behind-the-border’ barriers and implications for the WTO, see Hoekman 2011.

¹¹⁵ Wajda-Lichy 2014, 148. Examples of potential behind-the-border barriers to trade include technical barriers to trade, sanitary and phytosanitary requirements, and public procurement regulations.

¹¹⁶ See Krueger 2006.

¹¹⁷ Hageboutros 2016, 12–13.

¹¹⁸ See, e.g., Sloan 2014.

¹¹⁹ See, e.g., Keohane and Victor 2016, 571–73.

standards, and genetically modified organisms.¹²⁰ The work of the UNSC is also broadening to include a wider range of issues that directly or indirectly affect international peace and security. Climate change is one such issue that is increasingly becoming a factor in conflict dynamics and has thus sparked debate about the extent to which—and how—the UNSC should address this linkage.¹²¹ New issues of international concern, almost entirely absent from the global agenda just a decade or two ago, also come with challenging linkages. An example of this is the governance of cyberspace and emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, which are not just interrelated among each other but even individually touch on issues ranging from human rights to nuclear deterrence.¹²²

Formal postwar institutions struggle with this change in cooperation problems. Their established procedures frequently fail to generate cooperative solutions to contemporary global challenges. The collapse of the Doha Round negotiations at the WTO is a key example of formal procedures' failure to address complex and divisive issues.¹²³ Yet FIGOs' struggles are also structural. Many global issues defy the delimitations of the mandate and area of responsibility that characterize the postwar institutional system and its international bureaucracies. It has, therefore, been contended that FIGOs are too inflexible to adequately address many contemporary issues in global governance.¹²⁴ This mirrors tensions in domestic foreign policy apparatuses, where the traditional hub role of foreign ministries, including in liaising internationally through embassies and missions to FIGOs, has been eroded by the international activities of specialized departments and regulatory agencies with the required domain expertise.¹²⁵ Already, pressing questions are emerging about whether traditional models of

¹²⁰ On the widening of the scope of trade agreements to non trade issues, see, e.g., Milewicz et al. 2018; See also Hale, Held, and Young 2013a, 227.

¹²¹ See, e.g., Scott 2015; and Sindico 2007.

¹²² On the link between AI and cybersecurity, see, e.g., Bonfanti, Cavelti, and Wenger 2021; On AI and human rights, see, e.g., Donahoe and Metzger 2019; On AI and nuclear deterrence, see, e.g., Johnson 2020.

¹²³ See Jones 2009.

¹²⁴ E.g., Eccleston, Kellow, and Carroll 2015, 298.

¹²⁵ See Manulak and Snidal 2021.

formal centralized governance are fit to address cross-cutting issues like artificial intelligence in the future.¹²⁶

Major IIGOs like the G7, the G20, and BRICS provide several advantages for facilitating cooperation on issues that states struggle to resolve in formal organizations. IIGOs' informal design means that negotiations on issues come without the immediate prospect of a permanent institutional lock-in or legally binding agreement. They also bring together not only working-level experts but also members' political leadership with the authority to make breakthrough concessions. Overall, this lowers the hurdles for engagement and enables leaders to explore common ground on intractable cooperation problems.¹²⁷ Thus, deliberations on issues that states struggle to make progress on in formalized and slow procedures, such as digital trade, are now partially shifted to IIGOs. For example, in 2019, the Japanese G20 Presidency, with the support of then-WTO Director-General Azevêdo, launched the so-called "Osaka Track," which aimed, among other things, to catalyze agreement on digital trade in the WTO.¹²⁸ Indeed, as agreement currently remains elusive in a multilateral trade framework, the issue will be pursued further as part of the upcoming 2022 G20 presidency.¹²⁹

IIGOs also more easily bridge thematic silos that separate formal organizations given their lack of a clearly determined mandate and fixed rules and procedures. In fact, major IIGOs such as BRICS integrate engagement in a host of related topics such as infrastructure, energy, and digitization under the umbrella of the leaders' summit.¹³⁰ As Bailin notes, "one of the problems of the multilateral institutionalist approach is that most international institutions are designed to address one issue-area."¹³¹ In comparison, she finds that the G7, which addresses

¹²⁶ See Cihon, Maas, and Kemp 2020.

¹²⁷ Cf. Vabulas and Snidal 2013; and Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001.

¹²⁸ World Trade Organization 2019.

¹²⁹ Andarningtyas and Lim 2021.

¹³⁰ See Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa Group 2021.

¹³¹ Bailin 2017, chap. 2.

a multitude of issues, “more effectively allows for the strategy of issue linkage.”¹³² Bayne also highlights this feature of the G7, noting that “the capacity to establish linkages between topics and to strike cross-issue deals ... [is] regarded as the highest form of cooperation at the [G7] summit.”¹³³ And as Benson and Zürn point out, the G20 is “one of the few existing global platforms where different international institutions and regional organisations can coordinate across a vast array of issue areas and emergent policy fields.”¹³⁴ This breadth of the thematic agenda, the engagement with diverse international actors, and the involvement of political leaders with cross-domain authority distinguishes major IIGOs and can enlarge the zone for agreement through issue linkage.¹³⁵

Changes to State Constellation: Actor Heterogeneity

Changes to the constellation of states required to govern global issues—and particularly their greater heterogeneity—is another trend that has propelled informal intergovernmentalism. The membership of key postwar institutions has grown considerably, and members represent a significantly larger span of economic development and political systems. Together with a gradual shift in power, this raises the costs of agreement in FIGOs and undermines their authority and legitimacy.

Contemporary global governance involves a much larger number of parties. In fact, since the end of World War II and in the wake of decolonization, the number of states in the international systems has nearly tripled.¹³⁶ Moreover, not just the numbers have changed but power has shifted. After World War II, the United States and its (mostly European) allies could largely determine international rules.¹³⁷ Power has since gradually shifted away from the war

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Bayne 2005, chap. 14.

¹³⁴ Benson and Zürn 2019, 549.

¹³⁵ Cf. Sebenius 1983, 292.

¹³⁶ Pevehouse et al. 2020, 493.

¹³⁷ Ikenberry 2001, 9.

victors.¹³⁸ From the 1970s onward, the economic resurgence of Germany and Japan as political and economic heavyweights increased the necessity of a more collective management of the global economy and, increasingly, of international security issues.¹³⁹ Above all, the unprecedented economic growth of (former) developing countries, especially China, and their fuller integration into the world economy has—and continues to—reconfigure the global distribution of power.¹⁴⁰ The corresponding dispersion of governance capacity across a larger and more heterogeneous group of states has important implications for global governance and the institutions that underpin it.

Actor heterogeneity has reduced states' willingness to delegate to FIGOs and has affected formal organizations' effectiveness. Greater actor numbers and heterogeneity imply that the respective interests of the states involved are more likely to diverge and the costs of agreement rise.¹⁴¹ As a result, it makes states "more wary of delegating authority to institutions"¹⁴² Indeed, because many decisions in FIGOs are taken by consensus—either as a formal requirement or by convention—negotiations become more difficult and may even come to a standstill.¹⁴³ The previous example of trade negotiations is a case in point. The WTO, just like its predecessor, the GATT, did, governs international trade through rules that are unanimously accepted during rounds of negotiations.¹⁴⁴ The initial preponderance of Western industrialized states in the GATT meant that they could arrive at relatively speedy consensual decisions through a "take it or leave it" approach. States such as Brazil, India, and China, which

¹³⁸ As Keohane notes, "[a]fter the mid-1960s, however, U.S. dominance in the world political economy was challenged by the economic recovery and increasing unity of Europe and by the rapid economic growth of Japan." Keohane 1984, 9.

¹³⁹ See Putnam and Bayne 1987; and Penttilä 2003.

¹⁴⁰ In addition to an almost two-digit average annual GDP growth rate since the opening up of its economy in 1978, China integrated into the world economy more fully in the early 2000s, notably through its accession to the WTO in 2001. World Trade Organization n.d.

¹⁴¹ Hale, Held, and Young 2013a, 226–27; Olson 1971, 48; See also Kahler 1992.

¹⁴² Viola 2015b, 21.

¹⁴³ An analysis by Blake and Payton, for instance, shows that, in FIGOs, "formal voting is relatively rare with decisions reached through informal consensus." Blake and Payton 2015, 380.

¹⁴⁴ On consensus voting in the WTO and its effects on trade negotiations, see World Trade Organization n.d.; Tijmes-Lhl 2009; and Gallagher 2007.

joined the WTO in 2001,¹⁴⁵ introduce greater heterogeneity of preferences and force more extensive consideration of demands by developing countries, which they claim to represent.¹⁴⁶ The result is that successful rounds of negotiations similar to those that have taken place in the past are effectively out of reach.

Furthermore, the discrepancy between institutionally embedded influence and de facto distribution of power has grown and represents a challenge to postwar institutions' authority and legitimacy. Rules and procedures in FIGOs are artifacts of the power relations at the time of their creation. Demand for their reform in line with changing economic, political, and demographic realities have forcefully collided with institutional momentum in the postwar institutions.¹⁴⁷ As Keohane notes, "when dissatisfaction arises with established institutions, there is no mechanism for orderly gradual change."¹⁴⁸ Indeed, he explains, "[b]oth power mismatch and authority–legitimacy mismatch seem endemic to world politics except in periods (often following world wars) in which one actor or coalition is hegemonic."¹⁴⁹ Greater actor heterogeneity, in other words, is shaking the (implicit) institutional equilibrium on which FIGOs are founded.¹⁵⁰

IIGOs offer several advantages for coping with changes to the constellation of states in global governance. IIGOs' smaller membership, exclusive character, and higher level of confidentiality can make them a preferred choice for furthering common interests of a select group of like-minded actors.¹⁵¹ In Viola's words, "[t]he consequences [of actor heterogeneity] for governance institutions include a reliance on member-driven institutions and incentives to

¹⁴⁵ World Trade Organization n.d.

¹⁴⁶ E.g., Vickers 2012, 260–62; Zangl et al. 2016, 178–84.

¹⁴⁷ See Zangl et al. 2016; and Vestergaard and Wade 2015.

¹⁴⁸ Keohane and Fioretos 2017, 332.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ikenberry 2001, 199; This implicit equilibrium on which multilateral organizations are built, in fact, extends beyond formal rules and into the informal processes that permeate their work. Stone has shown that multilateral organizations 'really function' by operating according to formal rules most of the time but provide for disproportionate (informal) influence by leading states when the stakes are high. Stone 2011, 7.

¹⁵¹ Viola 2015b, 23; See also Viola 2020.

work within institutions that are more likely to homogenize interests.”¹⁵² Yet informality can also facilitate cooperation among actors with diverging interests. Greater state autonomy and closer control of information in IIGOs, as discussed earlier, renders heterogeneous members less reluctant to explore common ground.¹⁵³ Notably, IIGOs allow states to make critical governance decisions without risking formal lock-in as uncertainty about future relative power is high.¹⁵⁴

Relatedly, IIGOs also play an important mediating function during power shifts.¹⁵⁵ Given their legal and organizational flexibility, they more readily adapt to changing international realities.¹⁵⁶ Since its creation in 1975, today’s G7, for example, has repeatedly expanded and shrunk in response to changing power political constellations and world political events.¹⁵⁷ The creation of the leaders’ level G20 in 2008, integrating incumbent and emerging powers, and its uptake of many issues previously discussed in the G7 similarly exemplify the adaptability of informal intergovernmentalism.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, IIGOs not only orchestrate in and around the multilateral institutional system but also play a key part in its reform process. It was the G20 that, in 2010, arrived at an agreement on reforming IMF quotas and changing voting shares and the composition of the IMF’s Executive Board to the advantage of emerging and developing countries.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵² Viola 2015b, 22.

¹⁵³ Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 211; Kahler 2013, 729.

¹⁵⁴ Vabulas and Snidal 2020, 48; Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 195.

¹⁵⁵ See Vabulas and Snidal 2020; and Prantl 2014.

¹⁵⁶ Vabulas and Snidal 2020, 43.

¹⁵⁷ See Hajnal 2007.

¹⁵⁸ Hajnal 2014, 11–18.

¹⁵⁹ International Monetary Fund 2017.

Changes to Design Feasibility: Transportation and Communications Technologies

In addition to these demand-side factors that drive states' growing use of IIGOs, the literature has highlighted *advances in transportation and communications technologies* as an important supply-side variable. Manulak and Snidal have shown that “the emergence and adoption of new communication technologies increased the feasibility and lowered the cost of informal governance.”¹⁶⁰ FIGOs, they argue, were highly effective at reducing the costs of diplomatic activity in the past. FIGOs' centralization of interactions among states in a “hub-and-spoke” model, where foreign ministry representatives—based in embassies and supported by an international secretariat—negotiate international agreements, minimizes travel and bundles information exchanges between capitals.¹⁶¹ As the costs for transportation and information exchange have fallen, however, this has opened up the option to dispense with a permanent secretariat or headquarters and to more frequently use (informal) organizational designs that structure direct government-to-government engagement.¹⁶² In a similar vein, Abbott and Faude point to technology as a driver of informal institutions, noting that it enables the creation of “low-cost institutions” that can be more easily created, operated, changed, and exited from.¹⁶³ In short, technology has made IIGOs more feasible and cheaper to run—and thus a viable institutional choice where FIGOs fail to address a cooperation problem adequately.

Overall, IIGOs' growing centrality in global governance since the 1970s has been driven by important changes in the scope and depth of cooperation problems as well as by an increase in the number and heterogeneity of key states. At the same time, technological advancements have raised the feasibility of informal institutional designs that encompass frequent travel and cross-border communications instead of a permanent organizational hub-and-spoke model.

¹⁶⁰ Manulak and Snidal 2021, 182.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 188–89.

¹⁶² See *ibid.*, 193–196.

¹⁶³ Abbott and Faude 2020, 7.

Meanwhile, IIGOs like the G-groups complement rather than replace formal organizations. Their centrality stems from their role in crafting major power consensus and orchestrating governance activities by other, typically formalized organizations on many of the most obstinate international issues. This makes IIGO orchestration a new and little-explored frontier for international cooperation research. In the last section, I highlight two key areas of research on that matter.

IIGO Orchestration as a Research Frontier

IIGO orchestration is now arguably of systemic importance to global governance. The G7, the G20, and—to a lesser extent—BRICS, are focal bodies for major powers' attempts at advancing agreement on issues that they fail to resolve in established intergovernmental organizations. The bargains that states strike in these IIGOs—or the failure to do so—frequently form the basis on which organizations like the UN, the IFIs, or the WTO operate.

The orchestrating activities of key IIGOs and the postwar institutional system have become an integrated whole. Formal universal organizations and binding agreements continue to form the backbone of global governance, whether in international trade, global finance, or newer areas such as the mitigation of climate change.¹⁶⁴ Yet, as cooperation problems and the constellation of relevant states have changed, their operation has become intertwined with that of IIGOs. In Prantl's words, "[t]he substantial challenges for liberal institutions to adapt to major shifts in the global distribution of power and to act as effective problem-solvers has led to growing recourse to informal mechanisms for collective action that operate in and around the liberal institutional architecture."¹⁶⁵ IIGOs embed formal multilateralism within parallel

¹⁶⁴ Even as these issue areas are getting crowded by a greater number and variety of international institutions, the WTO (for international trade), the IMF (for global finance), and the UN (for climate change) remain the central organizations around which global governance responses form and through which states make binding commitments, arbitrate disputes, and hold each other accountable.

¹⁶⁵ Prantl 2014, 481.

processes of regular informal negotiations—and orchestration forms the connective tissue between the two.

The rise of IIGOs as orchestrators thus crystallizes as a new and important research frontier for scholars of international cooperation. The trends, identified earlier, that have driven states' reliance on IIGOs continue unabated. IIGOs, we have seen, continue to expand their reach as steering bodies into new fields of critical importance like climate change and global health. They are now extending their work to the vast space of technology governance, where regulation and standards are set to have profound implications for economic welfare and are already at the center of tense geopolitical competition.¹⁶⁶ Yet, even though the field has made great strides in identifying *why* states rely on IIGOs to govern global issues, the mechanics of IIGO orchestration—that is, *how* they orchestrate—remain little explored. Only a few contributions have explicitly inquired into how IIGOs steer—and sometimes create—international regimes. Even fewer have concerned themselves with analyzing how IIGOs developed organizationally to adapt from being crisis management vehicles to being global steering bodies.

Accordingly, two topics stand out as key areas for future research. One area is the *governance logic* of IIGO orchestration, that is, how IIGOs manage their governance relationships with other international institutions. IIGOs' governance relationships with formal universal organizations like the UN, the IMF, or the WHO are particularly salient here. IIGOs depend on universal organizations for governing many pressing issues. Challenges like climate change, financial instability, and emerging technologies are global in scale and entail significant distributive implications. Universal organizations possess the organizational capacity to manage substantive operations like multilateral surveillance. Just as importantly, as independent and

¹⁶⁶ For the 2022 G7 priorities, which include the aforementioned issue areas of climate change, global health, and technology governance, see Group of Seven 2022.

rules-based organizations mandated to serve their membership-at-large, they command the necessary credibility and legitimacy to garner broad international support for globally coordinated policies. In turn, IIGOs facilitate major power agreement on issues that remain intractable in formal settings. They provide political guidance to universal organizations as these adapt to new cooperation problems and power constellations—and thus, as my review has shown, play a part in keeping the formal multilateral system in orderly flux.

Yet IIGO orchestration walks a fine line between complementing and undermining the universal organizations that form the multilateral system's bedrock. When issues are global in scope and distributive conflict is pronounced, solutions agreed in IIGOs are prone to be diluted, changed, or even blocked within universal organizations. On the one hand, this increases the incentives for IIGO members to tighten their grip on universal organizations—formally or informally—and to pass over other states to ensure that their pre-agreed outcomes prevail. On the other hand, exerting control can undermine the perception of universal organizations as independent and rules-based bodies, thereby negatively affecting competencies like credibility and legitimacy that IIGOs require to translate their agreement into effective governance. IIGOs are thus navigating a delicate relationship with universal organizations in which they must balance the requirement for competence with the need to exert control. This renders the logic according to which IIGOs shape international regimes a central puzzle that must be solved to understand contemporary global governance.

Another area is the *organizational foundations* of IIGO orchestration. The consolidation of IIGOs as orchestrators has entailed a significant change in the functional demands placed on them. As noted earlier, IIGO like the G7, the G20, and BRICS were initially created as vehicles for crisis management, covering specific issues in the economic and financial realm. The extension of their mandate to additional issue areas and their role in guiding other international institutions means that these IIGOs now structure varied and multilevel state interactions all year round. In short, even though the implementation of substantive governance activities

usually remains with formal organizations, IIGOs have come to facilitate state interactions well beyond what they were originally designed to support. Moreover, we have seen that scholarship maintains that when choosing IIGOs, states trade functions that support sustained and extensive state interactions, like negotiation stability, for other advantages such as flexibility and speed.¹⁶⁷

In this light, the resilience of IIGOs against formalization is remarkable. It raises new questions for international cooperation scholars about the functions that IIGOs can plausibly provide to support state interactions—without formalization through a permanent secretariat. Because IIGOs provide political guidance to other institutions, their inner workings have repercussions well beyond their immediate organizational boundaries. Vabulas, in fact, cautions that “the G20 has far from eliminated key structural flaws in the system and has perhaps been better at crisis response than crisis prevention,” noting the importance of the “day-to-day coordination of a bureaucracy to manage a plan for the future.”¹⁶⁸ A concrete concern is, in Viola’s words, that “the ad hoc and institutionally undisciplined G20 might exacerbate coordination and overlap problems.”¹⁶⁹ Thus, through the orchestrating role of IIGOs, the relationship between institutions’ design and functions re-emerges as a relevant theme for scholarship and practitioners alike.

In sum, as IIGOs consolidate their centrality in international organization, questions around *how* they orchestrate global governance become increasingly salient. Research on IIGO orchestration can shed light on the logic, promises, and pathologies of “orchestrated multilateralism” as well as the limitations of informal organizational design. Generally, it has the potential to add to the more comprehensive and nuanced picture of international organizational life that the informal governance literature has begun to paint over the past few years. In the

¹⁶⁷ Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 219.

¹⁶⁸ Vabulas 2019, 68.

¹⁶⁹ Viola 2015a, 113.

remainder of the thesis, I present a series of three research articles that contribute—theoretically and empirically—to the study of IIGO orchestration along these lines.

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III.

A Strategic Theory of Regime Design: The Governor's Dilemma and Institutional Differentiation

Abstract Why do states govern through international regimes with overlapping institutions? In this article, I examine regime design through the prism of indirect governance. My starting point is the existence of a fundamental constraint: when states, as governors, enlist institutions, as intermediaries, they face the governor's dilemma, that is, a tradeoff between the competence they can obtain and the control they can exert. Crucially, however, sensitivity to control—or control elasticity—varies with competency type, namely expertise, capacity, credibility, and legitimacy. Against this background, I argue that states can frequently obtain a preferred combination of competence and control by enlisting multiple institutions and differentiating their contributions. Specifically, this differentiation allows states to exploit the variation in control elasticity by setting control individually for the different types of competencies they seek. This argument differs from and complements previous analyses that suggest that states foster regime complexity to erect institutional checks and balances against slack. I illustrate the plausibility of my argument through three short case probes of sovereign debt crisis, anti-money laundering, and chemical weapons elimination regimes. I conclude with a discussion of the broader ramifications of my theoretical argument for international cooperation scholarship.

Institutional overlap has become a common feature of international regimes. Frequently, two or more separate institutions' governance activities intersect in an issue area of international relations.¹ While the resulting regime complexity can be unintentional, it is frequently the result of deliberate decisions by states. Consider a range of regimes governing key international issues:

- When the Euro area governments (Eurogroup) confronted a severe European sovereign debt crisis, they could have opted for a European regime, because its members are financially resourceful and EU institutions had administered dozens of billions of

¹ I base my definition of institutional overlap on Faude and Fuss 2020, 271. Given the article's concern with indirect governance, I focus on institutions with agency. This includes institutions that are formal and informal, centralized and networked, and constituted by state and non-state actors. For a conceptual discussion of institutional overlap, see Hofmann 2011, 103–6.

community lending since the 1970s. Nevertheless, the Eurogroup relied on a troika involving the European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECB), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

- When the Group of Seven (G7) countries sought to step up the countering of money laundering and terrorist financing in the wake of 9/11, they could have doubled down on their brainchild, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), whose network encompassed most of the world's jurisdictions and that had just introduced a stricter compliance mechanism. Instead, the G7 called on the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) to get involved alongside the FATF.
- When UN Security Council (UNSC) members agreed to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons program, they could have relied on a United Nations (UN) mission, as they had done for Iraq in the early 1990s and again in the 2000s. Yet the UNSC endorsed a joint mission of the UN and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

In all these instances, states could have avoided institutional overlap by defaulting to a simpler regime. Why do states govern through regimes with overlapping institutions? And how does the underlying rationale determine the relationship among institutions operating in a regime?

Existing scholarship focuses mainly on strategic interactions among states and institutional adaptability as sources of regime design.² A key theme is that regimes with overlapping institutions result from states' competition for power and influence, for example through regime shifting and institutional proliferation.³ States have also been shown to seek more effective cooperation by shaping regimes through the management of externalities and

² Less widespread approaches to explaining regime patterns consider, for instance, the role of domestic preferences. See, e.g., Van de Graaf 2013.

³ See, e.g., Pratt 2021 on institutional proliferation; and Morse and Keohane 2014 on regime shifting and creation; See also Faude and Parizek 2021; and Faude and Fuss 2020.

spillovers, for instance by integrating (or separating) institutions or pushing for a division of labor.⁴ Furthermore, institutions themselves, especially their path dependencies and ability to adapt to changes such as power shifts, often moderate states' institutional strategies and codetermine regime patterns.⁵ Yet the current focus on strategic state interactions and institutional adaptability is incomplete in relation to understanding design decisions in regimes such as those introduced above. Regarding the governance of the European debt crisis, for instance, Henning has highlighted the importance of states' wariness of institutions' agency and (potentially diverging) preferences for the genesis of institutional overlap.⁶ In other words, existing approaches ignore relationship dynamics between states and institutions as an important causal variable for explaining variation in regime design.

In this article, I propose a theoretical framework that redresses this omission by explaining regime design through the lens of indirect governance. Indirect governance is a fundamental characteristic of regimes where states rely on institutions' competence to govern on their behalf.⁷ The Eurogroup depended on the troika to design and assess economic programs. The G7 relied on the FATF and IFIs to combat money laundering and terrorist financing. And the UNSC entrusted the UN mission and OPCW with overseeing and verifying the destruction of chemical weapons. These regimes exhibit considerable variation in the relationships between parties, ranging from hierarchical delegation to mere orchestration through inducements. Nevertheless, in every instance, states, as governors, enlisted institutions, as intermediaries, to exercise a governance function over their targets, whether they were nongovernmental actors, other governments, or even themselves.

⁴ See, e.g., Gehring and Faude 2014; and Johnson and Urpelainen 2012.

⁵ See, e.g., Kahler 2016; Lipsy 2017; Fioretos 2017; Zangl et al. 2016; and Hanrieder 2015.

⁶ Henning 2019, 23; See also Henning 2017.

⁷ See, e.g., Hawkins et al. 2006a; Nielson and Tierney 2003.

This renders the logic underlying indirect governance central to actors' considerations regarding regime design. Crucially, when states govern indirectly through institutions, they face the so-called *governor's dilemma*: an inherent tradeoff between the competence that a governor can receive from an intermediary and the control that it can exert over the latter.⁸ This dilemma, or constraint—captured by Competence-Control (CC) theory—is inherent to indirect governance in that it spans the full range of relationship modes that appear in regimes, including hierarchical delegation and nonhierarchical orchestration.⁹ Furthermore, CC theory recognizes the availability of multiple intermediaries—or institutions—as an important structural variable.¹⁰ A larger pool of intermediaries increases the probability that a governor finds an intermediary that offers a preferred CC combination.¹¹ Furthermore, the presence of multiple potential intermediaries raises competition among them and increases the credibility of (latent) governor threats to switch.¹²

CC theory is thus a natural theoretical starting point for exploring regime design. But how does the CC tradeoff relate to institutional overlap as an intentional design decision? Recently, scholars have suggested that states mix institutions to foster competition and erect checks and balances, thereby guarding against drift or slack on the part of intermediaries.¹³ However, I argue that regime complexity frequently emanates from an alternate set of considerations. The fundamental challenge that governors encounter when navigating the CC tradeoff does not derive from information asymmetries and related agency drift or slack.¹⁴ Rather, the principal issue is whether and, if so, when to tighten control. I contend that states, in response, enlist institutions not as competing substitutes but as complements, that is, as

⁸ Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 6–7; See also Abbott, Zangl, et al. 2020.

⁹ See Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b; and Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020a.

¹⁰ Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020a, 628–29; Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 19–20.

¹¹ Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 19.

¹² Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020a, 628; Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 20.

¹³ See Biermann and Rittberger 2020; Henning 2019; Moschella 2020; and Hodson 2015.

¹⁴ As Abbott et al. note, '[i]mportantly, the governor's dilemma is based not on information asymmetry, but on power.' Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 4.

primary providers of different competencies. The logic, in that case, is to leverage the availability of multiple intermediaries to fine-tune the level of control for different types of competencies that the governor requires. Therefore, we should distinguish the strategy of what I label *diversification*, aimed at mitigating intermediary drift and slack, from that of *differentiation*, which serves to obtain a preferred combination of competence and control.¹⁵

The differentiation argument builds on the incorporation of the *control elasticity of competency types* as an important factor in states' calculations. CC theory identifies four basic competency types: expertise, capacity, credibility, and legitimacy.¹⁶ Control elasticity captures the varying sensitivity of these competencies to governor control.¹⁷ Albeit the CC tradeoff permeates all types, I specify that intermediaries' ability to provide these different competencies degrades at varying rates in relation to control. For instance, a group of states like the G7 can plausibly rely on a closely controlled forum of regulatory officials to obtain issue-specific expert advice (lower control elasticity). However, this same institutional arrangement will almost certainly fail to lend credibility to the G7's commitments when enlisted as a compliance monitor (higher control elasticity). As in this scenario, governors will frequently require competencies with different control elasticities. In these instances, setting control for individual competencies, rather than globally, can be preferable for the governor. The differentiation of contributions between multiple intermediaries operationalizes this rationale. It breaks the larger governor's dilemma into several smaller CC tradeoffs (one for each intermediary) that the governor can optimize for different competencies it seeks.

¹⁵ This terminology integrates semantically with recent contributions to the study of regime complexes. Henning and Pratt, for instance, conceptualize institutional differentiation as a dimension (or continuum) that captures the degree to which functions performed by institutions vary in a regime. In comparison, in this article, I focus not on dimensions for comparing different regime complexes but on strategies that originate them. More precisely, the choice to diversify or differentiate that I describe produces the score that Henning and Pratt's dimension captures. See Henning and Pratt 2020.

¹⁶ Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020a, 620; Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 3.

¹⁷ More specifically, the control elasticity of competencies captures how the level of competence that an intermediary can provide changes in response to a change in governor control.

Systematically linking indirect governance and the design of regimes contributes to international organization scholarship in several cross-cutting ways. First, the article provides a new perspective on the emergence of international regime complexes. My analysis suggests that indirect governance dynamics play a key role in states' choice to integrate regimes through the creation of institutional overlap and thus to promote complexity in international cooperation. Second, the article expands on existing rationalist accounts of international institutions. Specifically, it highlights institutional overlap and combination as a design vector alongside institutional change and creation where an institution does not satisfy states' requirements. Lastly, the article adds to the field's understanding of the potential and limitations of informality in state cooperation. Amidst institutional gridlock and power shifts, policymakers increasingly look to informal intergovernmental organizations (IIGOs) like the G7 and G20 as governors for critical emerging issues that rely almost entirely on orchestrating other institutions. This makes governor strategies around the CC tradeoff key components of contemporary global governance.

The article proceeds as follows. The next section begins with a brief exposition of the CC tradeoff before discussing the variable control elasticity of competency types. I then develop my theoretical argument, demonstrating the link between the CC tradeoff, states' strategic use of differentiation, and the resulting institutional overlap. Following this, I conduct a plausibility probe of my argument by revisiting the three regimes introduced at the start of this article. I show that despite the variation in issue areas, governors, and intermediaries, states' navigation of the CC tradeoff was a key design determinant in each regime. I conclude with a discussion of the broader ramifications of my theoretical argument for international cooperation scholarship.

Theoretical Background

The Competence-Control Tradeoff

Much of global governance by states is indirect. That is, it happens through institutions like international organizations, regulatory networks, or even nongovernmental entities. The governance relationships between states, as governors, and institutions, as intermediaries, vary from “hard” and contractual to “soft” and voluntary.¹⁸

The same proliferation of institutions that sparks scholarly interest in regime complexes also propels a strand of research that attempts to describe the variety of (indirect) governance relationships that characterize these. Principal-Agent (PA) theory has a long tradition in IR research of explaining the creation and design of international institutions.¹⁹ However, a growing share of governance relationships eludes the concept of delegation, which underpins the relationships described in PA theory.²⁰ Taking the example of IMF involvement in the European sovereign debt crisis regime, its relationship with the Eurogroup is based on neither a conditional grant of authority nor the ability to act on its behalf, which are fundamental qualities of delegation.²¹ Recent contributions to the literature on indirect governance, therefore, describe a broader set of relationship types, including those that are nonhierarchical and do not entail a formal grant of authority, such as orchestration.²² Albeit analogous to delegation in that a governor (or principal) enhances its competence by governing indirectly through an intermediary (or agent), an orchestration relationship, for instance, is characterized by the

¹⁸ Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 11–15; Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020a, 621–24.

¹⁹ See Hawkins et al. 2006a.

²⁰ For an overview, see Snidal and Tamm 2018; For climate governance, see, e.g., Hale and Roger 2014; For civil war, see, e.g., Heinkelmann-Wild and Mehrl 2022; For human rights, see, e.g., Pegram 2015.

²¹ Hawkins et al. define delegation as ‘a conditional grant of authority from a principal to an agent that empowers the latter to act on behalf of the former.’ Hawkins et al. 2006b, 7.

²² See Abbott et al. 2015a; and Abbott et al. 2015b.

voluntary pursuit of a joint goal and “soft” inducements—ideational and material—rather than contractual control.²³

Against this background, Competence-Control (CC) theory distills a fundamental and unifying dynamic of indirect governance that cuts across the variety of governance modes. Indirect governance—for example, states enlisting international institutions—encompasses the so-called *governor’s dilemma*, that is, an inherent tradeoff between the competence that a governor can receive from an intermediary and the control that it can exert over the latter.²⁴ Governors enlist intermediaries to draw on their competence in the form of expertise, capacity, credibility, or legitimacy.²⁵ Because “[t]he governor depends on intermediaries to achieve its goals; this dependence creates a power asymmetry that undermines control.”²⁶ Simultaneously, the governor seeks control over intermediaries, that is, the “power to shape and constrain [their] behavior.”²⁷ Control thus describes the influence that a governor can potentially exert should the intermediary act on divergent preferences after enlistment. In short, competence and control underlie a tradeoff because more competent intermediaries are generally harder to control, and vice versa.²⁸ Closer goal alignment between governor and intermediary will make it more likely that the governor will cede control.²⁹ Nevertheless, the CC tradeoff is a persistent dynamic in indirect governance. Even where goals between the governor and intermediary are aligned initially, control concerns will remain to some degree given that either party may reassess these goals later.³⁰

A central expectation of CC theory is thus that the governor chooses an intermediary that best approximates how much it values competence relative to control. On the one hand,

²³ Abbott et al. 2015b, 719.

²⁴ Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 6–7; See also Abbott, Zangl, et al. 2020.

²⁵ Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020a, 620; Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 3.

²⁶ Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 7.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 6–7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

³⁰ Cf. Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020a, 629–30.

the value that a governor attaches to competence derives from “the ambition of the governor’s goals and its own capability deficits.”³¹ In short, a governor’s demand for competence increases with its competence deficit. Where a governor’s ability to achieve valued ends depends on untainted expert advice and the opportunity to commit credibly to a policy course, for instance, it will be more willing to cede control. In turn, the value that a governor attaches to control increases with “the probability it will lose control over the intermediary, and the severity of the harm such a loss would cause.”³² In other words, a governor’s demand for control is critically determined by expected intermediation losses. Because the potential to cause harm increases with an institution’s independence concerning the provision of competence, so do expected intermediation losses.³³

CC theory is thus a valuable starting point for exploring the linkage between indirect governance dynamics and states’ design of international regimes. CC theory builds on PA theory, but, not least given its origination in recent International Relations scholarship, it incorporates the variety of indirect governance modes that we find in contemporary international regimes. Central to this is its move beyond the traditional focus on information asymmetry towards a focus on power—a concept on which much of our understanding of international politics and governance hinges—to distill the cross-cutting dilemma between competence and control.³⁴ Most importantly, as I detail later, CC theory offers a thorough insight into states’ rationale for choosing particular institutions and overlapping them in regime complexes.

³¹ Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 16–18.

³² *Ibid.*, 18–19.

³³ *Ibid.*, 18.

³⁴ Abbott et al. make this point explicitly, noting that the governor’s dilemma is based ‘not on information asymmetry, but on power.’ *Ibid.*, 5.

Control Elasticity of Competency Types

CC theory puts the tradeoff between competence and control at the center of the governor's choice to enlist intermediaries. Although the literature does not theorize the CC tradeoff through a more fine-grained conceptualization of competence, it distinguishes four elementary *competency types*: expertise, capacity, credibility, and legitimacy.³⁵

Incorporating competency types explicitly into the analysis of the governor's dilemma, I argue, adds important detail to our understanding of governor choice and, by extension, states' decisions shaping regime design. While all competency types are subject to a tradeoff with control, as Abbott et al. observe, empirical studies from a range of governance domains “reveal that the intensity of the tradeoff varies across competencies.”³⁶ In other words, governors face a varying *control elasticity of competency types*.³⁷ The sensitivity of intermediary competencies to governor control depends on the type of competency sought. Some display a higher control elasticity, that is, are more sensitive and the tradeoff with control is steeper. Others show a lower control elasticity and are subject to a tradeoff with competence that is less steep. As I explore later, this varying control elasticity of competencies is a critical variable in the governor's enlistment decisions.

I contend that we can distinguish two competency subsets *within* which ranking is better seen as weak but *between* which we can reasonably assume control elasticity—and thus tradeoff intensity—to differ markedly. The first subset comprises expertise and capacity. *Expertise* is

³⁵ Abbott et al. concretize that they ‘define “competence” to include all of the capabilities intermediaries can potentially contribute to achieving a governor's goals. These include, most importantly, expertise, credibility, legitimacy, and operational capacity.’ Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020a, 620; See also Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 3; Note that a very similar distinction between competency types is also made in earlier IR scholarship applying Principal-Agent theory to international organizations. Hawkins et al., for example, argue that states delegate to international organizations because they ‘sometimes lack technical expertise, credibility, legitimacy, or other resources to make policy on their own.’ Hawkins et al. 2006b, 14.

³⁶ Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 28. Variation in the control elasticity of competency types is empirically observed in studies of indirect governance. However, note that this variation can also be constructed from the theoretical literature, which I refer to in the following discussion.

³⁷ The concept of elasticity is primarily used in economics. Its most prominent application, price elasticity, goes back to Alfred Marshall. See Marshall 1890, vol. 1.

comparatively insensitive to governor control. Here, independence matters most when objective assessment conflicts with political interests. An independent intermediary, of course, has greater leeway to take risks with innovative policy proposals and give unbiased advice that is less anticipatory of governor preferences. Yet a governor can receive sound expertise on even technically sophisticated issues from intermediaries over which it exerts a lot of influence. Similarly, *capacity* deficits can be relatively well addressed by intermediaries that operate under significant influence from the governor. Institutions with the capacity to support substantive operations such as the pooling of assets and risks, for instance to enable joint production (as in the case of CERN),³⁸ command a substantial degree of independence due to the necessity for a robust organizational structure, permanent staff, and a dedicated budget.³⁹ Nevertheless, in many cases, capacity that is needed to enable, for instance, regulatory cooperation or technical assistance may be provided by an institution with less power to resist and thus in a governance relationship in which the governor commands extensive leverage over the intermediary.

Consider the role of the Non-Proliferation Directors Group (NPDG) and the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) in G7 governance. The NPDG's lack of a legal foundation in the form of a charter and its close association with the summit process render it a highly malleable support structure for the governor.⁴⁰ Despite its minimal independence, it counterbalances the G7's critical lack of expert staff and technical grasp of governance problems.⁴¹ The PSI fulfills a similar function but also provides essential organizational capacity to the G7 in its efforts "to establish a more coordinated and effective basis through which to

³⁸ On pooling and joint production as well as their relationship to the independence of international organizations, see Abbott and Snidal 1998, 13–15; On CERN, see European Organization for Nuclear Research 2021.

³⁹ Abbott et al. similarly note that 'strong operational capacity implies strong power to resist.' Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 17.

⁴⁰ On the G7 Non-Proliferation Directors Group, see Group of Seven 2019.

⁴¹ On the role of such government networks, including that on non-proliferation, for the provision of expertise to the G7, see Gstöhl 2007.

impede and stop shipments ... of proliferation concern.”⁴² The PSI not only coordinates but also features a Critical Capabilities and Practices Review Team that develops tools and resources for PSI members to enhance their ability to interdict shipments.⁴³ Despite these roles, the PSI is highly anticipative of governor preferences because the G7 states dominate its main steering committee, the Operational Experts Group.⁴⁴

The second subset includes credibility and legitimacy. Compared to the competencies discussed thus far, intermediaries’ ability to provide credibility or legitimacy degrades rapidly with governor control—they display higher control elasticity. *Credibility* requires the intermediary to be heavily shielded from governor attempts at exerting influence after enlistment. It becomes a salient competency for the governor, for example, when the intermediary exhibits an internal conflict of interest or where its goals are time-inconsistent.⁴⁵ Suppose the governor (or some parties that are part of it) could exert significant influence ex post. In that case, the intermediary could neither provide neutral information about behavior that could strengthen compliance⁴⁶ nor serve as a credible commitment mechanism to hold the governor accountable should it diverge from its original goals.⁴⁷ In a similar vein, the *legitimacy* that an intermediary can provide is highly sensitive to governor control. If the intermediary were perceived to be dependent on a governor that is itself considered illegitimate (or enlistment would not be necessary), the intermediary would rapidly forfeit its own legitimizing capacity that

⁴² The White House, Office of the Press Secretary 2003; For an account of the G7-PSI relationship, see Manulak and Snidal 2021.

⁴³ U.S. Customs and Border Protection 2019; For a detailed account of the PSI, see Manulak 2021.

⁴⁴ Proliferation Security Initiative n.d.

⁴⁵ See Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001, 775–76; and Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 16.

⁴⁶ Frequently, institutions do not engage in enforcement or ‘hard’ punishment of defectors. Yet, monitoring can enhance compliance. For a theoretical exposition, see Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001, 790, who argue that ‘the informational capacities of international organizations to expose states’ behavior can influence the activities of even the most powerful states by imposing international reputational costs or, sometimes, domestic audience costs.’

⁴⁷ On credibility and indirect governance, see, e.g., Bendor, Glazer, and Hammond 2001, 259–60; Miller 2005, 220–23.

the governor seeks.⁴⁸ The tradeoff is thus sharp. If the governor seeks legitimacy and a sense of ownership by parties excluded from its decisions, it must renounce control.

The quest for credibility and legitimacy is one of the reasons why powerful states design multilateral organizations like the UN or IMF so that formal rules constrain their influence.⁴⁹ This renouncement of control is, of course, not absolute. Attempts at informal influence by powerful states also penetrate institutions whose formal rules are designed to avert influence by individual states or groups of states.⁵⁰ The key is that such influence is “discreet enough that targets still perceive the intermediary as an authority in its own right, not as a passive instrument of the (illegitimate) governor.”⁵¹ For instance, in ordinary times, powerful players like the United States and the EU benefit from the IMF precisely because its formal voting rules provide their policy goals with a degree of legitimacy that elicits voluntary cooperation from others.⁵² The UN’s function as an instrument for collective legitimization is grounded in the same logic.⁵³

The takeaway from this discussion is that while the CC tradeoff is a persistent feature of indirect governance, its intensity is contingent on the type of competency that a governor seeks. Where control is high, it risks turning experts into yes-sayers and compliance monitors into poorly disguised whitewashers. However, intermediaries’ ability to provide expertise and capacity is comparatively less affected by governor control. In contrast, intermediaries’ ability to act as a vehicle for credible commitment or legitimize governance activities degrades swiftly with governor control.

⁴⁸ Cf. Abbott and Snidal 1998, 18, who, analogously, note that ‘activities that might be unacceptable in their original state-to-state form become acceptable when run through an independent, or seemingly independent, IO.’

⁴⁹ On the importance of independence for why states choose to cooperate through formal intergovernmental organizations, see Abbott and Snidal 1998.

⁵⁰ For an overview on informal governance in international organizations, see Stone 2013.

⁵¹ Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 17.

⁵² Stone 2011, 11–19.

⁵³ For an account of the use and misuse of legitimization through the United Nations, see Claude 1966.

Overall, CC theory, conceived from the ground up as an integrative approach, offers a useful starting point for systematically exploring the relationship between indirect governance constraints and the pattern of international regimes. While it distinguishes types of competencies, it has not analyzed their differing control elasticity and corresponding implications for the governor's decision to enlist intermediaries. In what follows, I explore this in more detail.

Explaining Regime Design through the Governor's Dilemma

Indirect governance dynamics shape the design of international regimes. I develop this argument by asking the following question: why and how does the CC tradeoff (governor's dilemma) make it rational for states to create institutional overlaps?

I address this question in two steps. First, I start with the conventional account of a governor facing a tradeoff between control and one (abstract) competency. Here, I briefly illustrate existing suggestions that states foster institutional overlap when they are concerned about intermediary slack (*diversification*). Second, I extend the governor's choice to multiple competencies. I show that states can leverage institutional overlap to set control individually for the different types of competencies they seek (*differentiation*). This differentiation strategy cuts to the core of the governor's dilemma as it can allow states to obtain a preferred CC combination. Thus, I argue that differentiation emerges as a key strategy shaping regime design.

The Governor's Choice for One Competency

In the conventional account of the governor's dilemma outlined earlier, a governor chooses to enlist the intermediary that provides a CC combination that is most closely aligned with its requirements. Before moving to the core argument about the rationale for institutional overlap, it is useful to illustrate the governor's choice more formally. To that end, I make several assumptions. First, of course, competence and control are subject to a tradeoff. Second, the

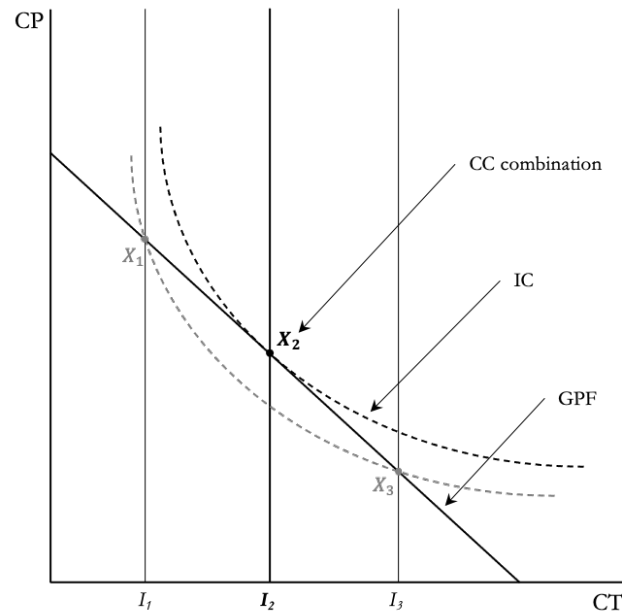
governor is a rational utility maximizer with well-behaved preferences who prefers more to less as both competence and control are “goods” (as opposed to “bads”) and prefers averages to extremes.⁵⁴ Enlistment is unattractive where the competence provided is so minimal that the governor may build its own capabilities instead and retain full control. Inversely, ceding almost complete control would have to yield very large competence benefits. Third, intermediaries are defined and distinguished through their relationship to the governor, that is, the degree of control that the governor can exert over them.⁵⁵ This aligns with the theoretical focus on relationships between actors and controls for individual inherent characteristics.

Figure 1 presents a scenario based on these assumptions. The tradeoff between competence (CP) and control (CT) is represented as a downward sloping *governance possibility frontier* (GPF). If we consider competence and control two “goods” sought by the governor, the GPF defines the available “budget.” In other words, the GPF displays the level of competence that could hypothetically be provided by intermediaries (if available) for a given level of control. For any increase in control, the competence that the governor can obtain decreases, and vice versa. The steeper the slope, the more competence a governor has to sacrifice for a marginal increase in control. I also visualize the governor’s preferences through a set of indifference curves (ICs). The governor is indifferent between CC combinations on an IC. In turn, it prefers those CC bundles that lie on ICs to the upper-right and thus provide it with a higher level of utility. Finally, I also introduce three available intermediaries (I_1, I_2, I_3), that is, levels of control, for illustrative purposes. Graphically, this is represented by three vertical lines, which intersect

⁵⁴ For an introduction to well-behaved preferences, see Varian 2014, 44–48.

⁵⁵ It is useful to think of control as the maximum level of control—or potential control—that a governor could exert. It is conceivable that intermediaries adapt to the CC requirements of the governor. However, this will typically involve a long-term perspective as intermediaries, especially international organizations, are often bound to the status quo.

with the GPF at the corresponding maximum level of competence that the intermediary can provide.⁵⁶



Notes: CP: competence; CT: control; GPF: governance possibility frontier; IC: indifference curve; I_{1-3} : intermediaries 1-3; X_{1-3} : competence-control combinations 1-3.

FIGURE 1. *The governor's choice*

In this scenario, the governor chooses the feasible CC combination on the highest indifference curve. To be a feasible choice in the presence of the governor's dilemma, the CC combination has to satisfy the GPF. In addition, the CC combination must be provided by an available intermediary; that is, it must be located on one of the vertical lines. In the given illustration in Figure 1, X_1 , X_2 , and X_3 represent feasible combinations, given that they lie on the GPF and intermediary lines. The governor chooses CC combination X_2 as it lies on the highest indifference curve. CC combinations X_1 and X_2 respectively entail more competence or

⁵⁶ Alternatively, the intermediaries could be represented by horizontal lines, which are positioned at different levels of competence and intersect with the GPF at the corresponding maximum levels of control that the governor can exert. I choose the representation through control following the observation in the literature that 'a governor's choice of indirect governance mode will often be driven primarily ... by its need for control.' Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020a, 628.

control for the governor but come with a less preferred tradeoff and correspondingly lie on a lower indifference curve.

The availability of alternative intermediaries plays an important structural role. CC theory notes that a larger pool of intermediaries increases the probability that a governor will find an intermediary that offers a preferred CC combination.⁵⁷ For instance, had intermediary I_2 not been available in the above scenario, the governor would have had to settle on a less preferred alternative. Furthermore, CC theory argues that the presence of multiple potential intermediaries can raise competition among them and increase the credibility of (latent) governor threats to switch. Whereas CC theory considers the effect of this competition on competence to be ambiguous, it bolsters the governor's ability to prevent intermediary slack *ex post*.⁵⁸

Accounts from different domains of international cooperation and global governance suggest that the risk of intermediary slack is actively addressed by the governor when designing regimes, albeit not necessarily through replacement threats. In a study of regulatory policymaking in the EU, Biermann and Rittberger argue that governors can form a “control triangle” by enlisting a closely controlled intermediary to “hedge in” a more independent one, thus limiting the latter's pursuit of diverging goals without tightening direct governor control.⁵⁹ When examining the European sovereign debt crisis, Moschella suggests that a governor sometimes enlists multiple intermediaries with diverging preferences so that they keep each other “in check” and tame the pursuit of goals that diverge from the governor's preferred course of action.⁶⁰ In a similar vein, Henning argues that states create institutional overlap in crisis and development finance to limit “drift” away from their preferences.⁶¹ Although the exact

⁵⁷ Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 19.

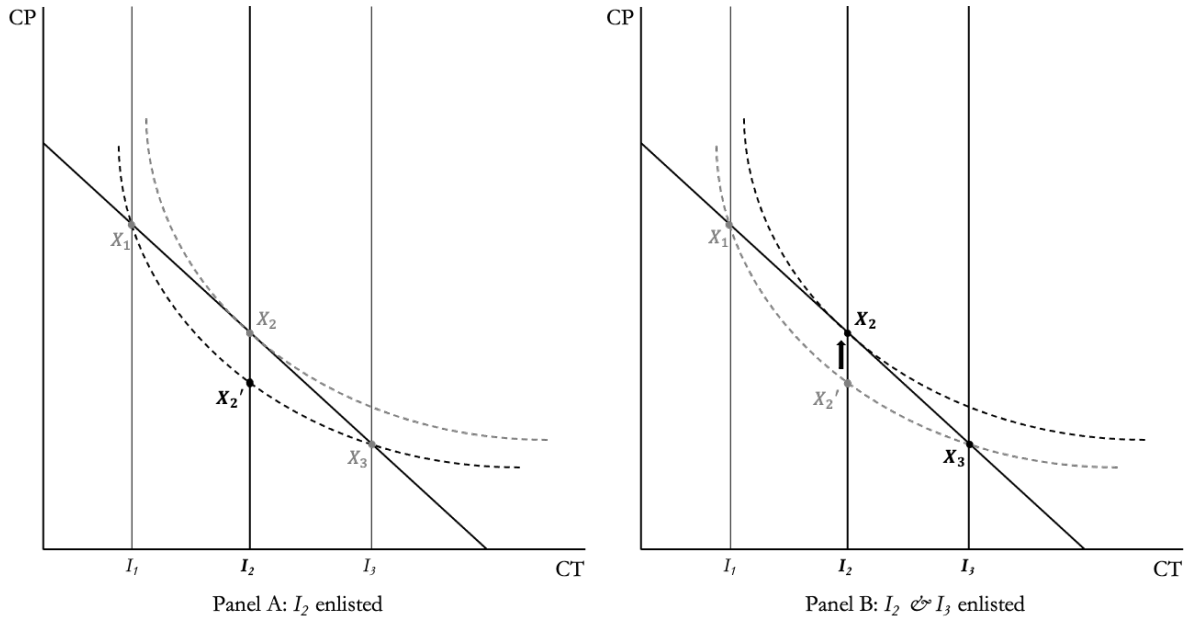
⁵⁸ Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020a, 628; Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 20.

⁵⁹ Biermann and Rittberger 2020, 184–85.

⁶⁰ Moschella 2020, 224.

⁶¹ Henning 2019, 24–25.

mechanisms described in these accounts differ, they have in common that governors *diversify* intermediaries that provide a competency, such as expertise on a regulatory issue or credibility of commitments through the monitoring of economic programs, to guard against slack.



Notes: CP: competence; CT: control; GPF: governance possibility frontier; IC: indifference curve; I_{1-3} : intermediaries 1-3; X_{1-3} : competence-control combinations 1-3. Left panel shows governor's choice before diversification. Right panel shows governor's choice after diversification. Arrow indicates change in CC combination obtained by the governor.

FIGURE 2. *Governor strategy: diversification*

I visualize the basic logic suggested by these analyses in Figure 2 below. In Panel A, as in the previous scenario, the governor enlists intermediary I_2 . However, while this intermediary potentially provides the best CC combination (X_2) for the governor, it now pursues either partially diverging goals (slippage) or minimizes efforts and resources spent on governance activities (shirking), leading to a lower level of utility for the governor (X_2'). In Panel B, the governor, expecting or observing a utility loss that outweighs the costs arising from (partial) duplication of governance activities, creates institutional overlap (co-enlistment of I_3). Through one of the mechanisms described above, for example, threat of replacement or checks and

balances between intermediaries, the engagement of I_3 in the regime disciplines the underperforming intermediary I_2 , that is, reduces slippage or shirking ($X_2' \rightarrow X_2$).

The Governor's Choice for Multiple Competencies

Many international issues that governors want to address are complex and contested. Frequently, therefore, indirect governance remedies governors' deficiencies, not in one competency but some combination of technical expertise, operational capacity, policy credibility, and local legitimacy. In this situation, a governor must choose its preferred intermediary, that is, level of control, with respect to its requirements for several competencies. For example, to govern global tax transparency, the G7 enlisted the OECD for its technical expertise regarding identifying regulatory measures, its operational capacity for coordinating technical assistance, and its credibility with respect to monitoring implementation in participating jurisdictions.⁶² As is the case for many indirect governance relationships, the G7 thus sought multiple competencies to govern this global issue.

Yet this introduces a new complication for the governor's enlistment decision. Because the level of control that the governor can exert relates to the intermediary, the CC combinations for different types of competencies come in a "bundle." Returning to the previous example, after the 2008 global financial crisis, pressure mounted to create a more rigorous tax transparency regime.⁶³ However, the OECD's activities in this space, orchestrated by the G7, were "undermined by the fact that it sought to regulate the activities of jurisdictions who were excluded from its deliberations breaching basic principles of deliberative equality."⁶⁴ This was partially redressed only when the G7 ceded overall control. The OECD Global Forum expanded its membership significantly, included all major emerging economies of the G20, and

⁶² See Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development n.d.; and Wouters and Van Kerckhoven 2011.

⁶³ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2019, 7.

⁶⁴ Eccleston, Kellow, and Carroll 2015, 309.

committed to member participation on an “equal footing.”⁶⁵ As in this case, a governor may be able to adjust its control, for instance, to improve legitimacy. However, the governor cannot usually “split” the governance relationship into two and obtain a higher control over the intermediary for one competency but not the other.

Obtaining multiple competencies through a single intermediary can create a potentially decisive impediment to enlistment if the governor holds highly diverging control preferences for each. In this case, adjusting control in either direction is problematic. In the above example, although some G7 members like the United States had shared “serious concerns” about the direction of the OECD’s tax initiatives in the early 2000s,⁶⁶ the risks of ceding more control were ostensibly outweighed by the prospects of a more effective regime in the wake of the global financial crisis. Compare this to the G20’s post-crisis governance of macroeconomic imbalances. G20 members shared a long-term goal of sustainable economic growth but encountered misalignment of short-term incentives.⁶⁷ This led to a strong requirement for credible and neutral monitoring of national economic policies. At the same time, the G20’s political will to tackle imbalances depended on a high level of “ownership,” that is, control, of the technical formulation of guidelines and the operationalization of the process.⁶⁸ As in this example, a governor sometimes faces strong tension between its requirement to exert close control over some governance activities and related competencies and its willingness to cede it in relation to others.

Where these tensions between CC requirements appear, institutional overlap can be a critical enabler of indirect governance. The G20 “squared the circle” of diverging CC

⁶⁵ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2009, 1; Each member’s voice is weighted equally in the sole decision-making body, the plenary, and the executive body comprises twenty members. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development n.d.

⁶⁶ U.S. Department of the Treasury 2001.

⁶⁷ For a discussion of the cooperation problem structure, see Faruqee and Srinivasan 2012, 498.

⁶⁸ Gnath and Schmucker 2014, 1.

requirements in precisely this way. Its design of the Mutual Assessment Process (MAP) addressed this tension by enlisting two institutions: a closely controlled Framework Working Group (FWG), comprised mainly of senior staff from the finance ministries or central banks, and the IMF, an independent and rules-based intergovernmental organization. The G20 leaders explicitly defined their roles, calling on the FWG “to develop indicative guidelines” and on the IMF to conduct the corresponding assessment “based on the above mentioned indicative guidelines.”⁶⁹ The G20 drew on the FWG as the primary technical adviser on guidelines and as a platform for peer reviews but on the more independent IMF as a credible assessor of members’ national economic policies.⁷⁰ This, of course, meant that both the guidelines, as the basis for assessment, and the subsequent reviews were prone to reflect political rather than just economic considerations. At the same time, this regime design arguably enabled a balance between competence and control that made governance possible in the first place.

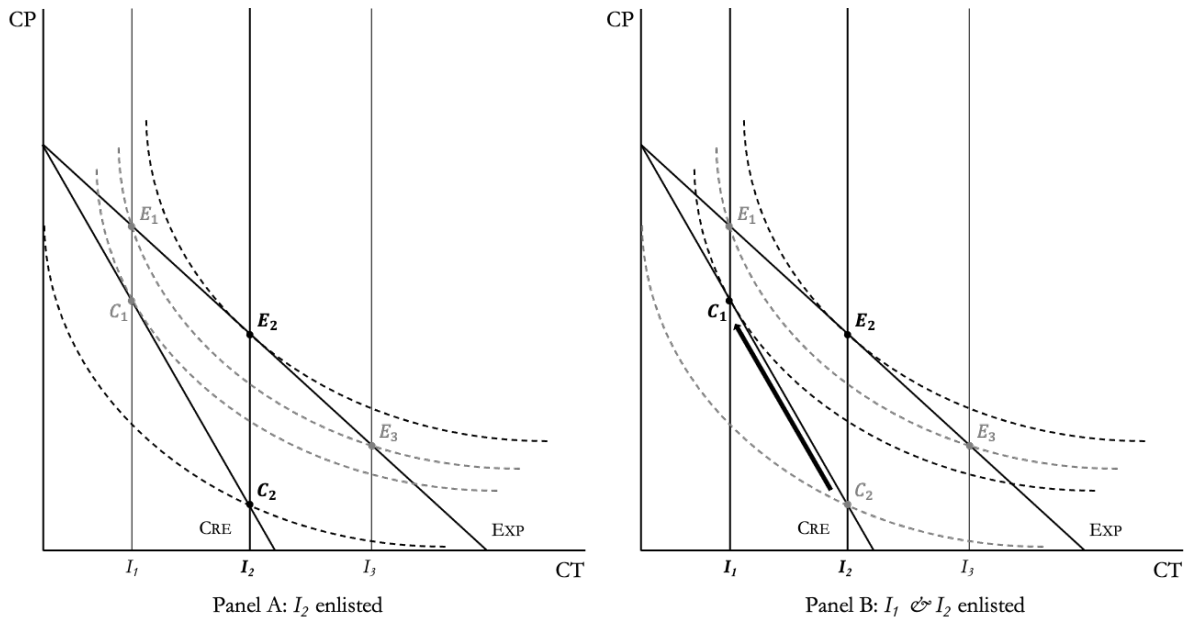
In Figure 3, I extend the previous examples of governor choice to a more general illustration of the governor’s rationale for *differentiation*. As before, the governor’s preferences for competence and control are represented by indifference curves.⁷¹ Similarly, the governor continues to operate in a setting with three available intermediaries (I_1, I_2, I_3), that is, levels of control. However, we now start from a governor that seeks two competencies, here expertise (EXP) and credibility (CRE). Therefore, the governor faces two GPFs, representing the CC tradeoff constraints of each respective competency type (EXP and CRE). In line with the discussion on competency types, where control elasticity is lower, as for expertise, the GPF is

⁶⁹ Group of Twenty 2010.

⁷⁰ This arrangement was possible because the IMF’s surveillance-like activities were classified as technical service under Article V, Section 2 (b) of the Fund’s Articles of Agreement. In this regard, IMF staff clarified that “[t]he essential quality of such services is that they are voluntary for both the Fund and the member: the Fund does not have to perform such services and the member does not have to receive them.’ International Monetary Fund 2009b, 6.

⁷¹ Note that, for simplicity and continuity with previous figures, indifference curves (ICs) are the same for both competency types. Varying ICs for competencies does not affect the argument as the governor may still (or even for that reason) prefer institutional overlap.

flatter. Where the control elasticity is higher, as for credibility, the GPF is steeper. Furthermore, when enlisting an intermediary, the governor obtains a “bundle” of two CC combinations, one on each type-specific GPF. The intermediary over which the governor exerts firm control (I_3) can contribute some level of technical expertise but fails to function as a credible commitment mechanism for the governor, similar to the FWG from the previous example. Graphically, therefore, its vertical line intersects only with one of the GPFs, namely that for expertise. In contrast, more akin to the IMF, the other two intermediaries (I_1, I_2) are sufficiently independent to provide both expertise and credibility. Graphically, their vertical lines intersect with both GPFs.



Notes: CP: competence; CT: control; GPF: governance possibility frontier; IC: indifference curve; EXP: expertise; CRE: credibility; I_{1-3} : intermediaries 1-3; E_{1-3} : expertise-control combinations 1-3; C_{1-3} : credibility-control combinations 1-3. Left panel shows governor’s choice before differentiation. Right panel shows governor’s choice after differentiation. Arrow indicates change in CC combination obtained by the governor.

FIGURE 3. *Governor strategy: differentiation*

In the scenario represented in Figure 3, the governor can obtain its preferred (feasible) CC combination for each competency only if it enlists multiple intermediaries. If, as shown in Panel A, the governor continues to enlist the same intermediary as previously (I_2), that is, at one

level of control, the governor obtains the best feasible CC combination for expertise (E_2). However, it receives a CC combination for credibility (C_2) that lies on a lower indifference curve than that which could have been provided by a different intermediary (C_1). In other words, by enlisting only one intermediary, the governor trades credibility for additional control that it values less. The same problem holds vice versa. If the governor enlists the intermediary (I_1), which provides the preferred CC combination for credibility, it cedes a more-than-preferred level of control for expertise (E_1). The closely controlled intermediary (I_3), as we have seen, fails as a useful commitment mechanism. In short, none of the intermediaries can optimize the governor's overall utility. In contrast, when enlisting two intermediaries, the governor can set control individually for each competence.⁷² Panel B illustrates the governor's rational decision to enlist two intermediaries. The intermediary under closer control by the governor (I_2) provides expertise only (E_2). Analogously, the governor leverages the other intermediary's higher independence (I_1) for credibility only (C_1) and thus obtains a CC combination on a higher indifference curve.⁷³

Overall, this theoretical discussion has shown that indirect governance constraints can incentivize states to intentionally design regimes with institutional overlaps. Whereas previous analyses have focused on intermediation slack as a rationale for combining institutions, I have argued that it will sometimes be rational for states to enlist institutions, not as competitors (*diversification*) but as complements (*differentiation*), that is, as primary providers of alternate

⁷² Evidently, the idea of a clear-cut separation of competencies is an analytical vehicle. In a more practical sense, the argument is that the governor differentiates between several institutions as *primary* suppliers of certain types of competencies. The case studies in this article illustrate this.

⁷³ Note that intermediary competence is not endogenous to the governor's menu of (institutional) choices. In this illustration, the assumption is that the credibility C_1 that a governor would forego by enlisting only I_2 is the same independently of whether it chooses not to enlist I_1 or whether I_1 is not available in the first place. In more formal terms then, it is assumed that $U_{CRE}(\text{Enlisting } I_2 | \text{ Not Enlisting } I_1) = U_{CRE}(\text{Enlisting } I_2 | I_1 \text{ Not Available})$. This assumption aligns with CC theory, where an intermediary's independence from the governor defines the former's ability to provide a competence. However, it is conceivable that the non-enlistment of an available intermediary affects the perception of credibility in a regime. Future studies may consider this as an extension to the present analysis.

competencies. The difference in control elasticity between competencies like expertise and credibility is a key factor for this. It implies that states' preferred combination of competence and control will frequently differ between the competencies sought. This makes it a useful strategy for states to differentiate contributions between institutions and thus set control for individual competency types rather than globally.

Table 1 provides an overview of the logics of institutional overlap. In practice, institutions are unlikely to ever fully compete or complement each other when governing a common issue. Notably, diversification and differentiation are not mutually exclusive and may be employed jointly. A state may, for instance, differentiate the role of institutions but foster competition for some governance activities where it is concerned about slack. In the next section, I examine three different regimes to probe the plausibility of my argument about the link between indirect governance dynamics and regime design.

TABLE 1. *Summary of governor strategies*

		Similarity of competencies provided	
		<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
Number of intermediaries enlisted	<i>One</i>	Conventional	
	$\geq Two$	Differentiation	Diversification

Case Probes

In the introduction to this article, I pointed to three regimes in which states deliberately created institutional overlap. These regimes feature different governors—the Eurogroup, the G7, and the UNSC—governing a diverse range of issues: a sovereign debt crisis, anti-money laundering and the countering of terrorist finance, and the elimination of chemical weapons. I now return to these cases to illustrate the broad empirical relevance of indirect governance dynamics, and

specifically the logic of *differentiation*, for regime design.⁷⁴ Given the necessarily condensed treatment of each case, I focus on three observations to illustrate the plausibility of my argument. Specifically, I examine whether a) a default regime existed b) that could not accommodate a governor's conflicting preferences for competence and control, and c) was thus subject to a design change through deliberate institutional overlap that exposes the logic of differentiation.⁷⁵

Case Probe 1: The European Sovereign Debt Crisis Regime

Default Regime

In late 2009, a sovereign debt crisis began to take hold in Greece, and subsequently in four additional countries in the Euro area.⁷⁶ These crises posed a threat to one of the core pillars of European integration, namely the common currency.⁷⁷ The default regime for the Euro area states (Eurogroup) for dealing with the emerging sovereign debt crisis was a European one, with the European Commission (EC) and the European Central Bank (ECB) at its core. Indeed, as the Greek sovereign debt crisis began to unfold in early 2009, the EC took over the lead in the crisis management. As Lipsky, then acting IMF managing director, recalls, “as Greek markets began to collapse, the decision was taken to keep the IMF out. The Commission was going to handle the situation all by itself.”⁷⁸

Yet the so-called troika, composed of the EC, the ECB, and the IMF, soon came to form the core of the sovereign debt crisis regime that provided financial assistance and managed the recovery of debt-ridden countries. European states' first clear move towards enlisting the

⁷⁴ On the probing of theoretical propositions through illustrative case studies, see Levy 2008, 6–7; Eckstein 1975, 108–10; On selection on the independent variable for non-comparative case studies, see Levy 2008, 8.

⁷⁵ Just as plausibility probes do not serve to conclusively test a theoretical argument, they also do not intend to eliminate alternative explanations. The more limited goal is to show that we have good reason to believe that existing explanations do not capture *one* (arguably important) causal factor of regime design.

⁷⁶ Pisani-Ferry 2014, 3–18.

⁷⁷ See Moravcsik 2012.

⁷⁸ Dijsselbloem 2019, 79.

IMF came in February 2010, when the EU heads of state and government issued a joint statement of support for the Greek government's stability program targets and referenced the involvement of the IMF alongside the EC and the ECB.⁷⁹ When, in March 2010, the decision was made that Eurozone states' bilateral loans would come "[a]s part of a package involving substantial International Monetary Fund financing,"⁸⁰ this was no less than a "surprising U-turn."⁸¹ Why did the Eurogroup create institutional overlap and complexity by involving a non-European institution, the IMF, and effectively making it part of European monetary policy?

Governor Preferences

A key reason for this U-turn was the tension faced by the Eurogroup between the requirements to retain European control over monetary policy and the need to address serious credibility deficits. While it has been opined that the EU's lack of experience with lending supranationally and on a comparable scale was a driver of IMF involvement, others assert that neither expertise nor capacity bottlenecks played a major role for one of the world's most capable bureaucracies.⁸² As a matter of fact, the EU institutions were no stranger to lending programs, having lent to community members as early as the 1970s.⁸³ Moreover, "[g]iven the availability of ample resources at the euro area level," it would have been "technically and financially possible to expedite the creation of an official lending framework."⁸⁴ Indeed, the legal restrictions on

⁷⁹ European Council 2010.

⁸⁰ Euro Area Member States 2010.

⁸¹ Bastasin 2015, 167–68.

⁸² Compare, e.g., Lütz and Kranke 2014, 316, opining that '[t]he EU is not nearly as experienced a lender as the IMF'; with Henning 2019, 33, asserting that '[t]he European governments had the resources, personnel and analytical capacity to design financial rescue programmes themselves.'; Irrespective of how one assesses the EU institutions' initial competence deficiencies, they shrank noticeably soon after the crisis onset. As David Lipton, First Deputy Managing Director of the IMF observed, 'there was a process of them gearing up, staffing up and getting experience.' Dijsselbloem 2019, 80.

⁸³ See Horn, Meyer, and Trebesch 2020; See also Horn, Reinhart, and Trebesch 2020.

⁸⁴ Corsetti, Erce, and Uy 2020, 671.

bailouts were circumvented through a new loan facility at record speed.⁸⁵ The first program for Greece already involved a large majority of European financing.⁸⁶

Much more evident was the deficiency in credibility that the Eurogroup sought to address. IMF involvement is frequently presented as a creditor strategy to ensure “toughness” alongside a “softer” EC with pro-integrationist goals.⁸⁷ However, Eurogroup countries, including creditors, were pursuing a pro-integrationist aim themselves, aspiring to ultimately safeguard the common currency as a hard-fought-for pillar of European integration. Furthermore, a case is to be made that large creditors like Germany and France would have been less restrained in imposing their preferences in a purely European crisis management regime. That the Commission had “enjoyed limited success,”⁸⁸ in the IMF’s words, with enforcing the preventive Stability and Growth Pact, was, in the eyes of many observers, due to the EC’s differential treatment of these very member states.⁸⁹ In short, the more fundamental issue was that the Commission was very much “an agent of the Eurogroup,”⁹⁰ and, therefore, limited in its ability to hold the governor to account.

In contrast, the IMF could act as a credible monitor of economic (as opposed to political) priorities given its greater independence from Eurogroup states, distinct organizational

⁸⁵ Article 125(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) states that member states ‘shall not be liable for or assume the commitments ... or public undertakings of another Member State.’ Furthermore, Article 123(1) of the TFEU fixes that between the ECB and member states, ‘[o]verdraft facilities or any other type of credit facility ... shall be prohibited, as shall the purchase directly from them ... of debt instruments.’ Conference of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States 2012, art. 125(1) and 123(1); However, by the time that the IMF approved the Stand-by-Arrangement in May 2010, European states had already coordinated a bilateral loan of €80 billion (totaling €110 billion jointly with the IMF). European Commission 2010.

⁸⁶ See Euro Area Member States 2010.

⁸⁷ As Pisani-Ferry et al. note, ‘[i]ts [the EC’s] role in the Troika could create a conflict of interest with its normal and much more encompassing role of “guardian of the treaty”.’ Pisani-Ferry, Sapir, and Wolff 2013, 122; Tallberg further observes that ‘[t]here is near consensus in the literature on European governance that the preferences of the Commission ... are best described as highly pro-integrationist.’ Tallberg 2003, 28.

⁸⁸ International Monetary Fund 2013, 31.

⁸⁹ See, e.g., The Economist 2003; Panagiotare, in fact, argues that the Commission’s notice to Greece asking it to reduce its excessive deficit in the years prior lacked credibility precisely because ‘[t]he discipline of the Stability and Growth Pact was already proving ineffective, particularly after the way Germany and France had been let off the hook back in 2003.’ Panagiotarea 2013, 108; Note, however, that the Commission did successfully go to court against the Council decision to loosen the deficit rules. European Court of Justice 2004.

⁹⁰ Pisani-Ferry, Sapir, and Wolff 2013, 121.

mission, and rules-based operations. In the words of the IMF's European Department Director, the IMF found the Eurogroup's political compromises "difficult to reconcile with [its] rules-based system and ... need to apply uniform standards across [its] membership."⁹¹ Indeed, the IMF became increasingly assertive on the effects of rapid fiscal adjustment, which it considered to hamper economic growth, and the need for debt relief, both of which were politically problematic for the Eurogroup creditor states in particular. Accordingly, as early as 2013, IMF staff openly criticized that "[a]n upfront debt restructuring would have been better for Greece although this was not acceptable to the euro partners"⁹² and that "the EC, with the focus of its reforms more on compliance with EU norms than on growth impact, was not able to contribute much to identifying growth enhancing structural reforms."⁹³

The Eurogroup states, including creditors, had considerable concerns about sharing control over a core policy area with an institution like the IMF, in which the United States, Japan, and four emerging market economies are among the top ten quota shareholders.⁹⁴ Divisions among Eurogroup members and hesitations within their administrations evidence this. At first, French President Nicolas Sarkozy strongly opposed any participation of the IMF altogether on the grounds that "such a step would deliver the euro into the hands of the Americans."⁹⁵ Similarly, then-Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble advocated for a "European Monetary Fund," not least "because a central policy area, namely monetary policy, has been pooled,"⁹⁶ thus making IMF interference in Greece an interference in a core aspect of European policy more generally.

⁹¹ Thomsen 2019.

⁹² International Monetary Fund 2013, 28.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁹⁴ International Monetary Fund 2021a.

⁹⁵ Bastasin 2015, 154.

⁹⁶ Schäuble 2010.

The skepticism about ceding control to the IMF was only overcome due to the overriding requirement for a credible commitment to program conditionality that the EU institutions could not provide to a similar degree. Schäuble came to the conclusion that it was better to involve the IMF because it “was seen as responsible, reliable, and neutral in the way it interpreted the figures” and “does not pull its punches when it comes to exposing the need for reforms in these countries.”⁹⁷ France finally agreed to the IMF’s involvement on similar grounds.⁹⁸ Overall, policymakers came to share “a profound scepticism on the capacity of euro area institutions to deal with any acute crisis without bending to political pressures.”⁹⁹ As Thomas Wieser, former President of the Eurogroup Working Group, put it: “The design and implementation of a decent adjustment programme simply needs an outside, neutral, and more or less independent institution.”¹⁰⁰

Overlap and Differentiation

The Eurogroup mitigated the tension between retaining as much European control as possible over a core policy area and remedying its credibility deficit through *differentiation*: It enlisted the IMF alongside the EU institutions but increasingly sought to constrain the former’s function to that of a credible monitor.

From the start, the Eurogroup had looked to the IMF as such a monitor. The agreement on the Greek Loan Facility merely invited the EC to report on compliance.¹⁰¹ This differed substantially from the EC’s role as a monitor of conditions attached to balance of payment support extended to non-Euro area EU members.¹⁰² In fact, “the contract’s openness on this point allowed euro area members to draw on the surveillance of both the Commission and IMF

⁹⁷ Dijsselbloem 2019, 79–80.

⁹⁸ Isenson 2010.

⁹⁹ Corsetti, Erce, and Uy 2020, 8.

¹⁰⁰ Dijsselbloem 2019, 81.

¹⁰¹ Hodson 2015, 578.

¹⁰² Ibid.

staff when it came to the disbursement of European loans to Greece.”¹⁰³ In practice, “the debt sustainability assessment prepared by the Commission and the IMF’ informed decision-making in the Eurogroup.”¹⁰⁴

Very quickly, the Eurogroup took steps to ensure that the design and implementation of programs could be undertaken independently of non-European contributions if necessary. As soon as May 2010, in an extraordinary meeting, the EU’s Economic and Financial Affairs Council decided to create two new mechanisms: The European Financial Stability Mechanism (EFSM) and the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF).¹⁰⁵ The EFSF was constituted as a temporary special purpose vehicle and operated under the constraints of Article 136 of the TFEU, which was only amended in March 2011.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, it constituted a fundamental transformation in the way that the Euro area members were able to finance crisis assistance. It went beyond the granting of bilateral loans organized under the loan facility created for the first Greece program and “multilateralized” lending through (primarily) the Eurogroup’s guarantees for market financing.¹⁰⁷

Whereas the IMF remained a financial guarantor of the Eurozone safety net at that point,¹⁰⁸ its role shrank more and more to that of an independent assessor insulated from the intricate political dynamics of the Eurogroup. For an institution like the IMF, which generally acts as sole or majority lender, its minority lending in the first program already represented an “awkward situation.”¹⁰⁹ But after the second agreement for Greece, run through a new European facility and with an even more reduced IMF share, the *Financial Times* opined that “[t]he IMF has been wheeled into the eurozone bailouts over the past 18 months to provide a

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Eurogroup 2011.

¹⁰⁵ Council of the European Union 2010.

¹⁰⁶ European Council 2011.

¹⁰⁷ Corsetti, Erce, and Uy 2020, 8–9.

¹⁰⁸ The EFSM and EFSF supplied the largest portion of the €750 billion safety net for the Eurozone but, with funds of up to €250 billion, the IMF remained a critical financial guarantor. European Commission 2011.

¹⁰⁹ Pisani-Ferry, Sapir, and Wolff 2013, 107.

minority of the money, but a majority of the policy credibility.”¹¹⁰ IMF insiders had an acute sense of the risks that this brought for the Fund. Morris Goldstein, who had been Deputy Director of the IMF’s Research Department for almost a decade, warned that such a junior role for the IMF “could create a very dangerous precedent.”¹¹¹ Observers already thought in 2011 that “[i]n theory, if the Franco-German plan works and the EU is going to set the rules as well as provide the money, there may be little future role for the IMF.”¹¹² But this underestimated the importance that the Eurogroup, and certainly Germany and France, attached to the policy credibility provided by the IMF.

The decision to establish the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) cemented the IMF’s relegation to this role as credibility provider. The final version of the treaty, which was signed in February 2012 and entered into force in September that year, introduced the ESM to replace the EFSM and the EFSF.¹¹³ However, the use of the terms in the treaty reflects the Eurogroup’s balancing act between strengthening the role of (better controlled) EU institutions in future crisis responses and the strong incentive to retain the IMF because of its unique credibility as an independent outsider. On the one hand, the treaty states that the “ESM will cooperate very closely with the International Monetary Fund (‘IMF’) in providing stability support.”¹¹⁴ On the other hand, the ESM prepares for a narrow role of the IMF. The treaty, as Henning remarks, “leaves the door open to an ESM program that does not include the IMF.”¹¹⁵ In brief, “the ESM Treaty looks to the IMF in this context not as a co-contributor to financial support programmes” but as an intermediary “that will work alongside the Commission and the ECB to monitor the conditions attached to European financial support.”¹¹⁶ It comes as no surprise,

¹¹⁰ Beattie 2011.

¹¹¹ Hughes, Beattie, and Hope 2010.

¹¹² Beattie 2011.

¹¹³ Euro Area Member States 2012.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 8.

¹¹⁵ Henning 2017, 103.

¹¹⁶ Hodson 2015, 579.

therefore, that in 2015, despite a dedicated international organization in the form of the ESM and the lack of any financial contribution by the IMF to the third economic program for Greece, the Eurogroup insisted that it “considers the continued programme involvement of the IMF as indispensable.”¹¹⁷

Overall, the case of the European sovereign debt crisis regime underscores the role of regime design in mitigating states’ conflicting requirements between competence and control. The IMF’s involvement redressed a deficit in credibility that was significant in the heated political environment of the crisis. At the same time, the Eurogroup carefully differentiated the contributions of this less controlled outside institution, enlisting the IMF as a vehicle for credible policy commitments while actively moving towards a regime that European institutions could otherwise sustain. In this way, institutional overlap and differentiation of competencies became a central feature in the management of the sovereign debt crisis.

Case Probe 2: The Anti-Money Laundering Regime

Default Regime

Illicit flows of money, especially those related to narcotics, entered the agenda of the G7 states in the late 1980s.¹¹⁸ At the 1989 Paris summit, the G7 set up a temporary task force for technical deliberations on how to tackle money laundering,¹¹⁹ the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).¹²⁰ As the FATF’s initial mandate ended in April 1990, it released the so-called *Forty Recommendations* as a reference for advancing the fight against money laundering.¹²¹ The G7 retained the FATF and transformed it into a more resourceful international body.¹²² Its mandate has since been to

¹¹⁷ Eurogroup 2015.

¹¹⁸ Scherrer 2009, 15.

¹¹⁹ The IMF defines money laundering and terrorist financing in the following way: ‘Money laundering is the processing of assets generated by criminal activity to obscure the link between the funds and their illegal origins. Terrorism financing raises money to support terrorist activities.’ International Monetary Fund 2021b.

¹²⁰ Group of Seven 1989.

¹²¹ See Financial Action Task Force 1990.

¹²² Financial Action Task Force n.d.

protect market integrity globally by promoting and monitoring the implementation of the Forty Recommendations and its subsequent amendments.¹²³ For a decade, the anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) regime was almost single-handedly built by the FATF, a brainchild of the G7 and especially of the United States.¹²⁴

However, in the early 2000s, a complex of several overlapping international institutions came to form the core of the AML/CFT regime. In the wake of the September 11 (9/11) terrorist attacks on the United States, AML/CFT had again become a priority concern for the G7.¹²⁵ The G7 could have doubled down on the FATF, whose network by then encompassed most of the world's jurisdictions and that had just introduced a more robust compliance mechanism, the Non-Cooperative Countries and Territories (NCCT) framework.¹²⁶ However, in addition to pursuing the anchoring of FATF standards in UN resolutions,¹²⁷ the G7 began to orchestrate an institutionally more complex regime, pushing strongly for the IMF and the World Bank to get involved in AML/CFT activities alongside the FATF.¹²⁸

Governor Preferences

The decision of the G7 to create an overlap between the mandates of the FATF and the IFI was rooted in the divergence of two imperatives: on the one hand, to retain the considerable control over the AML/CFT regime that the FATF had afforded the G7, and, on the other hand, to remedy the blatant deficit in the regime's legitimacy from the perspective of many states who were key governance targets but largely relegated to rule taking.

¹²³ Financial Action Task Force n.d.

¹²⁴ See Nance 2018.

¹²⁵ Gardner 2007, 325–26; Krisch 2014, 21–22.

¹²⁶ Financial Action Task Force n.d.

¹²⁷ For instance, in 2005, UN Security Council Resolution 1617 '[s]trongly urge[d] all Member States to implement the comprehensive, international standards embodied in the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) Forty Recommendations on Money Laundering and the FATF Nine Special Recommendations on Terrorist Financing,' United Nations Security Council 2005, 3–4.

¹²⁸ The G7 finance ministers, in 2002, for example, 'urge[d] the IMF and World Bank to begin conducting integrated and comprehensive assessments of standards to combat money laundering and financing of terrorism.' Group of Seven 2002.

The FATF came to life as an attempt by the United States and G7 members to assume control over and move ahead on a topic that was highly contentious internationally. One year before the creation of the FATF, in 1988, the UN had introduced the first international definition of money laundering in the Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Vienna Convention).¹²⁹ However, the inclusion of money laundering was highly controversial, so much so that, as Nance reports, one UN employee stated that he “would rather have [his] teeth pulled out than to sit through another one of those negotiations.”¹³⁰ After ten years of negotiation, the United States and other G7 states had been unable to exert sufficient influence in the UN to move towards an AML/CFT regime that could live up to the rapidly expanding international financial flows. Against this background, as illicit financial flows became a key national security concern in the early 2000s, the G7 had every reason to strengthen, rather than cede, control over the AML/CFT it had built.

However, whereas the FATF had made significant strides in developing and diffusing AML/CFT standards, the regime’s legitimacy deficit in the view of many nonmembers developed into an acute impediment to effective global governance. Since 2000, the FATF had issued the so-called blacklist under the NCCT framework.¹³¹ The NCCT framework threatened countries that did not comply with the FATF’s recommendations with naming and shaming through explicit identification and even the application of countermeasures.¹³² In addition, some criteria in the NCCT framework went beyond the FATF’s Forty Recommendations and imposed higher requirements on those that were not core members of the organization.¹³³ Levi and Gilmore underscore the legitimacy dimension of the NCCT framework, noting that “[t]his plainly represented a cultural shift, in trying to achieve results from multilateral efforts without

¹²⁹ United Nations Economic and Social Council 1988.

¹³⁰ Nance 2018, 114.

¹³¹ Financial Action Task Force n.d.

¹³² Financial Action Task Force 2000, 6–8.

¹³³ Levi and Gilmore 2002, 104.

first or afterwards requiring global consensus.”¹³⁴ The more the FATF-centered regime closed in on non-compliant countries, the more legitimacy stood out as a deficit.

This tension between competence and control also lay at the heart of the G7’s seemingly contradictory behavior. In the wake of 9/11, the G7, and particularly the United States, stepped up its pressure concerning universalization of FATF recommendations.¹³⁵ Simultaneously, it suspended its NCCT framework, which it had established just one year earlier and which was arguably the organization’s most effective (coercive) tool for improving compliance.¹³⁶ Examining this contradiction, Hülse finds that “[t]he FATF reacted by withdrawing the blacklist and also by engaging in various legitimacy practices, because even club organisations need legitimacy if they want to achieve results.”¹³⁷ The G7 was confronted with the diverging requirements of increasing legitimacy—a competence the FATF could not supply—while retaining control through a regime centered around an exclusive club-style organization.

Thus, legitimacy was not the only reason for the G7’s call for more expansive IFI participation in the AML/CFT regime, but it was arguably the most important one. The active involvement of the IFIs would bring additional expertise and capacity to a regime, where assistance with and monitoring of standards implementation globally is highly resource intensive. Nevertheless, some observers have gone as far as to argue that the involvement of the IFIs was little more than an attempt to “routinize, professionalize and to some extent depoliticise” the body’s activities.¹³⁸ What made the IFIs crucial from the perspective of the G7, Reuter and Truman emphasize, was that “[t]hey are universal organizations, compared to the self-appointed FATF club, with well-earned reputations for competence and integrity.”¹³⁹ In

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Gardner 2007, 325–26.

¹³⁶ See Eggenberger 2018; and Morse 2019.

¹³⁷ Hülse 2008, 459.

¹³⁸ Levi 2007, 172, quoted in Oliveira 2018, 161.

¹³⁹ Reuter and Truman 2005, 58.

short, their greater independence and universal character made the IFIs valuable complements to the club-style FATF, which struggled to endow the AML/CFT regime with sufficient legitimacy globally.

Overlap and Differentiation

The G7, accordingly, expanded the regime to include the IFIs but carefully *differentiated* their contributions. After an initial pilot program, in 2002, the G7 finance ministers jointly “urge[d] the IMF and World Bank to begin conducting integrated and comprehensive assessments of standards to combat money laundering and financing of terrorism.”¹⁴⁰ At the same time, they very clearly called on the FATF (and only the FATF) “to identify countries for follow-up assessment and technical assistance, by the IMF, the World Bank, and the United Nations.”¹⁴¹

These calls by the G7 are reflected in the design of the regime. The FATF remains the principal body for technical deliberations and the setting and updating of AML/CFT recommendations.¹⁴² It also continues to be the operational platform that advances these as the worldwide gold standard.¹⁴³ To that end, it draws on a professional staff and experts that support the work of the FATF membership as well as its global network at large.¹⁴⁴ This global network has continuously been expanded through the FATF-style regional bodies (FSRBs), the latest of which was recognized by the FATF in 2015.¹⁴⁵ FSRBs reach over 200 jurisdictions and require that their members adopt the FATF recommendations as a baseline criterion for membership.¹⁴⁶ Simultaneously, by keeping the core membership small, the FATF itself remains firmly in the

¹⁴⁰ Group of Seven 2002.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Financial Action Task Force 2019, 1.

¹⁴³ Financial Action Task Force n.d.

¹⁴⁴ Financial Action Task Force n.d.

¹⁴⁵ The Task Force on Money Laundering in Central Africa (GABAC) obtained observer status at the FATF in February 2012 and was recognized as an FSRB by the FATF in October 2015. U.S. Department of State 2016.

¹⁴⁶ Financial Action Task Force n.d.

orbit of the G7.¹⁴⁷ So much so, in fact, that an IFI official lamented that the G7's influence in the FATF is the source of "a lot of tension."¹⁴⁸

The IFIs, in turn, have been enlisted principally to conduct assessments of compliance with the FATF's recommendations. The IMF describes its involvement in the AML/CFT regime after 9/11 as follows:

Within about a year, the Fund was already actively at work assessing member countries' compliance with the international standard developed (and subsequently fundamentally revised) by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), as well as providing technical assistance on how to improve AML/CFT regimes.¹⁴⁹

The FATF continues to engage in monitoring the compliance of jurisdictions. However, reviews of countries that are not FATF members were partially transferred to the IMF and the World Bank.¹⁵⁰ Since 2009, the IMF's capacity development in AML/CFT has been co-financed through a voluntary trust fund launched as a multidonor initiative supported almost exclusively by FATF core members.¹⁵¹

The differentiation between the FATF as a standards setter and the IFIs as co-implementers and legitimizers did not come without tension. Gardner notes that "IMF and World Bank officials ... expressed their desire to focus on capacity building rather than 'naming and shaming',"¹⁵² which had been key to the FATF's "blacklist," and they were generally "uncomfortable with responsibilities linked to law enforcement."¹⁵³ Indeed, many IMF Directors voiced that this would risk "jeopardizing the cooperative nature of the Fund's relations with its members and the support of the membership for AML/CFT."¹⁵⁴ As Peter

¹⁴⁷ By 2021, FATF membership comprised 37 member jurisdictions and two regional organizations. Financial Action Task Force 2021.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with IFI official, quoted in Oliveira 2018, 162.

¹⁴⁹ International Monetary Fund n.d.

¹⁵⁰ Jakobi 2015, 400.

¹⁵¹ The two states that contributed but were not core FATF members were Qatar and Kuwait. International Monetary Fund 2009a.

¹⁵² Gardner 2007, 339.

¹⁵³ Reuter and Truman 2005, 58.

¹⁵⁴ International Monetary Fund 2004.

Reuter and Edwin M. Truman, Assistant Secretary of the US Treasury for International Affairs when the NCCT came to life, explain, “[s]ince 2002, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund *have been drawn, reluctantly, into monitoring compliance* with the global AML standards (own emphasis).”¹⁵⁵

Although the case only provides a brief glimpse of the core AML/CFT regime, it illustrates the role of conflicting requirements for competence and control in the shaping of its design. The deliberate institutional overlap created between the FATF and the IFIs in the early 2000s contributed to easing this tension. It allowed G7 states to retain control over AML/CFT standards by relying on the FATF’s technical expertise and operational capacity and cede control selectively to the IFIs so that compliance assessments with the FATF standards would be perceived as more legitimate.

Case Probe 3: The Syrian Chemical Weapons Disarmament Regime

Default Regime

Several months after Syrian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Jihad Makdissi confirmed the possession of chemical weapons (CW) to deter foreign aggression,¹⁵⁶ in December 2012, the first allegations of CW usage within Syria surfaced.¹⁵⁷ It was following a March 2013 attack in Aleppo, however, that, under the auspices of its Secretary-General, the UN launched a mission to investigate CW usage and started on-the-ground work to that effect in early August.¹⁵⁸ Like Iraq, Syria was not (yet) a signatory to the Chemical Weapons Convention and thus not subject to the monitoring and enforcement mandate of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). However, also like Iraq, Syria was a signatory of the Geneva

¹⁵⁵ Reuter and Truman 2005, 58.

¹⁵⁶ Black 2012.

¹⁵⁷ Arms Control Association 2021.

¹⁵⁸ United Nations Secretary-General 2013a.

Protocol.¹⁵⁹ This made it subject to UN General Assembly (UNGA) 1987 Resolution A/RES/42/37C, which “*requests* the Secretary-General to carry out investigations in response to reports that may be brought to his attention by any Member State concerning the possible use of chemical and bacteriological (biological) or toxin weapons.”¹⁶⁰ In broad terms, therefore, the initial mission and its legal foundations continued the pattern of UN-led post-Cold War international efforts to inspect and destroy CW weapons in the 1990s and 2000s.¹⁶¹

However, as events unfolded, the Syrian CW elimination regime took on an unprecedented and unique design.¹⁶² Rather than relying on a UN-led mission for the verification and destruction of nonnuclear weapons of mass destruction (WMD),¹⁶³ as occurred during the UNSCOM and UNMOVIC missions in Iraq between 1991 and 2007,¹⁶⁴ the UN Security Council created deliberate institutional overlap between the OPCW and the UN, integrating them in a joint mission.¹⁶⁵ Since 2001, an agreement between the UN General Assembly and the OPCW Conference of the Parties had delimited the organizations’ boundaries and their respective roles.¹⁶⁶ Yet, prior to Syria, the relationship between the two institutions, for instance in Libya and Iraq, had not been closely coordinated.¹⁶⁷ Instead, it was the

¹⁵⁹ Conference for the Supervision of the International Trade in Arms and Ammunition and in Implements of War 1925.

¹⁶⁰ United Nations General Assembly 1987.

¹⁶¹ Note that, while the first 2013 UN investigative mission in Syria drew on complementary OPCW personnel, it remained within the boundaries of the two institutions’ 2001 relationship agreement and did not establish a joint mission. The relevant Article II(2) of the 2001 agreement stipulates that the ‘OPCW shall, in accordance with paragraph 27 of Part XI of the Verification Annex, closely cooperate with the Secretary-General in cases of the alleged use of chemical weapons involving a State not party to the Convention or in a territory not controlled by a State Party to the Convention and, if so requested, shall in such cases place its resources at the disposal of the Secretary-General.’ United Nations General Assembly 2001, art. II(2).

¹⁶² The uniqueness of the Syrian CW regime design is widely observed in the literature. See, e.g., Bleek and Kramer 2016, 220; Makdisi and Pison Hindawi 2019, 558; Makdisi and Hindawi 2017, 1691; and Trapp 2014, 7.

¹⁶³ For nuclear capabilities, UN Security Council Resolution 687 requested the IAEA as a specialized IO to undertake the inspections and dismantling. United Nations Security Council 1991.

¹⁶⁴ United Nations Special Commission n.d.; United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission 2003.

¹⁶⁵ United Nations Security Council President 2013.

¹⁶⁶ This agreement between the UN and OPCW was adopted in UN General Assembly Resolution 55/283 and OPCW Executive Council Decision EC-MXI/DEC.1. See United Nations General Assembly 2001; and Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Executive Council 2000.

¹⁶⁷ Makdisi and Pison Hindawi 2019, 543.

Framework for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons, agreed between the United States and Russia in September 2013, that laid the political foundations for this new regime design.¹⁶⁸ Concurrently, Syria announced its immediate accession to the CWC, thus creating the preconditions for comprehensive OPCW involvement.¹⁶⁹ The legal basis for the hybrid mandate was then given by the UN Security Council in its Resolution 2118¹⁷⁰ and by the OPCW in an Executive Council decision,¹⁷¹ both of which were adopted on September 27, 2013. On October 16, 2013, the organizations involved announced the formal establishment of the OPCW-UN Joint Mission.¹⁷²

Governor Preferences

This unprecedented regime design in the form of an OPCW-UN joint mission mitigated a potentially prohibitive tension between competence and control that the UNSC, as governor, faced. On the one hand, the UNSC sought to retain control and sanctioning power through a UN-led mission. On the other hand, it required the perceived credibility and legitimacy of OPCW inspections to reach internal agreement (specifically with Russia) with the target state, the Arab Republic of Syria.

To begin with, it is worth noting that the inter-institutional relations in this regime display a considerable asymmetry in their overall resources. The UN is, by a significant margin, a much larger organization and draws on extensive experience. As previously mentioned, the UN could look back at decades of leadership in CW inspections and destruction missions. In contrast to the OPCW, furthermore, it could mobilize a large group of experts and experienced administrators with specialized knowledge of the Middle East.¹⁷³ This stark asymmetry in

¹⁶⁸ United States and Russian Federation 2013.

¹⁶⁹ Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons 2013.

¹⁷⁰ United Nations Security Council 2013.

¹⁷¹ Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Executive Council 2013.

¹⁷² Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and United Nations 2013.

¹⁷³ Makdisi and Pison Hindawi 2019, 551.

expertise, capacity, and general resources between the UN and the OPCW reportedly also reflected on their inter-organizational relations. A senior member of the UN delegation recalled that during the initial negotiations on the joint mission, the OPCW required the assurance “that they would really have a leading role that wouldn’t be trampled on by the big blue UN elephant.”¹⁷⁴ This asymmetry, in fact, led a number of UN units to push for a “very maximalist position for what the UN role should be.”¹⁷⁵ This should not distract from complementarities in specialized expertise, which transpires in reports by those involved on the ground.¹⁷⁶ Yet the unique and organizationally challenging nature of the joint mission chosen for Syria, cobbled together in record time, points to other factors that explain the design of the regime.

The indications are that the regime design was a response to critical deficiencies in credibility and legitimacy that had the potential to derail attempts at a coordinated international response through the UN alone. The United States and its allies had a preference for retaining control over the weapons inspections and destruction by working through the UN, as had been done in Iraq, and for keeping the Security Council involved, thus maintaining the latent threat of coercive action if needed.¹⁷⁷ On the Russian side, however, there was the distinct concern that other powerful states would use the UN mission “as a tool to pressure the Syrian regime and potentially exploit any compliance failures as happened in the case of Iraq a decade earlier.”¹⁷⁸ Indeed, as Hawkins et al. have highlighted, “UN weapons inspectors in Iraq enjoyed substantial discretion regarding which sites to inspect and how to gather evidence, but ultimately enjoyed little autonomy due to constant pressure from the United States and other members of the Security Council to produce specific results.”¹⁷⁹ Given the importance of Russia’s support—

¹⁷⁴ Senior member of the UN delegation, cited in *ibid.*, 548.

¹⁷⁵ Senior UN officer, cited in *ibid.*, 549.

¹⁷⁶ See, e.g., Trapp 2015.

¹⁷⁷ Makdisi and Pison Hindawi 2019, 546.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 555.

¹⁷⁹ Hawkins et al. 2006b, 8.

a close ally of the Syrian government—for the success of a prospective regime, credibility and legitimacy thus crystallized as potentially prohibitive competence deficits of a UN-led mission.

Given the OPCW's status as an independent, reputable, and primarily technical organization, its enlistment provided a pathway to mitigating these critical deficits in credibility and legitimacy. The OPCW's independence vis-à-vis the UN and its organs, including the Security Council, had, in fact, been formally established in its 2001 relationship agreement, stating that “[t]he United Nations recognizes that OPCW ... shall function as an independent, autonomous international organization in the working relationship with the United Nations.”¹⁸⁰ This independence was crucial in the context of the Syrian CW regime. Similar to the domain of nuclear safeguards, where states have been more willing to cooperate with monitoring staff sent by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) than that of other states, the OPCW's nominal independence provides it with a greater veil of credibility and legitimacy.¹⁸¹ Russia and like-minded states indeed insisted on involving the OPCW as a “technical” body for inspections and monitoring that would be more neutral and less prone to (asymmetric) political influence.¹⁸²

The integration of the OPCW and the UN into the Syrian CW regime also addressed key legitimacy deficits. Unlike the more exclusive UN Security Council, the OPCW Executive Council—involved as a co-decider in this regime—comprises a larger membership, rotates regularly, and ensures an equitable geographical distribution, thereby giving voice to a more heterogeneous group of states.¹⁸³ Previous UN Security Council references foreshadow the OPCW's role as legitimator. For instance, in Resolution 1540, aimed at curbing the threat of WMD by non-state actors, the UNSC explicitly prioritized “the rights and obligations of State

¹⁸⁰ United Nations General Assembly 2001, 2.

¹⁸¹ Abbott and Snidal discuss this ‘laundering’ function of the IAEA. Abbott and Snidal 1998, 19.

¹⁸² Makdisi and Pison Hindawi 2019, 546.

¹⁸³ See Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons 2021.

Parties to ... the Chemical Weapons Convention,”¹⁸⁴ arguably “[t]o allay concerns among non-Western members of an intrusive enforcement mandate.”¹⁸⁵ The regimes’ integration of both institutions in a joint mission thus increased its legitimacy in the view of actors not represented at the UN Security Council, including the target state, Syria, which completed a fast-track accession to the CWC.¹⁸⁶

Maybe equally important is the role of legitimacy in the wider power political calculus. Through the parallel enlistment of the UN and the OPCW, “Russia ensured that the Syrian government could henceforth argue that, while the implementation of disarmament was exceptional and had to be validated by the Security Council, the overall process was based upon the Syrian sovereign decision to join the CWC.”¹⁸⁷ The highlighting of the Syrian government as a sovereign and proactive player was thus another way in which the design of the regime balanced not only control and competence but also the political goals that underlay the tension between them. Retrospectively, in the words of former US Under-Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Rose Gottemoeller, “the Russians delivered the Syrians.”¹⁸⁸ The mitigation of concerns about the UN’s role through the additional enlistment of the OPCW was a crucial enabler for this.

Overlap and Differentiation

The international community thus responded to the challenge of reconciling competence and control through the creation of a deliberate overlap between the UN and the OPCW in the form of a joint mission. In line with the governor preferences that led to this institutional

¹⁸⁴ United Nations Security Council 2004, art. 5. Article 5 states that the UN Security Council: ‘Decides that none of the obligations set forth in this resolution shall be interpreted so as to conflict with or alter the rights and obligations of State Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention or alter the responsibilities of the International Atomic Energy Agency or the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.’

¹⁸⁵ Makdisi and Pison Hindawi 2019, 543.

¹⁸⁶ Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons 2013.

¹⁸⁷ Notte 2020, 209.

¹⁸⁸ Personal interview with Gottemoeller cited in *ibid.*, 4.

overlap, the CW regime for Syria displays a clear *differentiation* of competencies provided by each organization.

This differentiation of governance activities and related competencies was established at an early stage of the genesis of the Syrian CW regime. This is indicated in the UN Secretary-General's letter to the Security Council from October 7, 2013, in which he lays out the basic proposal for the joint mission.¹⁸⁹ This proposal for a CW regime for Syria, accepted by the Security Council on October 11, 2013,¹⁹⁰ foreshadows differentiation between the UN as the overall coordinator and the OPCW as the technical lead.

The UN assumes the lead and is entrusted with the overall “strategic coordination” and referred to as the “operational enabler.”¹⁹¹ As part of the joint mission, the UN would “provide support to overall coordination and liaison with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and opposition groups, security arrangements, logistics, information assessments, communications and outreach, and administration.”¹⁹² At record speed, therefore, the UN “seconded experienced personnel already stationed in the region and with requisite Arabic language skill.”¹⁹³ The UN and its member states played the key role in the transportation and destruction of CW. The legal basis for this was the UNSC's decision “to authorize member States to acquire, control, transport, transfer and destroy chemical weapons identified by the Director-General of the OPCW.”¹⁹⁴ In fact, a large portion of CW—especially the most dangerous materials—was destroyed outside of Syrian territory, onboard a US vessel, the *MC Cape Ray*.¹⁹⁵ Denmark and Norway operated the transports between the port of Latakia and the US vessel.¹⁹⁶ Russia contributed to the security for the maritime operation and also to the

¹⁸⁹ United Nations Secretary-General 2013b.

¹⁹⁰ United Nations Security Council President 2013.

¹⁹¹ United Nations Secretary-General 2013b, 3.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ Makdisi and Pison Hindawi 2019, 551.

¹⁹⁴ United Nations Security Council 2013, art. 10.

¹⁹⁵ Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons 2014b.

¹⁹⁶ Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons 2014a.

materials and vehicles required for the transport to the port.¹⁹⁷ The UN and its member states, accordingly, provided much of the expert personnel and organizational capacity as well as operational resources to enable the mission.

The OPCW, in turn, was identified as the “lead technical agency.”¹⁹⁸ Correspondingly, the UN Secretary-General’s letter states:

OPCW will engage with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic for the purposes of verifying chemical weapons and facilities related to chemical weapons storage and production, including mixing and filling, and chemical weapons research and development. OPCW will also conduct inspections ... and other activities related to the verification of the destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons programme.¹⁹⁹

The letter thus names the OPCW, rather than the UN, as the primary organization responsible for verifying the destruction of the CW program, including production facilities. During the transport and destruction operations, OPCW personnel provided credible verification by, for example, supervising the sealing of maritime containers²⁰⁰ and the destruction of chemicals onboard the *Cape Ray*.²⁰¹ In the same vein, the OPCW was tasked with the training and certification of Syrian military personnel ordered to handle and package the relevant chemicals for transportation.²⁰² In this context, it is also noteworthy that “the OPCW selected staff with only military backgrounds: in other words, ‘nonpolitical’ expertise that would comprise its main resource contribution in this asymmetrical relationship.”²⁰³ The regime design tailored the OPCW’s contributions to those elements where its credibility and legitimacy were critical, namely in the realm of inspections, verifications, and monitoring activities.

¹⁹⁷ Gutterman 2013.

¹⁹⁸ United Nations Secretary-General 2013b, 3.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Director-General 2013, 4.

²⁰¹ Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons 2014a.

²⁰² Bleek and Kramer 2016, 214.

²⁰³ Makdisi and Pison Hindawi 2019, 551.

Keeping in mind previous UN-led CW efforts, this differentiation was not born out of the UN's inability to deploy technically competent experts. Rather, the decision to create an overlap between the two institutions and form a new type of CW regime was the result of a careful balancing act between control and competencies required to reach agreement among UN Security Council members, and, as Notte notes, "ensured continued interest alignment for the Russian Federation."²⁰⁴ Thompson has also highlighted the relevance of "hybrid" missions in the context of the governor's dilemma.²⁰⁵ Focusing on multilateral weapons inspections, and analogous to my argument developed previously, he suggests "that hybrids could provide a politically appealing middle ground that allows the Security Council to balance the benefits of competence with the guard rails of more control."²⁰⁶

This short case probe of the chemical weapons inspections regime in Syria demonstrates that the governor's dilemma can play an important part in shaping regime design in the international security domain. Among other factors, joint interests in preventing CW proliferation as well as the possibility of a Western military strike against Syria created the political context for the Syrian CW regime.²⁰⁷ However, the UN Security Council's translation of this readiness to cooperate into a functioning regime depended on its ability to balance demands for competence from and control over intermediaries in ways that aligned with the state parties' interests.

The resulting and unusual enlistment of the UN and the OPCW involved significant on-the-ground learning and flexibility.²⁰⁸ Yet, at its core, the regime design, as we have seen, shows marked differentiation. The UNSC, as governor, leveraged the OPCW's "technical" credibility and legitimacy while retaining significant governor control through the UN's

²⁰⁴ Notte 2020, 202.

²⁰⁵ Thompson 2020, 87–88.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

²⁰⁷ See Notte 2020, 204–6.

²⁰⁸ See Trapp 2015.

contribution of regional expertise and its capacity for coordination and operationalization. Although cooperation broke down as Syria allegedly continued CW usage after 2014, the regime, in the short time frame that it persisted, led to the destruction of all declared CW.²⁰⁹

Conclusion

The institutional fabric of international cooperation has evolved dramatically. Well over three hundred formal intergovernmental organizations now populate the international system, more than three times as many as in 1945.²¹⁰ Informal variants, lacking legalization in the form of a treaty, were rarities then but now number well over one hundred.²¹¹ The proliferation of institutions since World War II is as much fertile soil for, as it is an artifact of, states' inclination to engage in institutional combinatorics.

In this article, I have advanced indirect governance dynamics as a lens through which to explain regime design. Indeed, much of the governance exercised through international regimes is indirect, with states enlisting international institutions to provide technical expertise, support policy coordination operationally, lend credibility to commitments, or legitimize policy among a larger audience of states. This propels the governor's dilemma to a central role in regime design, namely the tradeoff between the competence that institutions can provide and the control that states can exert. My analysis showed that states could often obtain a preferred combination of competence and control when governing through regimes with overlapping institutions. Due to the varying control elasticity of competencies, states' preferred level of control will frequently differ depending on the competencies sought. By enlisting multiple institutions and *differentiating* the competencies that these contribute, states can address this and set the level of control separately for different competency types. This logic differs from the

²⁰⁹ Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons 2016.

²¹⁰ Pevhouse et al. 2020, 493; The original dataset was introduced in Wallace and Singer 1970.

²¹¹ Vabulas and Snidal 2021, 860; Roger and Rowan 2021, 11.

diversification of intermediaries for the purpose of fostering competition and guarding against drift or slack.

I illustrated the broad empirical relevance of my argument through case probes of three regimes governing distinct domains: the European sovereign debt crisis, global anti-money laundering standards, and the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons. In all three cases, states' conflicting requirements between competence and control played an important part in the decision to create an institutional overlap. Moreover, in line with my theoretical expectations, the regime designs bear the mark of deliberate differentiation among institutions' contributions. States enlisted institutions with greater independence as providers of credibility or legitimacy but relied on better-controlled ones where possible, notably for their expertise and capacity to inform and implement policy.

The theorization of the link between indirect governance and regime design and its empirical illustration contribute to several cross-cutting scholarly debates on contemporary international cooperation. First, the article provides a new angle for thinking about the emergence and implications of regime complexes. Regime complexes originate from the amalgamation of multiple "elemental" regimes or institutions, as in the cases examined in this article, that govern a specific issue area in international relations.²¹² Contemporary international cooperation, and indeed the provision of global public goods, increasingly depends on the performance of regime complexes. This has led to a lively scholarly debate regarding their origins and ramifications.²¹³ The indirect governance approach to regime design advanced in this article adds a new lens through which to explain why and how regime complexity arises. It highlights the governor's dilemma and resulting actor incentives as important drivers of

²¹² Raustiala and Victor 2004, 279, originally defined a regime complex as 'an array of partially overlapping and nonhierarchical institutions governing a particular issue-area.'; Alter and Raustiala 2018, 332, postulate as an essential characteristic of a regime complex that 'more than one set of rules or actors may plausibly claim to govern an issue.'

²¹³ For recent overviews of the debate, see Alter 2022; and Gómez-Mera 2021.

complexity. It also underlines orchestration as a mode of governance that generates order without introducing formal hierarchy.²¹⁴

Second, the article expands on existing accounts of rational design. Rationalist accounts of state cooperation have always highlighted a tension between states' demand for control and the benefits from working through centralized and independent international organizations.²¹⁵ States take this into account when designing institutions.²¹⁶ Moreover, in institutionally dense environments, they select from a menu of institutional choices beyond creation, including the use and change of institutions.²¹⁷ My analysis expands on this by highlighting that overlap or a combination of institutions is an underappreciated design dimension that is used by states to address cooperation problems. In many instances, where simple use of an institution is unsatisfactory, combination may represent a more feasible option for states than significant change or the creation of an institution.

Lastly, the article adds to the field's understanding of the potential and challenges of informality in state cooperation. Amidst institutional gridlock and power shifts, policymakers and scholars increasingly look to IIGOs like the G7 and G20 as governors of key international issues.²¹⁸ At the same time, because of the nature of their informal design, IIGOs possess minimal, if any, organizational capacity, typically lacking even a rudimentary secretariat.²¹⁹ Instead, they rely on their political weight and focality to enlist other institutions to pursue (joint) governance goals, making them orchestrators "by design."²²⁰ The CC tradeoff thus crystallizes as the linchpin of IIGO-orchestrated global governance. As IIGOs' centrality grows, governor

²¹⁴ Whether international regime complexes are, by definition, non-hierarchical remains an active scholarly debate. Compare, e.g., Alter and Meunier 2009; and Alter and Raustiala 2018; with Henning and Pratt 2020.

²¹⁵ On control and centralization, see Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001, 771–72; On centralization and independence as fundamental attributes of international organizations, see Abbott and Snidal 1998.

²¹⁶ Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001, 772–73; Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 210–11.

²¹⁷ See Jupille, Mattli, and Snidal 2013.

²¹⁸ See Vabulas and Snidal 2020; and Westerwinter, Abbott, and Biersteker 2021.

²¹⁹ Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 197.

²²⁰ Viola 2015, 88.

strategies around the CC tradeoff are a pivotal component for assessing these organizations' potential and limitations as pillars of multilateral cooperation.

The article opens a number of avenues for future research aimed at theoretical refinements. One is accounting for temporal dynamics. Learning and feedback effects can change the governor's or intermediaries' preferences down the line and shift relative power between the parties.²²¹ This may impact the decision to create institutional overlap or the sequencing of enlistment. Another—related—avenue is looking at the agency of intermediaries in regime design. Intermediaries may sometimes resist enlistment or use enlistment as an opportunity to define the characteristics and implications of overlaps. Finally, scholarship would greatly benefit from future efforts to explore the interaction between different factors associated with regime design, notably state-state and state-institution relations. My probe of the Syrian CW regime, for instance, highlighted the close connection between institutional differentiation between the UN and the OPCW on the one hand, and the US and Russia's ability to strike a cooperative bargain on the other. Overall, bridging scholarship on indirect governance and international regimes promises to generate important new insights into the institutional patterns of international cooperation.

²²¹ Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 23.

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IV.

Orchestrated Multilateralism: Informal Intergovernmental Organizations and the Design of Global Regulatory Regimes

Abstract While postwar institutionalized cooperation is ailing, major powers organize in informal IGOs (IIGOs) such as the G7, G20, and BRICS to orchestrate governance responses by formal universal organizations. Yet, when distributive conflict is pronounced, this orchestrated multilateralism hinges on a delicate balance. On the one hand, IIGOs seek control over universal organizations to ensure that their pre-negotiated governance goals are not diluted, changed, or blocked by other members. On the other hand, to translate these goals into effective regimes, IIGOs require competencies from universal organizations, including credibility and legitimacy, that depend on the latter's perception by states as independent bodies that serve their broader membership. I argue that IIGOs mitigate this competence-control tradeoff through strategic regime design: they enlist multiple institutions to *differentiate* their contributions, ceding control to universal organizations for advancing implementation, where credibility and legitimacy are critical, but relying on club institutions for bundling the expertise and capacity to set and enforce rules. An analysis of the two principal G7-/G20-orchestrated global regulatory regimes—market integrity and financial stability—confirms this design pattern. As states position IIGOs to steer the regulatory regime for global challenges ranging from artificial intelligence to pandemic preparedness, the article's findings serve as an analytical lens through which to examine the logic, challenges, and opportunities of orchestrated multilateralism.

International cooperation has never been more vital to the global public good. The very interdependencies that fueled unprecedented economic growth now render coordination indispensable for addressing cross-border challenges like climatic change, financial instability, and pandemic preparedness. Yet the fabric of postwar institutionalized cooperation—a set of formal organizations with (near-)universal membership—is under strain. More than half a century after their creation, universal organizations face global issues that are broader in scope and penetrate deeper into domestic politics.¹ Moreover, shifts in the distribution of power have

¹ See Hale, Held, and Young 2013b.

undermined the balance between de jure influence and de facto power that sustains the good functioning of universal organizations.²

While postwar institutionalized cooperation is ailing, major powers are looking to informal intergovernmental organizations (IIGOs), lacking a formalized agreement and an independent secretariat, headquarters or staff,³ to sustain cooperation.⁴ IIGOs like the G7, G20, and BRICS already operate as focal points for a broadening array of international issues, ranging from development to nonproliferation.⁵ While states engage in protracted negotiations and clash over reform in universal organizations, IIGOs' greater legal and organizational flexibility, smaller membership, and adaptability to the changing constellation of power make them attractive venues for circumventing contested decision-making processes and crafting agreement among major states.⁶

IIGO consensus frequently forms the basis for the *orchestration* of governance activities by universal organizations. IIGOs like the G20 cannot engage in traditional delegation to other international institutions as they do not command a hierarchical position vis-à-vis other institutions that would allow them to formally steer their governance activities.⁷ Just as importantly, IIGOs, as informal governors, cannot grant authority to, or rescind it from, other institutions, least formal universal organizations with their own set of political principals, to act

² See, e.g., Zangl et al. 2016; and Ikenberry 2001.

³ Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 197.

⁴ On the informalization of international organization, see generally Westerwinter, Abbott, and Biersteker 2021; Vabulas and Snidal 2021; Roger 2020; and Roger and Rowan 2021.

⁵ For an in-depth look at the broadening of the G20's agenda, see Hageböling 2021b; See also Berger, Cooper, and Grimm 2019, 497.

⁶ I focus on rationalist accounts here that build on the institutional design literature in International Relations. However, the benefits of informal design for generating political agreement and guidance emerges as a common feature across different perspectives. Mitzen, for instance, stresses the importance of forums akin to the G-groups for the spawning of collective intentionality that facilitates governance of difficult problems. A different but related argumentative strand, developed, for example, by Holmes, is that on the importance of face-to-face diplomacy among political decision-makers for gauging each other's intentions and crafting agreement. On institutional design, see Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001; and Koremenos 2016; On the role of collective intentionality, see Mitzen 2013; On the role of face-to-face diplomacy, see Holmes 2018.

⁷ On hierarchy as a governance mode, see Abbott et al. 2015a, 8–10; See also Abbott et al. 2015b, 724.

on their behalf.⁸ IIGO orchestration is based neither on formal hierarchy nor on a grant of authority.⁹ Instead, IIGOs leverage their focality—which is mainly a product of their members’ economic and political weight and ability to advance political consensus—to steer other institutions, as intermediaries, including through joint calls, convening and coordination, endorsements, and material assistance.¹⁰

Orchestrated multilateralism hinges on a delicate tradeoff between competence and control, though. On the one hand, IIGOs, as orchestrators, seek control over universal organizations, as intermediaries, to ensure that their governance goals are not diluted, changed, or blocked by other members. On the other hand, to translate these goals into effective regimes, IIGOs require competencies from universal organizations, like credibility and legitimacy, which depend on the latter’s perception by states as independent bodies that serve their broader membership. Although persistent, the steepness of this *competence-control (CC) tradeoff* depends on the structure of the cooperation problem.¹¹ When a regime requires broad participation but distribution problems are pronounced, both the importance of universal organizations’ competencies and the risk of control loss due to opposition by other states increase.

Problematically, regimes for governing global issues, including the regulatory challenges of artificial intelligence, financial instability, and pandemic preparedness, are prone to a similar cooperation problem structure: they require almost universal buy-in but come with nontrivial and asymmetric distributive implications. The CC tradeoff thus crystallizes as the linchpin of orchestrated multilateralism. This raises a central question: how do IIGOs manage their

⁸ Hawkins et al. define delegation as ‘a conditional grant of authority from a principal to an agent that empowers the latter to act on behalf of the former.’ Hawkins et al. 2006, 7; See also Nielson and Tierney 2003.

⁹ On orchestration, see Abbott et al. 2015a; and Abbott et al. 2015b.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Viola 2015b, 28; and Cooper and Bradford 2010, 4; On the G20 as a focal point, see Cooper 2019.

¹¹ On the competence-control tradeoff in indirect governance, see Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b; and Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020a.

orchestration relationships with other international institutions? That is, how do IIGOs mitigate this CC tradeoff when orchestrating global governance?

I build from recent contributions to indirect governance theory to argue that IIGOs mitigate the CC tradeoff through strategic regime design.¹² I contend that IIGOs, rather than simply calling on universal organizations to operationalize governance, embed them into a larger regime complex by co-enlisting club institutions, who—by virtue of their smaller and more homogenous membership—are more anticipatory concerning their preferences. The logic of this *differentiation* strategy is intuitive: It allows IIGOs to cede control to universal organization only when necessary and to tighten it through club institutions where possible. I concretize my argument in relation to the governance cycle, hypothesizing that IIGOs leverage universal organizations' credibility and legitimacy as independent organizations to advance broad *implementation*, including through technical assistance and monitoring, but draw on club institutions for expertise and capacity to *set* and *enforce* rules.

I probe my argument empirically through an in-depth analysis of two principal G7-/G20-orchestrated global regulatory regimes: market integrity and financial stability. Both issue areas confront the G-groups with a steep CC tradeoff. “Weakest-link-in-the-chain”-type interdependencies require almost universal application of regulatory standards by states. At the same time, these standards come with significant and asymmetric distributive implications, principally between G-group members and developing countries. I show that, in both cases, the G-groups responded by designing a differentiated regime. Rather than relying on the International Financial Institutions (IFIs), the G-groups created club institutions—the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the Financial Stability Forum Forum/Board (FSF/B)—to provide the expertise and capacity for standards setting and enforcement against noncompliant

¹² See Hageböling 2021a; Also cf. Biermann and Rittberger 2020; and Moschella 2020.

jurisdictions. The IFIs were embedded in this regime complex to advance universal implementation through technical assistance and monitoring.

The article contributes to several strands of International Relations scholarship. First, it advances the literature on informal global governance. While recent scholarship has examined IIGOs' growing role in the context of changing governance challenges,¹³ power shifts,¹⁴ domestic politics,¹⁵ and technological advances,¹⁶ this study unpacks how these bodies integrate into the postwar multilateral system to meet global (regulatory) challenges. Second, the article adds to the discussion on regime complexes. It bolsters the theoretical proposition that indirect governance dynamics shape regime-level patterns.¹⁷ More generally, it shows that—beyond regime strategies that contest status quo multilateralism¹⁸—complexity can also result from containing erosion of the multilateral institutional system. Lastly, and related to that, the article speaks to the large body of scholarship on the origins and functioning of the postwar multilateral system. Whereas contributions have to date focused on *internal* adaptation and calibration of influence in multilateral organizations,¹⁹ this study demonstrates that states are also devising ways to sustain their good functioning *externally* through regime design, particularly the combination of formal and informal international institutions.

In what follows, I begin with a brief exposition of states' increasing reliance on IIGOs and the tradeoff between competence and control in orchestrated multilateralism. I then introduce my theoretical argument, detailing how IIGOs can use differentiation to mitigate this tradeoff. The last part demonstrates the use of differentiation in the G-groups' orchestration of the global regulatory regimes for market integrity and financial stability. I conclude by discussing

¹³ E.g., Vabulas and Snidal 2013.

¹⁴ E.g., Vabulas and Snidal 2020.

¹⁵ E.g., Roger 2020.

¹⁶ E.g., Manulak and Snidal 2021.

¹⁷ See Hageböling 2021a; See also Rixen and Viola 2020; Henning 2019; Moschella 2020; Thompson 2020; and Hodson 2015.

¹⁸ See, e.g., Morse and Keohane 2014; and Helfer 2009.

¹⁹ See, e.g., Fioretos 2017; Stone 2011; and Ikenberry 2001.

my findings regarding the implications of the broader ongoing shift towards orchestrated multilateralism for emerging regulatory challenges such as the ethical use and development of artificial intelligence.

From Postwar Institutionalism to Orchestrated Multilateralism

Formal universal organizations and treaties—the central pillars of postwar institutionalism—struggle to formulate speedy and effective responses to pressing global issues. Several factors contribute to this, including an increase in issue complexity, greater actor heterogeneity, and institutional status quo bias.

The complexity of contemporary problems in terms of the universality of their scope and the depth of their penetration into domestic politics, poses significant challenges for global governance.²⁰ The global transition to a low-carbon economy, for example, requires cooperation by many state (and substate) parties and reaches deeply into domestic politics.²¹ Importantly, many issues, such as the regulation of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, connect to a broad array of interrelated concerns—from human rights to development to nuclear deterrence.²² Postwar institutionalism struggles with this issue complexity. It is increasingly evident that established procedures are failing to generate cooperative solutions for deep cooperation problems such as behind-the-border barriers to trade²³ and the scope of issue linkages between, for instance, international trade, the environment, and labor standards.²⁴ The collapse of the Doha Round negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO) serves as a cautionary tale of formal organizations' failures to address complex issues.²⁵ Global challenges

²⁰ Hale et al. define these 'harder problems' based on their extensity (scope of problems has increased) and intensity (problems penetrate more deeply into societies). Hale, Held, and Young 2013a, 227.

²¹ See Keohane and Victor 2016, 571–73.

²² On AI and human rights, see, e.g., Donahoe and Metzger 2019; On AI and nuclear deterrence, see, e.g., Johnson 2020.

²³ On 'behind the border' barriers and implications for the WTO, see Hoekman 2011.

²⁴ On the widening of the scope of trade agreements to non-trade issues, see, e.g., Milewicz et al. 2018.

²⁵ See Jones 2009.

also defy the sharp delimitation of areas of responsibility that characterize postwar institutionalism and its international bureaucracies. Scholars are thus questioning whether traditional models of centralized governance are fit to address cross-cutting issues like artificial intelligence in the future.²⁶

Actor heterogeneity presents another challenge to postwar institutionalism. Contemporary global governance involves a much larger number of parties. In fact, since the end of World War II and in the wake of decolonization, the number of states in the international systems has more than tripled.²⁷ Moreover, not only have the numbers changed but power has shifted too. After World War II, the United States and its European allies could largely determine international rules.²⁸ Power has since gradually shifted away from the war victors.²⁹ Above all, the unprecedented economic growth of (former) developing countries, especially China, since the early 2000s is reconfiguring the global distribution of power in a fundamental manner.³⁰

Actor heterogeneity complicates cooperation in universal organizations. Member states represent a significantly larger span of economic development, political systems, and military capabilities. Their concerns and interests are more likely to differ and the larger number of states raises the costs of agreement.³¹ Yet it also shakes the foundations of postwar institutionalism. Universal organization are founded on an implicit bargain. In return for ceding policy autonomy and giving a voice to smaller states, major powers exercise disproportional influence in these organizations—for instance through voting or veto rights—and eschew the need for costly

²⁶ See Cihon, Maas, and Kemp 2020.

²⁷ Pevehouse et al. 2020, 493.

²⁸ Ikenberry 2001, 9.

²⁹ As Keohane notes, '[a]fter the mid-1960s, however, U.S. dominance in the world political economy was challenged by the economic recovery and increasing unity of Europe and by the rapid economic growth of Japan.' Keohane 1984, 9.

³⁰ In addition to an almost two-digit average annual GDP growth rate since the opening up of its economy in 1978, China integrated into the world economy more fully in the early 2000s, notably through its accession to the WTO in 2001. World Trade Organization n.d.

³¹ See Hale, Held, and Young 2013a, 226–27; and Olson 1971, 48; See also Kahler 1992.

unilateralism.³² As power has shifted, however, this equilibrium has been undermined by the asynchronicity of de jure influence and de facto power in international organizations, and pressure for adaptation has been increasing.³³

These challenges are amplified by institutional status quo bias. Formal rules and procedures render the flexible adaptation of mandates in response to new and cross-cutting issues more difficult.³⁴ Yet institutional inertia is arguably most evident in the slow adaptation of rules and procedures themselves.³⁵ Even as pressure for reform increases, formal design and entrenched interests make universal organizations slow to adapt. As Hale et al. note, “the power of the original set of leading states is firmly embedded in the institutions themselves, making it difficult to shift without damaging the institutions as a whole.”³⁶ Take the IMF: after lengthy negotiations, the 2010 agreement to reform quotas, then heralded by its director as “the most important reform in the governance of the institution since its creation,”³⁷ took repeated calls for implementation³⁸ and six years to finally come into effect.³⁹ Over time, this status quo bias has thus reinforced challenges to universal organizations’ good functioning.⁴⁰

Against this backdrop, states are seeking ways to sustain cooperation and re-equilibrate influence outside of formal universal organizations. A notable development in this respect has been states’ growing use of IIGOs.⁴¹ Major IIGOs like the G7, G20, and BRICS, originally created as fora to coordinate global financial governance, have become focal organizations for

³² Ikenberry 2001, 199; This implicit equilibrium on which multilateral organizations are built, in fact, extends beyond formal rules and into the informal processes that permeate their work. Stone has shown that multilateral organizations ‘really function’ by operating according to formal rules most of the time but provide for disproportionate (informal) influence by leading states when the stakes are high. Stone 2011, 7.

³³ See Kruck and Zangl 2020; and Stephen and Zürn 2019.

³⁴ For a comprehensive theoretical and empirical treatment of status quo bias in international institutions and states’ propensity for incremental institutional steps, see Jupille, Mattli, and Snidal 2013.

³⁵ On the need for reform of international institutions, see, e.g., Brooks and Wohlforth 2009.

³⁶ Hale, Held, and Young 2013a, 227.

³⁷ Boughton 2010.

³⁸ Reuters 2014.

³⁹ International Monetary Fund 2016.

⁴⁰ See Stephen and Zürn 2019, 39–244.

⁴¹ See Westerwinter, Abbott, and Biersteker 2021; Vabulas and Snidal 2021; and Roger and Rowan 2021.

a wide range of global issues. The G20, for instance, “has become the central forum where established and rising powers work together to address the most obstinate issues in world politics.”⁴² The G7, as a smaller and more homogenous grouping of states, has lately added cooperation on emerging concerns such as the responsible development of artificial intelligence to its portfolio.⁴³ BRICS serves as a coordinating forum for its members on issues governed by a wide range of universal organizations, including the UN, IFIs, and the WTO, as well as new institutions such as the New Development Bank.⁴⁴

IIGOs provide important advantages for structuring cooperation on issues that states struggle to resolve in formal organizations. Absent concerns about being permanently locked into a specific institutional setting and legally binding decisions, states more readily explore common ground on intractable cooperation problems.⁴⁵ Thus, deliberations on issues that states struggle to resolve due to their distributional implications, such as digital trade, which remains gridlocked in the WTO, are now shifted to IIGOs.⁴⁶ In addition, in the absence of a clearly determined mandate and fixed rules and procedures, IIGOs reduce functional silos that separate formal organizations. In fact, major IIGOs such as BRICS integrate engagement in a host of related topics such as infrastructure, energy, and digitization under the umbrella of the leaders’ summit.⁴⁷

IIGOs also offer advantages for coping with actor heterogeneity. Their smaller membership, exclusive character, and higher level of confidentiality can make them a preferred choice for furthering the common interests of a select group of like-minded actors.⁴⁸ Yet informality can also have an integrative function. Greater state autonomy and closer control of

⁴² Vabulas and Snidal 2020, 47.

⁴³ See The Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence n.d.

⁴⁴ See Larionova and Shelepov 2019; and Cooper and Farooq 2013.

⁴⁵ Cf. Vabulas and Snidal 2013; and Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001.

⁴⁶ For example, in 2019, the Japanese G20 Presidency launched ‘Osaka Track’, aiming, among other things, to catalyze agreement on digital trade in the WTO. World Trade Organization 2019.

⁴⁷ See Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa Group 2021.

⁴⁸ Viola 2015b, 23.

information in IIGOs renders heterogeneous members less reluctant to explore common ground.⁴⁹ In addition, states can adapt IIGO membership with greater ease. Since its creation in 1975, today's G7, for example, has expanded and shrunk in response to changing constellations of political power and world political events.⁵⁰ The creation of the leaders' level G20 in 2008, integrating incumbent and emerging powers, and its uptake of many issues previously discussed in the G7 exemplify the adaptability of informal intergovernmentalism.⁵¹

Given their informal design, IIGOs largely govern *indirectly*. IIGOs offer advantages for advancing agreement on contentious issues and support state interactions by enhancing negotiation stability, information dissemination, and issue linkage.⁵² At the same time, given the limitations of their informal setup, they rely on the competencies of other—typically formal—organizations for most governance activities. As Eccleston et al. observe, IIGOs like the G20 “are generally highly dependent on the inputs, expertise and capacities of various affiliated organisations and groups to develop and implement technical regulatory programs.”⁵³ Indeed, as Woods notes, “[t]he task of implementing agreements made by G20 Leaders falls to international organizations endowed with formal rules of membership, decision-making, and a formal authority to implement.”⁵⁴ Both the expertise and the capacity required for operationalizing governance are thus regularly provided by other institutions.

Just as importantly, IIGOs lack essential qualities that are needed to implement governance responses that are global in scope. The greater state autonomy, control, and flexibility that IIGOs afford, in turn, reduces their ability to credibly commit their members to a course of action.⁵⁵ This feeds into IIGOs' struggle to legitimate governance more widely in

⁴⁹ Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 211.

⁵⁰ See Hajnal 2007.

⁵¹ See Hajnal 2014, 11–18.

⁵² Hageböling 2021b.

⁵³ Eccleston, Kellow, and Carroll 2015, 302.

⁵⁴ Woods 2010, 12.

⁵⁵ Abbott and Faude 2020, 4.

the international community, given their exclusive membership and the absence of “legitimizing factors such as transparency and accountability.”⁵⁶ Even the comparatively inclusive G20 encompasses barely ten percent of state members of universal organizations like the IMF or World Bank. As Rachman puts it, “[t]here is one global divide that cannot be expressed at a G20 summit – and that is the divide between the 20 big countries that have secured invitations and the 170-odd that are excluded.”⁵⁷ Credibility and legitimacy, particularly regarding the wider collective of states, thus crystallize as acute deficits of IIGOs.

States’ use of IIGOs thus signals a deeper shift in the way that postwar institutionalized cooperation works. While states are advancing cooperation through IIGOs, formal universal organizations like the UN, the IFIs, and the WHO remain indispensable for translating consensus into the governance of many international issues. IIGOs, in Viola’s words, engage in “orchestration by design.”⁵⁸ They guide and steer the governance activities of other institutions, including formal universal organizations. IIGOs do not command formal hierarchical superiority, nor do universal organizations derive their authority from these exclusive bodies. Rather, IIGOs’ ability to orchestrate stems from their focality, which is underpinned by the (economic) power and influence of its members, as well as the prospect of advancing agreement on international issues gridlocked in formal organizations.⁵⁹

In this *orchestrated multilateralism*, therefore, major powers, in parallel to the slow-moving *internal* adaptation and reform of universal organizations, maintain the functioning of the multilateral institutional system *externally*. They punctually shift consensus formation to more flexible IIGOs that then orchestrate governance activities of other international institutions. This moves the dynamics and constraints of the orchestration relationship between IIGOs and

⁵⁶ Vabulas and Snidal 2020, 40.

⁵⁷ Rachman 2010.

⁵⁸ Viola 2015a, 88.

⁵⁹ For an exposition on the difference between orchestration and delegation, see Abbott et al. 2015b; and Abbott et al. 2015a.

these institutions, especially universal organizations, to the center stage of contemporary international organization.

The Competence-Control Tradeoff as the Linchpin of Orchestrated Multilateralism

The shift towards regime designs in which IIGOs, as governors, orchestrate formal international institutions, as intermediaries, introduces an important constraint: the *competence-control (CC) tradeoff*. The CC tradeoff is a fundamental dynamic of the indirect governance relationship between a governor (e.g., an IIGO orchestrator) and an intermediary (e.g., an international institution). It refers to an inherent tradeoff between the competence that a governor can receive from an intermediary and the control that it can exert over the latter.⁶⁰ On the one hand, IIGOs' steering of global governance responses depends on their ability to *control*, that is, “shape and constrain”⁶¹ the governance activities of universal organizations. States rely on IIGOs as alternative vehicles for crafting agreement. For this “outsourcing” of consensus formation to work, however, governance activities of universal organizations must reflect the IIGO consensus. Thus, IIGOs seek control to ensure that their governance goals are not diluted, changed, or blocked by other state members or professional staff.

On the other hand, effective governance through IIGOs requires *competencies* that stem from the perception of universal organizations as independent bodies. Actors perceive the activities of universal organizations as credible and legitimate due to the limits that they impose on the influence of individual (powerful) members—whether through rules and procedures, decision-making norms, or a vocal and neutral staff—and their benefits to the membership at large.⁶² This is what underlies their ability to “dispense[] ... politically significant approval and

⁶⁰ Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 6–7; See also Abbott, Zangl, et al. 2020.

⁶¹ Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020a, 620.

⁶² Abbott and Snidal 1998, 19–23. Abbott and Snidal emphasize the role of neutrality (which depends on independence from member states) for IGOs' usefulness as credible and legitimate agents.

disapproval of the claims, policies, and actions of states.”⁶³ As Abbott and Snidal observe, “[t]he participation of an IO as an independent, neutral actor can transform relations among states, enhancing the efficiency and legitimacy of collective and individual actions.”⁶⁴ The tightening of control over universal organizations risks undermining the very competencies that IIGOs require to pursue their valued goals.⁶⁵

While the CC tradeoff is a persistent feature of indirect governance, its steepness varies with the structure of the cooperation problem. When the preferences of an IIGO and relevant universal organizations—that is, their (larger) membership—are aligned, the tradeoff is less severe. An IIGO, in that case, has less reason to anticipate that universal organizations would pursue diverging governance goals or solutions and thus to seek control that could limit competencies.⁶⁶ By contrast, when the effectiveness of a regime depends on broad—even universal—participation but distributions problems between the IIGO and other states are pronounced, the CC tradeoff steepens. In these instances, both the demand for control over universal organizations and the criticality of their competencies increase, intensifying the dilemma faced by the IIGO as orchestrator.

The increased demand for control stems from the higher risk that other states dilute, change, or even block IIGO governance goals. Across issue domains, universal organizations offer greater opportunity for attack by disgruntled members, even against a set of influential states. Some bodies have voting provisions that can give a group of smaller or less powerful members disproportionate leverage. UN Security Council decisions, for example, can effectively

⁶³ Claude 1966, 367.

⁶⁴ Abbott and Snidal 1998, 16.

⁶⁵ Abbott and Snidal note, analogously, that “[p]owerful states face a tension between the immediate advantages of dirty laundering versus the long-run costs of jeopardizing IO independence.” *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶⁶ Note that the CC tradeoff never fully disappears in indirect governance, given that misalignment may still arise later on as political imperatives change, other states get involved, or parties learn about the issue at hand. On endogenous instability in indirect governance relationships, see Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020a, 629–31; and Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 22–26.

be vetoed by a lack of support from temporary members.⁶⁷ Even when consensus is not a formal requirement, it may still be the *modus operandi*. In the UN General Assembly, decisions are generally taken by consensus, not because it is a formal necessity but to ensure broad buy-in of members to its legally nonbinding resolutions.⁶⁸

Barriers to the imposition of preferences are also often deeply rooted in organizational culture. The IMF and the World Bank, for example, have strong norms concerning consensual decision making that provide considerable leeway for opposition.⁶⁹ The IMF, as Viola observes, “has a deeply embedded organizational culture and requires the involvement and approval of many mid-level bureaucrats as well as a large and heterogeneous Executive Board.”⁷⁰ Indeed, the Executive Board has a strong tradition of furthering the institution’s cooperative nature by taking decisions consensually, allowing “member countries to have a greater voice in decision-making than their voting shares might suggest”⁷¹ and offering “valuable protection to the developing countries.”⁷² As a big-picture analysis by Blake and Payton shows, in universal organizations “formal voting is relatively rare with decisions reached through informal consensus.”⁷³ Even less powerful states can draw on such norms to employ strategies like rhetorical coercion and shaming based on an allegedly illegitimate use of power,⁷⁴ reducing IIGOs’ ability to achieve valued ends.⁷⁵

⁶⁷ United Nations n.d.; See also Cronin 2008.

⁶⁸ In effect, roughly 80 percent of resolutions are adopted by consensus. United Nations n.d.

⁶⁹ See Drezner 2007, 133–35.

⁷⁰ Viola 2015b, 10.

⁷¹ Ramlogan and Fritz-Krockow 2007, 76.

⁷² Van Houtven 2002, 24; This culture can also be traced to Section 11 of the IMF’s By-Laws, which states that the Chairman of the Executive Board ‘may ascertain the sense of the meeting in lieu of a formal vote.’ International Monetary Fund 2019a, 5–6.

⁷³ Blake and Payton 2015, 380.

⁷⁴ Kruck and Zangl discuss these strategies in the context of bargaining over institutional adjustment. However, they apply more broadly to bargaining situations. Kruck and Zangl 2020, 8–9.

⁷⁵ Note the parallel to a tradeoff that states face in the design of intergovernmental institutions more generally. As Abbott and Snidal observe, ‘[p]owerful states will not enter an organization they cannot influence, yet undermining the independence of an organization ... will simultaneously reduce its effectiveness and their own ability to achieve valued ends.’ Abbott and Snidal 1998, 16.

At the same time, distribution problems also raise the importance of harnessing universal organizations' competencies. Heightened incentives to defect render credible information about state behavior critical for improving compliance. It allows other actors, including market participants, to adjust their own behavior and to directly or indirectly sanction noncompliant parties.⁷⁶ Furthermore, the ability of universal organizations to serve as sources of approval of claims and policies is of heightened importance in the presence of distributive conflict. The "laundering" of IIGO consensus through universal organizations distances a policy from its originators and can increase acceptance of related governance activities that would otherwise have been considered unacceptable.⁷⁷ This becomes the more important the more difficult the (coercive) enforcement, for instance due to the sheer number of jurisdictions that would have to be subjected to resource-intensive assessments.⁷⁸

Problematically, global issues like climatic change, financial instability, or the ethical development of technology that IIGOs are mandated to address often display this cooperation problem structure: they require broad, if not universal, participation but entail significant and asymmetric distributive implications. In the next section, I explore how IIGOs may mitigate the resulting CC tradeoff on which the orchestration of multilateral regulatory responses hinges.

Strategic Regime Design: The Logic of Differentiation

The CC tradeoff is a fundamental dynamic of orchestrated multilateralism. This raises a central question: how do IIGOs mitigate this CC tradeoff when orchestrating global governance? I argue that IIGOs use strategic regime design to mitigate the CC tradeoff. First, building on a recent theoretical contribution, I contend that IIGOs can optimize the ratio between competence and control through regime *differentiation*: they limit reliance on universal

⁷⁶ See, e.g., Simmons 2000b.

⁷⁷ Abbott and Snidal 1998, 18–19.

⁷⁸ See Hurd 1999, 383–389.

organizations to those competencies that require significant independence but otherwise enlist more controllable club institutions. Second, I specify this argument further by developing expectations about IIGOs' calibration of competence and control along the governance cycle. Specifically, I assert that IIGOs will frequently prefer to enlist universal organizations to advance (global) implementation but rely on club institutions to set and enforce rules. In what follows, I develop this argument step-by-step.

Optimizing the Competence-Control Ratio: Enlistment of Complementary Institutions

International Relations scholarship identifies regime design as a key vector within which governors (or principals) can manage their relations with intermediaries (or agents). Earlier literature on indirect governance, taking a principal-agent (PA) theoretical perspective, focused on *how* governors could tighten control over intermediaries in the presence of information asymmetries, including through the limitation of discretion, monitoring and reporting requirements, and sanctions.⁷⁹ Over time, IR scholars have extended this approach to the regime level, arguing that governors can combine international institutions and create deliberate regime complexity to strengthen control. Specifically, it has been suggested that states or organizations (as governors) enlist multiple institutions to improve monitoring and supervision,⁸⁰ erect checks and balances,⁸¹ and limit agency drift.⁸² This *diversification*, where institutions are enlisted as competing substitutes, is a costly but potentially effective regime design strategy for reducing intermediaries' leeway for pursuing alternative governance goals.

⁷⁹ Hawkins et al. 2006, 26–31.

⁸⁰ Biermann and Rittberger 2020; Hodson 2015.

⁸¹ Moschella 2020; Hawkins et al., in fact, also argued that '[c]hecks are also created by empowering more than one agent or hiring agents with overlapping mandates. Competition between the agents will help reveal to principals the true costs of performing the task, the preferences of the agents, and so on.' Hawkins et al. 2006, 30.

⁸² Henning 2019; See also Henning 2017.

However, the fundamental challenge that governors encounter when navigating the CC tradeoff does not derive from information asymmetries and related agency slack or “drift”.⁸³ Rather, it stems from the inverse relationship between competence and control. The principal issue is *whether* and *when* to tighten control. In the case of IIGO orchestrators like the G7 and G20, the dilemma faced is that tightening control over universal organizations—even when possible—undermines the competence needed to achieve valued ends. Against this backdrop, Hageböling suggests that governors frequently *differentiate* (as opposed to diversify) regimes to mitigate a steep CC tradeoff.⁸⁴ Here, intermediaries are enlisted not as competing substitutes but as complementary providers of different competencies.⁸⁵ Differentiation is a regime design strategy that targets the core of the CC tradeoff. While it cannot circumvent the CC tradeoff altogether, it aims at reducing its steepness by optimizing the ratio between competence and control.

Differentiation leverages the varying *control elasticity of competencies*. This elasticity captures the sensitivity of intermediaries’ competencies to governor control.⁸⁶ A higher elasticity indicates that a competency is more sensitive and, hence, the tradeoff with control steeper. The indirect governance literature distinguishes four basic types of competencies: expertise, capacity, credibility, and legitimacy.⁸⁷ Intermediary competence generally degrades with governor control. Importantly, however, while all competency types are subject to a tradeoff with control,

⁸³ As Abbott et al. note, “[i]mportantly, the governor’s dilemma is based not on information asymmetry, but on power.” Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 4.

⁸⁴ Hageböling 2021a.

⁸⁵ This observation about differentiation as a strategy also integrates with recent scholarship that identifies differentiation as a key design dimension for classifying and comparing regime complexes. See Henning and Pratt 2020.

⁸⁶ More specifically, the control elasticity of competencies captures how the level of competence that an intermediary can provide changes in response to a change in governor control.

⁸⁷ Abbott et al. concretize that they ‘define “competence” to include all of the capabilities intermediaries can potentially contribute to achieving a governor’s goals. These include, most importantly, expertise, credibility, legitimacy, and operational capacity.’ Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020a, 620; See also Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 3; Note that a very similar distinction between competency types is also made in earlier IR scholarship applying Principal-Agent theory to international organizations. Hawkins et al., for example, argue that states delegate to international organizations because they ‘sometimes lack technical expertise, credibility, legitimacy, or other resources to make policy on their own.’ Hawkins et al. 2006, 14.

empirical studies “reveal that the intensity of the tradeoff varies across competencies.”⁸⁸ Generally, the ability of intermediaries to provide credibility and legitimacy degrades much more rapidly with governor control than technical expertise and organizational capacity.⁸⁹ That is to say, the tightening of control tends to have a comparatively muted effect on an intermediary’s ability to supply or pool the issue-specific expertise that a governor requires. For that institution to be recognized as a credible voice that “speaks truth to power” or for it to serve as a credible commitment mechanism, by contrast, it will have to possess considerable (ex post) immunity from attempts by the governor to exert control.⁹⁰

Through differentiation—that is, by enlisting a different institution depending on the competency type that it seeks—an IIGO orchestrator can thus effectively “split” the CC tradeoff and optimize multiple smaller ones. Universal organizations like the UN, the WHO, and IFIs, as we have seen, are characterized by their comparatively high level of independence and relative insulation from attempts at tightening control. For IIGOs, universal organizations are, therefore, critical for competencies like credibility or legitimacy but are also problematic intermediaries given the risk of control loss. By contrast, club institutions lack this level of independence but allow for closer control. This type of institution can take various shapes: some are informal—as in the case of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI)—and others are formalized, like the 28-member Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS).⁹¹ However, they share a club-like character, notably a smaller and more “like-minded” membership and a setup that makes them member state driven rather than staff driven. Where membership

⁸⁸ Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2020b, 28; As is frequently the case when used in economics, control elasticity of competencies is empirically observed. However, note that this variation can also be constructed from the theoretical literature. The importance of ceding control to an agent (or intermediary) for its ability to provide credibility is a key example. See, e.g., Miller 2005, 220–23; Bendor, Glazer, and Hammond 2001, 259–60; and Schelling 1980, 22.

⁸⁹ Hageböling 2021a.

⁹⁰ On credibility and indirect governance, see, e.g., Bendor, Glazer, and Hammond 2001, 259–60; and Miller 2005, 220–23.

⁹¹ Basel Committee on Banking Supervision 2016. The count of 28 member states includes the European Union.

overlaps, IIGOs can exercise substantial control over the activities of these institutions. At the same time, club institutions' greater dependence makes them less suitable for the provision of competencies with high control elasticity.

Regime differentiation thus allows IIGOs to cede control to universal organizations only where their competencies are critical, and they retain it by relying on club institutions where possible. cursory examples indicate regime patterns that reflect such differentiation by IIGOs. Take the G20's macroeconomic policy regime. Previous attempts by China, the Euro area, Japan, Saudi Arabia, and the United States at addressing current account imbalances directly through IMF Multilateral Consultations (MCs) had failed resoundingly. As two senior IMF officials note, the reliance on the IMF as lead facilitator enhanced the legitimacy of the MCs.⁹² However, the strong deficit in states' "ownership" (that is, control) of the process meant that shortly after the MCs started, they decided not to reconvene.⁹³ By contrast, following the 2008 global financial crisis, the G20 pursued broadly similar objectives but instead integrated two institutions in the so-called Mutual Assessment Process (MAP). The so-called Framework Working Group (FWG), comprised mainly of senior staff from the G20 finance ministries or central banks, was set up to pool expertise and serve as a platform "to develop indicative guidelines."⁹⁴ The IMF was then called upon by the G20 to serve as a credible monitor of states' economic policies based on the FWG's indicative guidelines.⁹⁵ This differentiated regime retained greater state "ownership" but still drew on the IMF's credibility where it was most salient, namely for the monitoring of national policies.

⁹² Faruqee and Srinivasan 2012, 503.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Group of Twenty 2010.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*; This arrangement was possible because the IMF's surveillance-like activities were classified as technical service under Article V, Section 2 (b) of the Fund's Articles of Agreement. In this regard, IMF staff clarified that "[t]he essential quality of such services is that they are voluntary for both the Fund and the member: the Fund does not have to perform such services and the member does not have to receive them." International Monetary Fund 2009b, 6.

For IIGOs, I contend, differentiation represents a means to optimize the delicate balance between competence and control in orchestration. It allows IIGOs to enlist less (club) or more (universal) independent organizations depending on the type of competency sought, eschewing the need to “put all the eggs in one basket” and making governance outcomes unnecessarily dependent on organizations that are difficult to control. This leads to the first hypothesis:

Hypothesis I: IIGOs, as orchestrators, enlist (less independent) club institutions or (more independent) universal organizations when the control elasticity of required competencies is lower or higher, respectively.

Calibrating Competence and Control: Enlistment Choices along the Governance Cycle

A differentiated regime equips IIGO orchestrators with a lever to calibrate competence and control in line with their requirements. It allows IIGOs to draw on universal organizations in a more targeted manner and to rely on club institutions for competencies that are less contingent on independence from the governor. Specifically, then, when should we expect an IIGO to primarily rely on universal organizations? And, in turn, when is an IIGO likely to prefer club institutions to pursue its governance goals?

A logical starting point to address these questions and develop more concrete expectations about regime design is to theorize IIGOs’ enlistment preferences for each of the basic steps in the governance cycle: the *setting*, *implementation*, and *enforcement* of rules, principles, or standards.⁹⁶ An IIGO’s decision about whether to enlist club institutions or universal organizations will be determined by its requirements for competence and control at each of these steps. In other words, what an IIGO orchestrates (setting, implementation, or

⁹⁶ For the sake of brevity, from now on, I will frequently only refer to rule setting, implementation, or enforcement.

enforcement) affects the competencies and control it seeks—and, correspondingly, *when* it is more likely to enlist club institutions or universal organizations.

How differentiation manifests in more intricate regime design patterns thus depends on the relative weight of competence and control requirements at each stage, from rule setting to enforcement. When an IIGO requires competency types with high *control elasticity*, such as credibility and legitimacy, to govern effectively, this heightens the pressure to cede control to universal organizations. Where, by contrast, the main competencies it needs have a comparatively lower level of control elasticity, like expertise and capacity, club institutions become a more likely enlistment choice. While control elasticity is a key determinant of the enlistment decision, the risk and significance of *control loss* is also a factor. When an IIGO anticipates that other states may successfully dilute, change, or block its goals in relevant universal organizations, it will gravitate towards reliance on club institutions. Vice versa, where there is less leeway to diverge from an IIGO's goals, it will more readily prioritize competence even when this requires ceding control to a universal organization.

Examining differences in the main competency types required and the relative risk of control loss throughout the governance cycles provides valuable information for forming expectations about the design of IIGO-orchestrated regimes. Starting with rule *setting*, it is primarily contingent on an institution's ability to bundle relevant technical or issue-specific expertise and provide the organizational capacity or platform to stakeholders for exchanging information and converging on a common viewpoint. Club institutions are often suitable intermediaries for that purpose. We have already seen that the G20-associated FWG was used to pool expertise and to “develop indicative guidelines” for the assessment of macroeconomic policies.⁹⁷ Another example is the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and

⁹⁷ Group of Twenty 2010.

Materials of Mass Destruction (Global Partnership), a 31-member body launched by the G7 to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to terrorist groups and states of concern.⁹⁸ It pools the expertise of G7 members and partners to “assess the threat landscape” and provides the capacity to “coordinate and collaborate on an ongoing basis,”⁹⁹ to “[d]evelop and maintain appropriate effective measures,” and to establish a set of guidelines that guide WMD non-proliferation projects internationally.¹⁰⁰ As in these cases, club institutions can function as rule setters even where they are under the close guidance of a political governor.

At the same time, rule setting comes with a significant risk of control loss. In universal organizations, the development or selection of rules offers ample opportunity for the large and heterogeneous membership to dilute, change, or block governance goals at an early stage—even if formal voting provision are stacked in IIGO members’ favor. This stems from the way that these organizations habitually operate and make decisions. We have seen earlier that a large proportion of formal organizations’ decisions are made by consensus. As Drezner observes, “even when power differences are formally incorporated into decision rules ... informal consensus norms still constrain the great powers’ ability to push global economic governance through universal membership IGOs.”¹⁰¹ This makes the setting of rules through universal organizations susceptible to contestation strategies and elevates the risk of control loss. Overall, in view of this profile of CC requirements, IIGOs will frequently have strong incentives to enlist club institutions for rule setting.

Implementation presents IIGOs with a different set of CC considerations. Supporting broad, possibly even universal, implementation of rules can entail resource-intensive technical assistance and compliance monitoring. More importantly, however, due to their intrusiveness,

⁹⁸ Group of Eight 2002.

⁹⁹ Global Partnership n.d.

¹⁰⁰ Global Partnership n.d.

¹⁰¹ Drezner 2007, 67.

measures to advance implementation are often infeasible without the perceived credibility and legitimacy of a universal organization.¹⁰² Technical assistance, for instance, regularly entails outside involvement in the design of institutional systems, regulatory procedures, and even legislation.¹⁰³ Related monitoring of states' success at (and willingness towards) implementation requires access to sensitive information whose disclosure can carry disadvantageous consequences. Generally, policymakers and domestic publics are less likely to resist the implementation of rules by an independent universal organization than by an exclusive club of states.¹⁰⁴ Returning to our previous example, the Global Partnership—as a developer of measures and guidelines—integrates into a larger WMD regime complex in which the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) take the lead on the implementation of international projects.¹⁰⁵

Meanwhile, the risk of other states successfully challenging an IIGO's governance goals will often be less acute at this stage—thus reducing the demand for control. Once a set of rules, principles, or standards is developed and has been accepted by a critical mass of states, it propagates more easily. Finnemore et al. capture this phenomenon in their description of the “tipping point” in norm life cycles, after which norms have a propensity to cascade and become difficult to challenge.¹⁰⁶ Analogously, the setting of rules by club institutions and their adoption by IIGO members narrows the window for alternative propositions and goal divergence at the implementation stage. It is also worth noting that the identification of relevant standards and their integration into the work of universal organizations is frequently spearheaded by

¹⁰² As Abbott and Snidal note, ‘activities that might be unacceptable in their original state-to-state form become acceptable when run through an independent, or seemingly independent, IO.’ Abbott and Snidal 1998, 18.

¹⁰³ The World Bank is a key example of a multilateral organization that provides comprehensive technical assistance to states. See, e.g., World Bank n.d.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Abbott and Snidal 1998, 18.

¹⁰⁵ Global Partnership n.d.; As Heyes reports based on comments of a G7 (then G8) official involved in the Global Partnership, ‘in purist terms, there are no partnership projects. National and international organizations lead the projects, which are declared to the partnership members and so, to a degree, are coordinated within the partnership framework.’ Heyes 2013.

¹⁰⁶ Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 895–896.

professional staff. The IAEA's statute, for example, details that "[t]he Agency is authorized ... [t]o establish or adopt ... standards of safety for protection of health and minimization of danger to life and property ... and to provide for the application of these standards."¹⁰⁷ As part of this mandate, the IAEA also draws on the recommendations of bodies like the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP),¹⁰⁸ an independent nongovernmental organization.¹⁰⁹ In sum, where an IIGO governor prefers an already defined and potentially cascading set of rules, CC requirements for implementation make universal organizations a likely enlistment choice.

Finally, *enforcement* again shifts competence and control requirements. The insulation of an institution from parochial interests—and its resulting credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of those that are potentially sanctioned—plays a central role in enforcement. Enforcement in the world trade system, for instance, builds on the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Dispute Settlement Mechanism (DSM) for authorizing retaliatory measures taken by members.¹¹⁰ In the absence of an independent intermediary like the WTO, the sanctioning of noncompliance can easily become inseparable from thinly veiled power politics—and, thus, contested and ineffective. Yet, as for implementation, the regime context matters. Crucially, the credibility and legitimacy deficits of an enforcing institution are moderated where decisions are based on monitoring by a more independent institution. The G20 MAP process introduced earlier makes use of this. It links implementation monitoring and enforcement mechanisms by basing the FWG's peer pressure to redress unsustainable economic policies on assessments by the more

¹⁰⁷ Conference on the Statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency 1989, art. III A(6).

¹⁰⁸ International Atomic Energy Agency n.d.

¹⁰⁹ International Commission on Radiological Protection n.d.

¹¹⁰ World Trade Organization n.d.

independent IMF staff.¹¹¹ Therefore, where the risk of control loss is high, considerate regime design can make club institutions a more viable enlistment choice for enforcement.

Indeed, control requirements for enforcement will tend to be high given the significant risk that the creation or expansion of enforcement mechanisms encounters strong friction in universal organizations. First, enforcement measures are exceptionally difficult to agree. Creating or extending enforcement mechanisms typically requires amendments to an organization's treaty. The corresponding bargaining costs and time horizon can make this impractical.¹¹² States' negotiations concerning improvements to the WTO's DSM, for example, began in 1994 and are still ongoing almost three decades later.¹¹³ Second, enforcement changes the character and perception of an institution in ways that can impact its value to the IIGO orchestrator, potentially in a lasting manner. The Bretton Woods Institutions, for instance, stress their "cooperative nature" and draw on it as an important source of legitimacy, particularly in relation to smaller member states.¹¹⁴ Therefore, they have traditionally distanced themselves from coercing compliance, including through "naming and shaming."¹¹⁵ In sum, the substantial obstacles to enlisting universal organizations for enforcement will frequently make club institutions a more viable enlistment choice, especially where implementation monitoring and enforcement mechanisms can be linked across institutions.

Overall, differentiation between club and universal organizations forms the basis for an IIGO orchestrator's ability to calibrate competence and control in line with its requirements. These requirements, I have argued, are frequently best addressed by embedding implementation

¹¹¹ English et al. 2012, 5; The 2012 G20 Los Cabos Growth and Jobs Action Plan, in fact, dedicates an entire section of its annex to the role of 'third-party assessments,' primarily through the IMF, for monitoring countries' performance on the MAP's 'Indicative Guidelines'. Group of Twenty 2012.

¹¹² At the very least, major decisions that require a (large) qualified majority or even consensus tend to change the institutional setting for bargaining and strengthen the position of weaker states. A possible analogy are decisions on institutional enlargement. For a detailed discussion, see Schneider 2011.

¹¹³ World Trade Organization n.d.

¹¹⁴ Cf. International Monetary Fund Staff 2002.

¹¹⁵ Reuter and Truman 2005, 58.

by universal organizations in the rule setting and enforcement activities of club institutions. This allows IIGOs to limit ceding control to universal organizations where their competencies are essential to achieving valued ends. The second hypothesis is thus:

Hypothesis II: IIGOs, as orchestrators, enlist (less independent) club institutions as primary rule *setters* and *enforcers* and (more independent) universal organizations as primary rule *implementers*.

Before moving to the empirical analysis, I summarize the essence of this theoretical discussion in Figure 1, below. To visualize the logic of differentiation in IIGO-orchestrated regimes, the figure illustrates the governance relationships (solid arrows) between the IIGO, as orchestrator, club institutions and universal organizations, as intermediaries, and the target, which will typically be states. The upper half of the figure captures the basic differentiation argument (Hypothesis I). Confronted with a steep CC tradeoff, the IIGO orchestrator enlists multiple types of intermediaries: universal organizations and club institutions. This allows the IIGO to obtain a preferred combination of competence and control by differentiating their contributions. Notably, it can draw on more independent universal organizations selectively when it requires competencies with higher control elasticity. In turn, it can rely on club institutions that are more anticipatory concerning its preferences when control elasticity is lower, or when the risk of control loss prevails.

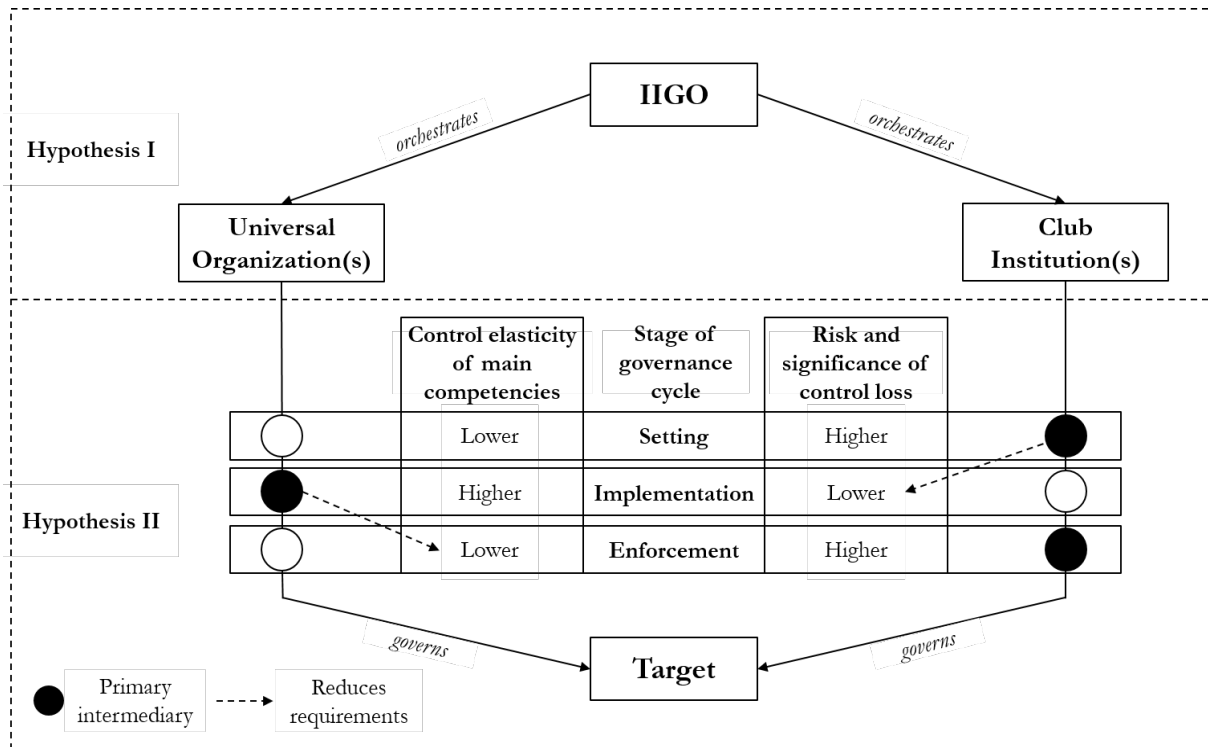


FIGURE 1. *The logic of differentiation in IIGO-orchestrated regimes*

In my discussion, I built on this basic differentiation argument to specify when, in practice, we should expect an IIGO to govern primarily through each of these two types of institutions. Accordingly, the lower half of the figure condenses my reasoning about the allocation of universal organizations and club institutions to the governance cycle (Hypothesis II). Each stage of the governance cycle (setting, implementation, and enforcement) varies in terms of the control elasticity of the main competencies required and the risk and significance of control loss. In addition, as we have seen, enlistment choices can reduce competence and control requirements at later stages (dashed arrows). Together, this determines an IIGO’s choice of primary intermediary at each stage (shaded circle). Whereas a higher control elasticity and a lower risk and significance of control loss make universal organizations a better fit for rule implementation, IIGOs are more likely to rely on club institutions for rule setting and enforcement.

Analyzing the Design of G7- and G20-Orchestrated Global Regulatory Regimes

The G7 and the G20¹¹⁶ are the most influential IIGOs in contemporary global governance and continue to expand their orchestration activities. I probe my theoretical hypotheses through an in-depth analysis of two principal G7-/G20-orchestrated global regulatory regimes: market integrity and financial stability.

My case selection is driven by several considerations. To investigate my hypothesis, governance relationships must have unfolded and be observable throughout the governance cycle, from rule setting to enforcement. Given the G-groups' inception as financial organizations, cases from the financial regulatory domain satisfy this requirement. This allows for a first test of the hypotheses by comparing expected and actual regime patterns (e.g., primary institutions enlisted along the governance cycle) and tracing the rationale behind decisions about orchestration.

Moreover, the selected cases have the advantage of approximating a most-different design.¹¹⁷ The market integrity and financial stability regimes are similar regarding the causal variable of interest (steep CC tradeoff) and outcome (governed by multiple intergovernmental institutions) but show little covariation concerning other variables, including several plausible alternative factors.¹¹⁸ Notable differences include the lead by state vs. nonstate actors, nonexistent vs. preexistent standards (and associated transgovernmental or transnational bodies), and "high" politics vs. "low" politics.¹¹⁹ Therefore, in addition to providing a first test

¹¹⁶ Throughout my empirical analysis, I regularly use the expression 'G-groups' to refer to the G7 and G20 together. Between 1997 and 2014, the G7 took the form of the G8 and included Russia. For clarity and to emphasize that the same IIGO is meant, I refer to the G7 throughout.

¹¹⁷ See Seawright and Gerring 2008, 304–6; Gerring 2007, 139–42; On comparable case research designs more generally, see Levy 2008, 10–11.

¹¹⁸ One advantage here is that my hypotheses are bivariate and thus eschew the problem of causal complexity in comparable case designs. Cf. Levy 2008, 10–11.

¹¹⁹ On 'high' vs 'low' politics: Unlike financial stability, market integrity is of direct relevance to typical high politics domains like law enforcement, anti-terrorism, and non-proliferation. As I detail later, this also led to reluctance on the part of the IFIs to get involved in the market integrity regime.

of the hypotheses, this setup can weaken alternative causal explanations such as regime differentiation as a “functional” response to the ecosystem of private standards-setting bodies.¹²⁰

I analyze each regime in three steps: First, I discuss the underlying parameters of the *CC tradeoff* faced by the G-groups. Second, I examine the genesis of the regime with a view to the differentiation of governance contributions between club institutions and universal organizations (Hypothesis I). Third, I assess the G-groups’ enlistment choices along the governance cycle—from rule setting to implementation to enforcement (Hypothesis II).

The Global Market Integrity Regime: Countering Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing

An estimated two to five percent of global GDP—between US\$800 billion and US\$2 trillion—is laundered annually.¹²¹ Money laundering, that is, the “processing of assets generated by criminal activity to obscure the link between the funds and their illegal origins,”¹²² undermines political systems, for example by facilitating the corruption of politicians and administrators, and can have destabilizing effects on economies by diverting flows away from beneficial usage and eroding confidence in the banking system.¹²³ Money laundering is also closely related to national security concerns such as the financing of terrorism.¹²⁴ With the rapid expansion of cross-border financial ties, global anti-money laundering efforts and (later) countering the financing of terrorism (AML/CFI) became more salient, particularly for industrialized economies.¹²⁵ In the late 1980s, the G7 thus became a focal point for these economies wanting

¹²⁰ See Gerring 2008, 673–74. Notably, when factors do not appear across the cases, this eliminates them as necessary causes.

¹²¹ Current estimate by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. United Nations n.d.

¹²² International Monetary Fund 2021c.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Drezner 2007, 142.

to move towards a coordinated AML/CFT approach.¹²⁶ After the 2008 global financial crisis, the leaders' level G20 developed into the main orchestrating IIGO in this area.¹²⁷

The Competence-Control Tradeoff in Global Market Integrity Governance

To be effective, an AML/CFT regime requires the broadest possible adoption of common regulatory standards. Money laundering and terrorist financing exploit loopholes globally by moving funds to those jurisdictions that have insufficiently fortified their legal code and institutional frameworks against illicit flows of money.¹²⁸ Because the expansion of international flows of money makes jurisdictions vulnerable to regulatory weaknesses in other countries, states face a weakest-link problem.¹²⁹ AML/CFT efforts, in other words, are “only as strong as the jurisdiction with the weakest measures.”¹³⁰ This renders a universal governance response critical to combating money laundering and terrorist financing.

Such a universal governance response, however, is complicated by significant and asymmetric distributional implications among states. In principle, “[a]buse of the global financial system is a clear case of a ‘global public bad.’”¹³¹ However, as Jakobi explains, “the gains that were to be achieved – such as increased security of financial markets and countering crime – were particularly attractive to those countries where most drug- and crime-related money was entering the financial system.”¹³² In other words, major economies that are attractive destinations for drugs and illicit money have a particularly large stake in a stricter AML/CFT

¹²⁶ Scherrer 2009, 15; Notably, the G7 served to reconcile different views regarding the role and responsibilities of the banking sector and law enforcement in this domain as well as the modalities of countering illicit flows without affecting legitimate financial activities. See Simmons 2000a, 245.

¹²⁷ This shift towards the G20 as the main orchestrator was driven by its emergence as a focal point for global economic governance and the expansion of the FATF's membership to include G20 members. For several years, the FATF has also been preparing annual reports to the G20 leaders' summit. See, e.g., Financial Action Task Force 2019c.

¹²⁸ International Monetary Fund 2021c.

¹²⁹ See, e.g., Krisch 2014, 20.

¹³⁰ Financial Action Task Force n.d.

¹³¹ Former U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Lawrence Summers, quoted in Reuter and Truman 2004, 78.

¹³² Jakobi 2015, 405.

regime. By contrast, for many others, the costs of such a regime outweigh the benefits.¹³³ For some, whose financial sector thrives on lax regulation and a private banking tradition, it even presents a serious threat to their national economic competitiveness.¹³⁴

The global nature of the problem meant that the G7 would not be able to address money laundering and terrorist financing effectively without enlisting universal organizations.¹³⁵ Yet the risk of the G7's ambitions being diluted, changed, or outright blocked was significant. Previous efforts to advance the fight against money laundering through universal organizations had been slow and painful. In 1988, the UN introduced the first international definition of money laundering in the Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Vienna Convention).¹³⁶ However, the inclusion of money laundering was highly controversial¹³⁷ and led to negotiations so protracted that one UN employee reportedly stated that he “would rather have [his] teeth pulled out than to sit through another one of those negotiations.”¹³⁸ The G7 faced a dilemma: to advance a stricter AML/CFT regime, it had to tighten control and possibly even bypass slow consensus formation in universal organizations. At the same time, involvement of universal organizations, especially the IFIs, would be crucial for the regime to be universally accepted and applied across jurisdictions.

Optimizing the Competence-Control Ratio: Enlistment of the FATF and IFIs as Complementary Institutions

In response, the G-groups created and enlisted a club-style institution—the Financial Action Task Force (FATF)—to operate alongside universal organizations in a complementary manner. The FATF came to life at the occasion of the 1989 G7 Paris summit¹³⁹ as an ad hoc network of

¹³³ Tsingou 2010, 623.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 628.

¹³⁵ Indeed, as explored in more detail below, until the G7 successfully enlisted the IFIs for AML/CFT governance, coordination had taken place largely ‘among the most industrialized countries.’ Simmons 2000a, 245.

¹³⁶ United Nations Economic and Social Council 1988.

¹³⁷ Johnson 2014, 197.

¹³⁸ Nance 2018, 114.

¹³⁹ Group of Seven 1989.

government officials from G7 countries, the EU Commission, and eight additional like-minded countries.¹⁴⁰ It initially operated on a one-year mandate “to assess the results of cooperation already undertaken ... and to consider additional preventive efforts in this field, including the adaptation of the legal and regulatory systems so as to enhance multilateral judicial assistance.”¹⁴¹ In line with the focus on narcotic drugs at the time, under French chairmanship, the FATF sought to create an empirical basis for policy development by estimating the volume of money laundering related to the narcotics market as well as identifying ways to prevent illegal flows of funds from narcotics trafficking.¹⁴² As the one-year mandate expired in 1990, the G7 decided to transform the FATF into a permanent and more resourceful international body.¹⁴³ At the 1991 London summit, the G7 further decided that, to ensure that the FATF could fulfill this function and operate on a continuing basis, it would be assisted by a secretariat located at the OECD.¹⁴⁴

Notwithstanding its nominal independence, the FATF was created as—and remains—an institution over which the G7, and later the G20, exercises considerable control. First, states have only gradually expanded its membership. It currently remains limited to 39 members, including all G20 members as well as the European Commission and the Gulf Co-operation Council.¹⁴⁵ Second, little voice or influence is given to outsiders. Participants that are substantially involved in the activities of the FATF are active officials of member governments, primarily from finance ministries, law enforcement agencies, and regulatory bodies.¹⁴⁶ Third, even as the FATF transformed from a temporary working group into a full-fledged organization, it remained subject to close oversight. Only in 2019, 30 years after its foundation, did members lift a sunset clause requiring regular renewal and decided to equip it with an open-

¹⁴⁰ Financial Action Task Force n.d.

¹⁴¹ Group of Seven 1989.

¹⁴² Nance 2018, 115; On the demand for data on the illegal drug industry and measurement challenges, see Thoumi 2005.

¹⁴³ Financial Action Task Force n.d.

¹⁴⁴ Gstöhl 2007, 26.

¹⁴⁵ Financial Action Task Force 2021.

¹⁴⁶ Johnson 2014, 199.

ended mandate.¹⁴⁷ Clearly, “the FATF is an organization that states keep on a short leash.”¹⁴⁸ Contextualizing this setup in the broader multilateral environment, Gstöhl aptly notes that “the G7 preferred to create the FATF as an external forum in the realm of the OECD instead of relying on the global UN system in order to dispose of a smaller, more flexible and controllable instrument.”¹⁴⁹

Despite the central role of the FATF, the regime incubated by the G-groups also builds on the contributions of several universal organizations, most notably the IMF and the World Bank. From the start, the G7 involved the IFIs in the FATF process. From the early 2000s onwards, however, the G7 explicitly called on the IFIs as co-contributors to AML/CFT governance.¹⁵⁰ It became more and more evident that the FATF, as an exclusive club institution, lacked the credibility and legitimacy to sustain a universal regime. As Johnson notes, “states already possessed deep expertise, for they had been at the vanguard of domestic and international anti-money laundering measures for years.”¹⁵¹ Congruently, at the IMF, there was concern about AML/CFT efforts being outside its core expertise and suggestions to focus more narrowly on financial supervisory principles.¹⁵² What made the IFIs valuable complements to the G7-orchestrated regime was that “[t]hey are universal organizations, compared to the self-appointed FATF club, with well-earned reputations for competence and integrity.”¹⁵³ Some observers have gone as far as to argue that the broadening of the regime the FATF had built to include the IFIs was nothing more than an attempt to “routinize, professionalize and to some extent depoliticise” the body’s activities.¹⁵⁴ Their constitution as (more independent) universal

¹⁴⁷ Financial Action Task Force 2019b.

¹⁴⁸ Johnson 2014, 200.

¹⁴⁹ Gstöhl 2007, 27.

¹⁵⁰ See Group of Seven 2001; Group of Seven 2002; and International Monetary Fund 2021c.

¹⁵¹ Johnson 2014, 200.

¹⁵² Holder 2003, 386.

¹⁵³ Reuter and Truman 2005, 58.

¹⁵⁴ Levi 2007, 172, quoted in Oliveira 2018, 161.

organizations made them valuable as contributors of the credibility and—most notably—legitimacy, which the FATF, as a club institution, lacked.

The differentiation between multiple institutions—notably the FATF and the IFIs – thus crystallizes as a central feature of the G-groups’ orchestration of global AML/CFT efforts. Whereas the FATF provides the organizational capacity and platform for bundling expertise, the IFIs are enlisted as complements to remedy the former’s deficit in credibility and legitimacy in the view of states that do not form part of its core membership.

Calibrating Competence and Control: Enlistment of the FATF and IFIs along the Governance Cycle

Having examined the genesis of the AML/CFT regime and the complementarity of the FATF and IFIs, I now proceed to analyze how the G-groups enlist these institutions throughout the governance cycle—from rule setting to implementation to enforcement.

Rule Setting Since its creation as an ad hoc working group in 1989, the FATF’s primary objective has been to protect the integrity of the international financial system by developing a set of regulatory recommendations for the combating of money laundering. When its initial mandate ended in April 1990, the FATF released *Forty Recommendations* as a comprehensive reference for advancing the fight against money laundering.¹⁵⁵ The FATF also provides the organizational platform for coordinating and updating global AML/CFT efforts. To that end, it draws on a “dedicated team of professional support staff and experts from all over the world” that “supports the substantive work of the FATF membership and global network.”¹⁵⁶ From this global network, the FATF bundles information on new “typologies,” that is, the techniques used to launder money or finance terrorism, and, where necessary, adapts its recommendations.¹⁵⁷ Under its supervision, the Forty Recommendations have thus, since their

¹⁵⁵ For the original Forty Recommendations, see Financial Action Task Force 1990.

¹⁵⁶ Financial Action Task Force n.d.

¹⁵⁷ Financial Action Task Force n.d.

first release in 1990, undergone several revisions and amendments.¹⁵⁸ The organization's centrality in this domain has led to the "recognition of the FATF as the standard setter" by the IFIs.¹⁵⁹

Through the FATF, the G-groups thus retain close control over rule setting. Over time, the FATF process has seen greater involvement not just of representatives from FATF-style regional bodies (FSRBs), their regional branches involving non-FATF members, but also public consultations with the private sector.¹⁶⁰ However, the FSRB representatives have no voting rights and reportedly have little de facto influence on discussions.¹⁶¹ As Krisch notes, "[m]ost nonmembers of the club ... fall far short of having an effective voice in FATF decision making."¹⁶² Universal organizations like IFIs are involved in the FATF's work through their own representatives. Yet, as observers, they have no formal leverage in decision making.¹⁶³ Overall, even as "the FATF's Forty Recommendations have provided the substantive core for developing international rules with respect to anti-money laundering efforts,"¹⁶⁴ the G7, and later the G20, retain significant control because the role of outsiders—whether states or international organizations—remains limited.

Rule Implementation The FATF also advances the diffusion and implementation of these recommendations.¹⁶⁵ The FSRBs have been instrumental in the "building of a worldwide anti-money laundering network."¹⁶⁶ Over the years, a total of nine FSRBs were established,¹⁶⁷ including over 200 jurisdictions.¹⁶⁸ FSRBs' functions include offering assistance and support to

¹⁵⁸ The latest update of the FATF recommendations has been published in October 2020. See Financial Action Task Force 2020b.

¹⁵⁹ Holder 2003, 383.

¹⁶⁰ See Financial Action Task Force 2012a.

¹⁶¹ Oliveira 2018, 160.

¹⁶² Krisch 2014, 24.

¹⁶³ See Financial Action Task Force 2021; and Financial Action Task Force 2019b.

¹⁶⁴ Simmons 2000a, 261.

¹⁶⁵ Williams 2001, 124.

¹⁶⁶ Gstöhl 2007, 25.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Financial Action Task Force n.d.

members, including for implementation planning, the drafting of legislation, and the training of legal and law enforcement officials.¹⁶⁹ The FATF and the FSRBs also monitor countries' compliance with FATF recommendations through the so-called mutual evaluations process.¹⁷⁰ It encompasses assessments of technical compliance, that is, the translation of recommendations into laws, regulations, or other legal instruments, and effectiveness, that is, the extent to which the jurisdiction's legal framework produces desired results.¹⁷¹

The principal step towards the universalization of AML/CFT recommendations, however, was the G7's enlistment of the IFIs for advancing implementation in close coordination with the FATF and FSRBs. The FATF encountered increasing pushback against the universalization of a regime that was single-handedly construed by a select group of major economies. As Levi and Gilmore point out, "[t]his plainly represented a cultural shift, in trying to achieve results from multilateral efforts without first or afterwards requiring global consensus."¹⁷² When the FATF resorted to openly identifying noncooperative jurisdictions and threatening countermeasures, this culminated in widespread criticism by nonmembers.¹⁷³ The deputy chair of the Caribbean FSRB, for instance, proclaimed that it was unacceptable "that a handful of states, however powerful, should usurp the right to dictate standards to the rest of the world under the threat or imposition of sanctions."¹⁷⁴ In June 2001, the FATF itself, in its annual report, conceded that its actions "had the unintentional effect of straining the relationship between the FATF and the FATF-style regional bodies."¹⁷⁵ Just as, in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, money laundering and terrorist financing became more

¹⁶⁹ Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering n.d.

¹⁷⁰ Financial Action Task Force n.d.

¹⁷¹ See Financial Action Task Force 2020a.

¹⁷² Levi and Gilmore 2002, 104.

¹⁷³ Krisch 2014, 22.

¹⁷⁴ Deputy Chair of the Caribbean FSRB, quoted in Hülse 2008, 464.

¹⁷⁵ Financial Action Task Force 2001, 11. The report, in fact, explicitly links that straining of the FATF-FSRB relationship to the Non-Cooperative Countries and Territories Initiative, which included the 'blacklisting' of non-compliant countries.

salient,¹⁷⁶ the FATF's legitimacy deficit complicated the further advancement of global implementation. Soon after, the G7 called for a closer integration of the IFIs into the regime and "urge[d] the IMF and World Bank to begin conducting integrated and comprehensive assessments of standards to combat money laundering and financing of terrorism."¹⁷⁷

Since the turn of the millennium, the G7 has thus enlisted the IFIs as the primary institutions for universalizing the implementation of the AML/CFT regime. This inclusion of the IFIs in the regime, as Tsingou observes, "addressed some of the membership shortcomings of FATF."¹⁷⁸ After the review of an initial pilot program,¹⁷⁹ in April 2004, the FATF recommendations were made a mandatory part of the Reports on the Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSCs) in every assessment under IFIs' Financial Sector Assessment Program (FSAP),¹⁸⁰ which structures comprehensive analyses of members' respective financial sectors.¹⁸¹ In the case of the IMF, FSAPs also serve as input for its surveillance function under Article IV consultations.¹⁸² The IMF alone aims to conduct approximately six AML/CFT country assessments each year.¹⁸³ Reviews of countries that are not FATF core members, in particular, were largely transferred to the IMF and World Bank.¹⁸⁴ Meanwhile, implementation monitoring by the IFIs remained firmly synchronized with the FATF's recommendations as well as with procedures. To that end, the FATF regularly publishes and updates a series of documents on

¹⁷⁶ See Gardner 2007, 325–26; and Krisch 2014, 21–22.

¹⁷⁷ Group of Seven 2002.

¹⁷⁸ Tsingou 2010, 624.

¹⁷⁹ International Monetary Fund and World Bank 2004, 4.

¹⁸⁰ International Monetary Fund n.d.; International Monetary Fund 2019b, 45.

¹⁸¹ International Monetary Fund 2021b. Note that the FSAP is run by the IMF for advanced economies and the World Bank for developing and emerging market economies.

¹⁸² Article IV of the IMF's Articles of Agreement regulates surveillance, including by determining members' obligations to provide information required for IMF staff analyses of countries' economic and financial system as well as potential risks to the international community. United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference 1944, art. IV.

¹⁸³ International Monetary Fund n.d.

¹⁸⁴ Jakobi 2015, 400.

principles, objectives, and methodology—comprising hundreds of pages of detailed guidelines—to ensure the coherence of assessments.¹⁸⁵

The IFIs are also the cornerstone of the technical assistance provided to jurisdictions that struggle with implementing AML/CFT recommendations effectively in their legal and financial systems.¹⁸⁶ This technical assistance is comprehensive and ranges from short-term support from headquarters to the assignment of resident advisors, the drafting of new legislation, and support for enhanced supervisory structures, including the formation of staff for financial intelligence units.¹⁸⁷ Over the past ten years, the World Bank’s Financial Integrity unit alone supported over one hundred countries with national AML/CFT risk assessments and trained over 5000 experts in client countries.¹⁸⁸ Since 2009, due to the significant financial demands of developing AML/CFT capacities globally, IMF accounts have been complemented by an external Topical Trust Fund.¹⁸⁹ This Topical Fund, in turn, is essentially financed by FATF core membership.¹⁹⁰

Rule Enforcement Whereas the IFIs are critical providers of the credibility and legitimacy in the evaluation of jurisdictions’ implementation of the FATF-devised AML/CFT standards, the G-groups rely on the FATF to sanction noncompliance. Indeed, the IFIs had been highly reluctant to undertake enforcement-related activities, including through the listing of noncompliant jurisdictions. As Gardner notes, the “IMF and World Bank officials ... expressed

¹⁸⁵ These documents include the *FATF Methodology for Assessing Compliance with the FATF Recommendations and the Effectiveness of AML/CFT Systems, High-Level Principles and Objectives for FATF and FATF-Style Regional Bodies, Consolidated Processes and Procedures for Mutual Evaluations and Follow-Up (Universal Procedures), and Procedures for the FATF Fourth Round of AML/CFT Mutual Evaluations*. Financial Action Task Force 2020a; Financial Action Task Force 2019a; Financial Action Task Force 2019d; and Financial Action Task Force 2019e.

¹⁸⁶ Besides United Nations Security Council resolutions and relevant international conventions, particularly the Vienna Convention mentioned earlier, the main basis for this technical assistance is the FATF Forty (+Nine) Recommendations. International Monetary Fund n.d.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ World Bank n.d.

¹⁸⁹ International Monetary Fund 2009a.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* All but two (Kuwait and Qatar) of the twelve donors of the Topical Trust Fund for AML/CFT are FATF core members.

their desire to focus on capacity building rather than ‘naming and shaming.’¹⁹¹ The resistance in parts of the IFIs’ membership to contribute directly to enforcement was evident during the IMF’s 2004 decision to integrate FATF recommendations in its work. IMF Directors confirmed “that assessing whether countries have the capacity to implement AML/CFT laws effectively is part of the core mandate of the Fund.”¹⁹² At the same time, many IMF Directors voiced concerns about the risk of “jeopardizing the cooperative nature of the Fund’s relations with its members and the support of the membership for AML/CFT.”¹⁹³ In fact, the Executive Boards of the IMF and the World Bank were so reluctant to be linked to coercive enforcement measures that they endorsed the FATF recommendations on the condition that “FATF would refrain from a further round of the Non-Cooperative Countries and Territories initiative, at least for the next 12 months,”¹⁹⁴ that is, its practice of blacklisting jurisdictions that it deemed noncompliant.

However, this practice soon resumed. The G-groups rely on the FATF to enforce compliance through the gray- and blacklisting of noncompliant jurisdictions. The mechanism had originally been set up in 2000 as the above-mentioned Non-Cooperative Countries or Territories (NCCT) framework,¹⁹⁵ with the direct backing of the G7, proclaiming that it would “implement coordinated countermeasures against those NCCTs that do not take steps to reform their system appropriately.”¹⁹⁶ The FATF backtracked on the NCCT framework in response to criticism, but soon returned to gray- and blacklisting under the high-risk and noncooperative jurisdiction framework in 2007,¹⁹⁷ reportedly at the behest of the G20.¹⁹⁸ Three times a year, the FATF publicly identifies those countries whose AML/CTF measures it

¹⁹¹ Gardner 2007, 339.

¹⁹² International Monetary Fund 2004.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Holder 2003, 387.

¹⁹⁵ For the first FATF report on NCCTs, see Financial Action Task Force 2000.

¹⁹⁶ Group of Eight 2000.

¹⁹⁷ Financial Action Task Force n.d.

¹⁹⁸ Krisch 2014, 22.

considers inadequate and to fall short of its requirements in two publications: the “Jurisdictions under Increased Monitoring” (gray list) and “High-Risk Jurisdictions subject to a Call for Action” (black list) reports.¹⁹⁹

The listing provides the FATF with leverage over countries that do not conform to its recommendations. In the case of blacklisted countries, the FATF calls for the application of enhanced due diligence, and, where it deems necessary, of countermeasures by its members.²⁰⁰ Where a country does not cooperate to redress shortcomings, it can also be expelled from the FATF or FSRBs.²⁰¹ In 2012, for instance, the FATF threatened Turkey with suspension of its FATF membership “unless adequate counter-terrorist financing legislation is enacted.”²⁰² To be removed from the list, the concerned country not only has to demonstrate that it has implemented the technical requirements of a FATF-determined action plan but must also allow a FATF team on site to scrutinize implementation, including the sufficiency of political commitment and institutional capacity.²⁰³ While blacklisting does not carry formal sanctions under international law, in practice, the (economic) repercussions of being listed have “proven useful to induce compliance by member states and nonmember states alike.”²⁰⁴ By February 2020, the FATF had identified no less than 80 jurisdictions as falling short of its requirements.²⁰⁵ Out of these 80 jurisdictions, three-fourths have since enacted the minimum reforms required by the FATF, frequently with technical assistance provided by the IFIs.²⁰⁶

Crucially, although this regime design circumvents the pushback in universal organizations against (coercive) enforcement, it still ties enforcement back to the IFIs’ activities. The IFIs account for a significant share of the implementation monitoring and evaluations on

¹⁹⁹ Financial Action Task Force n.d.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ Simmons 2000a, 258.

²⁰² Financial Action Task Force 2012b.

²⁰³ Financial Action Task Force n.d.

²⁰⁴ Gardner 2007, 337.

²⁰⁵ Financial Action Task Force n.d.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

which the FATF's International Co-operation Review Group bases its decision.²⁰⁷ Yet, even where the FATF or an FRSB is the originator of a particular evaluation, their monitoring gains credibility and legitimacy given the shared methodology with—and recognition by—the IFIs.²⁰⁸ Indirectly, therefore, enforcement in the AML/CFT regime also integrates with the governance activities of the IFIs.

Overall, the G-groups' enlistment choices in the AML/CFT regime closely track the theoretical expectations. Against the backdrop of protracted multilateral negotiations, the G7 created the FATF as a more controllable club institution to set regulatory standards. Confronted with criticism of the FATF's exclusive character, the G-groups involved the IFIs, perceived as more credible and legitimate, to advance the universal implementation of the FATF's recommendations. At the behest of the G-groups, the FATF sanctions noncompliant countries by drawing, in part, on the IFIs' implementation monitoring but circumventing universal organizations' reluctance to associate with enforcement.

The Global Financial Stability Regime: Strengthening the Financial Sector's Regulatory Standards

Global financial stability entered the agenda of the G7 as a priority item after the 1997 Asian financial crisis (AFC).²⁰⁹ The crisis demonstrated the significant risk of international contagion and highlighted the limits of protecting financial systems' stability without a global strengthening of regulations.²¹⁰ The 2008 global financial crisis (GFC) reinvigorated these concerns. It led to a broad consensus that financial stability required joint efforts by major industrialized and

²⁰⁷ Ibid. Other possible reasons for reviewing jurisdictions include non-participation in a FSRB, refusal to publish mutual evaluations, and nomination by a FATF member or an FSRB.

²⁰⁸ On the shared methodology and recognition of assessments by the IMF, see International Monetary Fund n.d.

²⁰⁹ Knight 2014, 5.

²¹⁰ For an IMF working paper addressing financial market contagion during the Asian financial crisis, see Baig and Goldfajn 1998; On financial regulation in developing countries and its relation to the financial crises of the 1990s, see Brownbridge and Kirkpatrick 2000.

emerging economies to achieve closer regulatory cooperation.²¹¹ Correspondingly, after 2008, the G20 emerged as the new lead governor in this domain.²¹²

The Competence-Control Tradeoff in Global Financial Stability Governance

The stability of financial markets, just like their integrity, is of global interest. As Wouters notes, “[f]inancial stability can be seen as an international public good because financial instability is a potential public bad that spreads across countries.”²¹³ Again, the interconnectedness of economies means that states are confronted with a situation that is reminiscent of the weakest-link problem in the combating of money laundering and financing of terrorism. This aspect of the cooperation problem is clearly recognized by international institutions like the FSB:

Financial markets are global in scope and, therefore, weaknesses in international cooperation and information exchange can undermine the efforts of regulatory and supervisory authorities to ensure that laws and regulations are followed and that the global operations of the financial institutions, for which they have responsibility, are adequately supervised.²¹⁴

A key lesson learned by the AFC was that the regulatory focus on industrialized economies was too narrow to ensure the stability of the global financial system. Yet even the finance minister-level G20, created in 1999 as a response to the AFC, excluded many states that played a direct role in or were strongly affected by the AFC.²¹⁵ Clearly, “[t]he IMF, with its expertise and universal weighted membership, was – in theory – best positioned to become a leader in financial governance.”²¹⁶ Unsurprisingly, therefore, several analysts proposed consolidating financial regulation in a strengthened IMF, that is, by empowering its Managing Directors, and

²¹¹ See Helleiner 2016.

²¹² See, e.g., Knight 2018; Helleiner and Pagliari 2009.

²¹³ Wouters and Odermatt 2014, 51.

²¹⁴ Financial Stability Board 2021a.

²¹⁵ This includes, among others, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand.

²¹⁶ Viola 2015b, 25.

toyed with the idea of a World Financial Organization (WFO) in the image of the World Trade Organization (WTO).²¹⁷

Distributional implications, however, complicate a coordinated global response and states ceding control to a supranational organization like the IMF, let alone a WFO-style body. The experience of the AFC and, later, the 2008 GFC, underpinned major economies' common interest in a more stringent set of regulatory standards. Yet regulatory standards and codes interact differently with domestic financial sectors and existing legislation and can, therefore, entail significant distributive implications.²¹⁸ While this has affected advanced economies' ability to agree on stricter regulation,²¹⁹ the principal divide runs between advanced and developing economies.²²⁰ For the latter, stricter financial standards tend to not only have fewer tangible benefits but typically entail large economic and political adjustment costs.²²¹ A further issue was that, early on, "some developing country policy makers questioned the fact that the creation of international standards regime had been driven by an assumption that domestic policy failures in developing countries had been the prime cause of the late 1990s' crisis."²²² For major economies, governance through the IMF or a WFO was poised to be met with significant hurdles.

As the G7, and later the G20, coalesced around an agenda that aimed for stricter financial regulation, the international environment was thus characterized by skepticism about its anchoring in global economic governance. G-groups members had a clear interest in retaining control—both to defend their regulatory preferences but also, more broadly, to avoid resistance in universal organizations. At the same time, the global scope of the problem meant

²¹⁷ For examples of such proposals after the 2008 global financial crisis and 1997 Asian financial crisis, see, respectively, Eichengreen 2009; and Eatwell and Taylor 2001.

²¹⁸ See Jones and Knaack 2019.

²¹⁹ See, Rixen and Viola 2020, 214–218.

²²⁰ For a detailed exposition of diverging preferences on global finance between advanced and developing economies, see Drezner 2007, 122–29.

²²¹ Helleiner 2010, 4.

²²² *Ibid.*

that governance was almost unconceivable without substantial reliance on the IFIs as the universal organizations mandated with fostering global financial cooperation.

Optimizing the Competence-Control Ratio: Enlistment of the FSF/B and IFIs as Complementary Institutions

Confronted with this tension between the need to involve the IFIs and the risks of ceding control to universal organizations, the G7 narrowed its dependency on the latter and co-enlisted a club-style institution. The hallmark decision in this respect was the creation of the G7-led Financial Stability Forum (FSF), which was later transformed into the Financial Stability Board (FSB) under the guidance of the G20.

Following the endorsement of a G7-commissioned report by the President of the Deutsche Bundesbank,²²³ the FSF was first convened in April 1999.²²⁴ The FSF was tasked with facilitating coordination among domestic regulators and to bundle expertise with a view to enhancing financial market resilience on a range of issues that had contributed to the financial crisis in Asia, including highly leveraged institutions, short-term capital flows, and offshore financial centers.²²⁵ In the wake of the 2008 GFC and the G20's inaugural 2008 Washington summit, in March 2009, the FSF decided at its plenary meeting that it would extend its membership to all G20 member countries.²²⁶ Shortly after, in April 2009, the FSF was upgraded and reconvened as the FSB.²²⁷ While essentially a continuation of its predecessor, the FSB was designed to possess “a stronger institutional basis and enhanced capacity.”²²⁸ Among other institutional amendments, the size of the secretariat was increased, and a full-time General Secretary position created to direct it.²²⁹

²²³ For the report, see Tietmeyer 1999.

²²⁴ Financial Stability Board 2021e.

²²⁵ Brummer 2012, 828.

²²⁶ Financial Stability Board 2009.

²²⁷ Financial Stability Board 2021e.

²²⁸ Group of Twenty 2009.

²²⁹ Heads of State and Government of the Group of Twenty 2012, art. 22.

Despite its operation as a formally independent body, the FSB, like the FSF, remains closely tied to the G-groups and anticipatory concerning its members' priorities and preferences. As Rixen and Viola observe with respect to the FSB, "the gradual and ultimately weak institutionalization of independent authority reveals the G20's ambivalence about ceding control to the body."²³⁰ Only G20 states participate directly in the FSB alongside a range of standards-setting bodies (SSBs) and international institutions.²³¹ Compared to the FSF, this has increased the heterogeneity of members but, at the same time, preserves an exclusivity that avoids incorporating deep-running distributive conflicts present in the IFIs' wider membership.²³² In addition, article 4 of the FSB charter creates a quasi-hierarchical relationship to the G20, stating that the FSB "will discharge its accountability ... through periodical reporting of progress in its work to the Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors of the Group of Twenty."²³³ In practice, the FSB generally only develops concrete recommendations when the G20 has expressed an explicit desire to enhance regulation in a certain domain.²³⁴ As for the FSF, priorities elaborated in the G20, therefore, closely guide the work of the FSB.

While the G-groups have been reluctant to cede control to the IMF as the single organization for overseeing the stability of the international financial system, they nevertheless rely on it for its unique competencies as an independent universal organization. A principal concern is that the FSF/B, as a body that closely depends on the G-groups, is unable to credibly promote its powerful members' adherence to financial regulatory standards²³⁵ and thus support their aim to "lead by example."²³⁶ The FSF/B also faces a significant legitimacy deficit given its exclusive membership. Indeed, as Helleiner remarks, "[t]he FSF's ability to encourage the

²³⁰ Rixen and Viola 2020, 213.

²³¹ See Financial Stability Board 2021d.

²³² Viola 2015b, 26.

²³³ Heads of State and Government of the Group of Twenty 2012, art. 4.

²³⁴ Rixen and Viola 2020, 208.

²³⁵ See, e.g., Arner and Taylor 2009, 511–13; and Walter 2010, 34–35.

²³⁶ Financial Stability Board 2020.

adoption of these standards was undermined from the start by a basic legitimacy problem,” namely that “[t]he very countries whose practices this initiative was designed to improve were excluded from the FSF’s membership.”²³⁷ This basic deficiency remains. Although the FSB features a larger membership, most countries, including several that the IMF deems systemically important, remain excluded.²³⁸

The genesis of the international financial stability regime shows that the G-groups, rather than relying exclusively on established universal organizations, differentiated between the FSF/B and IFIs as primary providers of alternative competencies. Thus, while the G-groups continued to involve the IMF and the World Bank because of their greater credibility and legitimacy, especially with developing countries, they positioned the more controlled FSF/B as the locus of technical expertise and the focal platform for the governance of global financial stability.

Calibrating Competence and Control: Enlistment of the FSF/B and IFIs along the Governance Cycle

The genesis of the global financial stability regime reflects the tension between competence and control faced by the G-groups and the differentiation between the FSF/B and IFIs as primary providers of alternative competencies. I now examine how the G7, and later the G20, enlist these institutions throughout the governance cycle.

Rule Setting The FSF was created as an institution mandated with advancing the stability of financial systems through the identification and compilation of relevant regulatory policies.²³⁹ Many financial standards are developed in specialized—often private—SSBs. Therefore, the FSF, and the FSB, as its successor, develop recommendations only in particular niches and

²³⁷ Helleiner 2010, 4.

²³⁸ For an overview of countries with systemically important financial sectors, see International Monetary Fund 2010.

²³⁹ Financial Stability Board 2021e.

instead take the lead on filtering and prioritizing standards elaborated by the SSBs and other relevant bodies.²⁴⁰ In fact, as Davies and Greene observe, “[s]ome countries, notably the United States, have consistently argued that the Forum should not take initiatives of its own and it has tended to focus more on commissioning work from other relevant groups.”²⁴¹ The key role that the G7 had attributed to the FSF was that of “acting as a clearing house for initiatives and ideas emerging elsewhere.”²⁴² In the words of an SSB representative, through the FSF, “[t]he technocratic work of the regulators gained the impetus of a quasi-political authority.”²⁴³ Accordingly, after its creation, the FSF displayed “remarkable activity”²⁴⁴ as a collector and filter of best practices devised by the SSBs and published these in a Compendium of Standards.²⁴⁵ From April 1999 onwards, “[i]t established working groups on highly leveraged institutions, capital flows, and offshore financial centers, and a task force on the implementation of standards.”²⁴⁶ The resulting *Key Standards for Sound Financial Systems* identified by the FSF were established as minimum requirements for good practice.²⁴⁷ It also brought a sense of urgency into the financial regulatory sphere, which led to “a noticeable quickening of the pace” of the work done by other bodies.²⁴⁸

The FSF’s conversion into the FSB bolstered its role as a filter and, in a more limited manner, a developer of standards. The FSB charter, for the first time, specifies the institution’s relationship to the SSBs. It circumscribes the FSB’s role, stating that it will “promote and help coordinate the alignment of the activities of the SSBs.”²⁴⁹ Meanwhile, “the standard setting

²⁴⁰ Central to this is the FSF/B’s Compendium of Standards, which ‘lists the various economic and financial standards - by both subject area and issuing body - that are internationally accepted as important for sound, stable and well functioning financial systems.’ Financial Stability Board 2021b.

²⁴¹ Davies and Green 2008, 116.

²⁴² Ibid., 223.

²⁴³ Mattli and Seddon 2015, 342–43.

²⁴⁴ Rixen and Viola 2020, 210.

²⁴⁵ Financial Stability Board 2021b.

²⁴⁶ Rixen and Viola 2020, 210.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Davies and Green 2008, 171.

²⁴⁹ Heads of State and Government of the Group of Twenty 2012, art. 2(2).

bodies will report to the FSB on their work without prejudice to their existing reporting arrangements or their independence.”²⁵⁰ Thus, the exact nature of the relationship remained vague and stopped just short of establishing a clear hierarchy. Still, in practice, as Brummer observes, “the somewhat free-floating standard-setting bodies—like the Basel Committee and IOSCO—were brought more squarely under the regulatory perimeter of both the G-20 and the FSB.”²⁵¹ In 2012, the G20 also amended the FSB charter to specify the body’s mandate as a proactive initiator of standards, even if “only at [the] margins and in a limited sense,”²⁵² where it perceives gaps in the work of SSBs that represent risks to financial stability.²⁵³ The FSF/B has thus established itself as the principal international institution for setting—either through prioritization or initiation—global financial standards.

Rule Implementation Even though the G-groups positioned the FSF/B as the principal institution for determining key standards for the soundness of the financial system, it plays a much more limited role when it comes to advancing their global implementation. Since 2011, the FSB has stepped up its efforts at reaching out to nonmember jurisdiction directly, particularly to developing economies.²⁵⁴ To that end, it has established a total of six Regional Consultative Groups (RCGs) to channel these outreach activities and “reflect the global nature of the financial system.”²⁵⁵ Beyond the improvement of information exchange about financial system vulnerabilities and ongoing FSB initiatives, one of the goals for RCGs is to promote implementation of key standards for sound financial systems within the respective regions.²⁵⁶

Yet the G-groups rely on the IFIs as the centerpiece for advancing the global implementation of financial standards. This transpires clearly in a November 2008 letter

²⁵⁰ Ibid., art. 6(3).

²⁵¹ Brummer 2012, 828.

²⁵² Mattli and Seddon 2015, 343.

²⁵³ Huepkes and Loew 2013, 44.

²⁵⁴ See Financial Stability Board 2021c.

²⁵⁵ Financial Stability Board 2021f.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

between the then Managing Director of the IMF, Dominique Strauss Kahn, and the then Chairman of the FSF, Mario Draghi, to the G20. The letter delimits the responsibilities of the institutions and defines the FSF's (and, by continuity, the FSB's) principal task as "the elaboration of international financial sector supervisory and regulatory policies and standards, and coordination across various standard-setting bodies."²⁵⁷ By contrast, the IMF is primarily in charge of assessing "authorities' implementation."²⁵⁸ While the FSF/B serves as a standards setter, in the IFIs' words, "the Fund (along with the World Bank) acts as impartial arbiters in evaluating compliance with these standards."²⁵⁹ The G7-/G20-orchestrated global financial stability regime deliberately draws on the IFIs' credibility and legitimacy regarding advancing and assessing implementation globally. This differentiation of contributions between the institutions reaches back to the beginning of the regime and has since solidified.

Accompanying the G7's decision to create the FSF, the IFIs, in the late 1990s, were called upon to incorporate standards and codes into their work to strengthen the international financial architecture.²⁶⁰ As Davies and Green note, "the FSF provided the impetus for ... the IMF and World Bank to pressure countries to implement standards for financial regulation which had been created by the regulatory groupings."²⁶¹ The standards defined in the FSF/B came to "form the core" of the FSAPs and ROSCs carried out by the IFIs.²⁶² The FSB later made it mandatory for its members to undergo the FSAP every five years and to publish the detailed assessments that the IFIs prepare as part of their ROSCs.²⁶³ Importantly, beyond this, in September 2010, the IMF Executive Board decided to make financial stability assessments under the FSAP mandatory for member countries with "systemically important financial

²⁵⁷ Strauss Kahn and Draghi 2008.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ International Monetary Fund and World Bank 2017, 34.

²⁶⁰ International Monetary Fund 2021a.

²⁶¹ Davies and Green 2008, 118.

²⁶² Rixen and Viola 2020, 210; See also Strauss Kahn and Draghi 2008.

²⁶³ Financial Stability Board 2020.

sectors” by integrating it into Article IV surveillance.²⁶⁴ This made FSAP monitoring mandatory for 25, and, subsequently, 29 IMF members, including a number of states that are not part of the G-groups or the FSB.²⁶⁵ By 2021, more than 150 countries had participated in FSAPs.²⁶⁶ Although FSAPs, in principle, remain voluntary for large parts of the membership, the IFIs’ involvement has—de facto—globalized implementation monitoring of FSF/B standards.

The IFIs also flank monitoring with the provision of technical assistance for the financial sector regulation and supervision standards that were integrated into the FSAP and ROSCs. The focus is on addressing the vulnerabilities identified during assessments of developing countries. Similar to its Financial Integrity unit, which is responsible for the FATF-led AML/CFT standards, the World Bank’s Financial Stability unit “coordinates the WB [World Bank] engagement with the Financial Stability Board (FSB)” and delivers technical assistance on issues ranging from financial sector monitoring to the building of regulatory and supervisory capacity.²⁶⁷ In addition, it has, since 2009, conducted more than 30 crisis-simulation²⁶⁸ exercises with developing countries.²⁶⁹ The IMF and World Bank have thus conducted the lion’s share of the activities aimed at advancing the global implementation of financial standards.

Rule Enforcement When it comes to enforcement, however, the G-groups govern largely through the FSB. The initial goal of the G7 had been to enforce FSF-selected standards multilaterally by making them part of the IFIs’ loan conditionality.²⁷⁰ However, this proved infeasible, with developing countries in particular voicing opposition.²⁷¹ They insisted that

²⁶⁴ International Monetary Fund 2014.

²⁶⁵ Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Hong Kong SAR, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland are deemed systemically important by the IMF but are neither G7 nor G20 members. In turn, four G20 (state) members are not considered by the IMF to have systemically important financial sectors. These are Argentina, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa. See *ibid.*

²⁶⁶ International Monetary Fund 2021d.

²⁶⁷ World Bank n.d.

²⁶⁸ Financial Stability Board 2021a.

²⁶⁹ World Bank n.d.

²⁷⁰ Helleiner 2010, 8.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

FSAPs and ROSCs be voluntary and that assessments would not—or only partially—be published on governments’ demand.²⁷² Although, as we have seen, mandatoriness has been introduced where countries are deemed “systematically important,” robust enforcement through the IFIs remains off limits. As the FSB notes in a status update of its enforcement process, “member international bodies’ legal frameworks and policies preclude their participation in decisions regarding the listing of non-cooperative jurisdictions and the adoption of negative measures that are not in accordance with those frameworks and policies.”²⁷³ Although one may question the legal impossibility of an enforcement mechanism, the political hurdles to achieving it most likely remain significant.

Therefore, the G-groups have set up the FSB to enforce compliance with financial regulatory standards both among members and globally. Internally, FSB members have committed to undergoing periodic peer reviews.²⁷⁴ These reviews build on the IFIs’ assessments.²⁷⁵ Notably, the country peer reviews focus on jurisdictions’ “systematic and timely follow up to relevant recommendations arising from an FSAP or ROSC.”²⁷⁶ Beyond the realms of its own membership, the FSB uses the Non-Cooperative Jurisdiction (NCJ) process to promote adherence to select standards, notably those related to internationally agreed information exchange.²⁷⁷ The NCJ process was introduced following a 2009 G20 Leaders’ “call on the FSB to develop a toolbox of measures to promote adherence to prudential standards and cooperation with jurisdictions.”²⁷⁸ Accordingly, since 2010, the NCJ process has aimed to close gaps in the worldwide implementation of standards.²⁷⁹

²⁷² Ibid.; As Walter explains, “[s]ome countries undertook IFI reviews but did not publish the reports (for example, Brazil and India); in about a quarter of all cases, the national authorities chose to suppress ROSC publication.” Walter 2010, 33.

²⁷³ Financial Stability Board 2014, 1.

²⁷⁴ Financial Stability Board 2010, 2.

²⁷⁵ Financial Stability Board 2020.

²⁷⁶ Financial Stability Board 2010, 2.

²⁷⁷ Financial Stability Board 2021a.

²⁷⁸ Group of Twenty 2009.

²⁷⁹ Financial Stability Board 2021a.

The NCJ process has parallels with the FATF's NCCT framework. First, it aims to enforce standards globally, including for jurisdictions that have neither pledged commitment through FSB membership nor been subjected to mandatory assessments by the IFIs as systemically important economies.²⁸⁰ Second, the NCJ process fosters compliance through a graduated approach that ranges from “positive” to “negative” incentives.²⁸¹ These incentives can range from confidential dialogue to restrictions on cross-border financial transactions.²⁸² Between 2011 and 2014, the FSB published annually a list of countries that “have yet to demonstrate sufficiently strong adherence” and those deemed “non-cooperative jurisdictions,”²⁸³ akin to the FATF's practice of gray- and blacklisting. It has, so far, undertaken examinations of over 60 jurisdictions—the majority not members of the FSB—and engaged with more than a dozen countries that it determined were not displaying a sufficiently strong adherence to the relevant standards.²⁸⁴

Whereas this differentiated regime design insulates the IFIs from enforcement decisions, the FSB's NCJ process, as for peer reviews, draws on the former's implementation-related monitoring. The NCJ process is institutionally detached from the IFIs and is managed by the FSB's Standing Committee on Standards Implementation, which operates under the direction of the FSB Plenary.²⁸⁵ It is also the FSB that selects those principles from the financial regulatory and supervisory domain that it considers most relevant to international cooperation and information exchange.²⁸⁶ At the same time, IFI assessments of states' implementation of financial standards form the basis of the identification of noncompliant countries. An FSB note

²⁸⁰ For the list of jurisdictions evaluated by the FSB, see Financial Stability Board 2014.

²⁸¹ Weber and Staiger 2014, 88–89.

²⁸² Financial Stability Board 2014, 17.

²⁸³ See Financial Stability Board 2014.

²⁸⁴ Financial Stability Board 2021a.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁶ The FSB selects those principles from the following sets of standards: BCBS Core Principles for Effective Banking Supervision, IAIS Insurance Core Principles, and IOSCO Objectives and Principles of Securities Regulation. *Ibid.*

on the NCJ process, in fact, explicitly details that “[a]dherence was evaluated by the FSB based on the latest available detailed assessment report underlying the IMF-World Bank Report on the Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSC).”²⁸⁷ While the G-groups had thus faced hurdles to enforcing financial standards through the IFIs, they proceeded to do so through an FSB mechanism that linked to the IFIs’ implementation monitoring.

This deeper dive into enlistment choices demonstrates the extent to which the differentiation of contributions by club institutions and universal organizations forms part of the G-groups’ orchestration strategy. After the AFC, the creation and enlistment of the FSF—and later FSB—allowed the G7 to retain a firm grip on the setting of key financial standards even as significant distributive conflicts, especially with developing countries, persisted. The co-involvement of the IFIs as universal organizations, however, was instrumental for alleviating credibility and legitimacy deficits that stood in the way of advancing the implementation of FSF/B-sanctioned standards globally. As the G-groups sensed resistance to using the IFIs to enforce these standards, they relied on the FSB to identify noncooperative jurisdictions based on the IFIs’ implementation monitoring.

Conclusion

International organization has undergone a gradual informalization of intergovernmental cooperation, with major IIGOs like the G7 and the G20 guiding global governance well beyond their original financial remit. This orchestrated multilateralism, however, walks a fine line between maintaining the multilateral system’s orderly flux and undermining the independence of the universal organizations that form its bedrock. Frequently, IIGO orchestrators face a tradeoff: On the one hand, they seek control over universal organizations to ensure that their pre-negotiated governance goals are not diluted, changed, or blocked by other members. On

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

the other hand, to translate these goals into effective regimes, IIGOs require competencies from universal organizations that depend on the latter's perception as independent bodies that serve their broader membership.

Theoretically and empirically, I demonstrated that IIGOs mitigate this tradeoff through strategic regime design. Rather than simply relying on universal organizations to operationalize governance, they *differentiate* between the contributions that are made by more independent institutions and those made by more controllable institutions. This opens up the possibility of ceding control to universal organizations to advance implementation, where credibility and legitimacy are critical, but relying on club institutions to bundle the expertise and the capacity to set and enforce rules. My examination of the global market integrity regime and the financial stability regulatory regime traced how the G7 and the G20 strategically responded to a steep tradeoff between competence and control by embedding their enlistment of the IFIs to advance (universal) implementation in the FSB's and FATF's rule setting and enforcement activities.

The article provides an analytical lens through which to see what is increasingly manifesting as a significant adjustment to how the multilateral system works. IIGOs, including the G7, the G20, BRICS, and others, are seeing a striking expansion of their agenda. Nothing could be more emblematic in this regard than what arises as the most significant challenge on the regulatory horizon: emerging technologies. Here, states are already looking to the G7—and, more cautiously, to the G20—to incubate and orchestrate global regulatory standards. Since 2019, the G7, for instance, has advanced the development of principles concerning the responsible development and use of artificial intelligence through a new club institution—the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI)²⁸⁸—as a stepping-stone to widespread international implementation.²⁸⁹ Moreover, major technology players and multinational

²⁸⁸ The Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence n.d. Note that the GPAI was initially created as the International Panel on Artificial Intelligence.

²⁸⁹ Cf. Pannier 2021, 7–8.

corporations such as IBM, Mastercard, and Mercedes are calling for a forum modeled on the FSB that is tasked with distilling basic principles and standards for multilateral technology governance.²⁹⁰ In 2021, the British G7 Presidency ran a pilot for such a future tech forum.²⁹¹ In short, the regime design pattern theorized and analyzed in this article may well consolidate as the blueprint for the governance of emerging regulatory challenges.

The growing role of IIGOs as orchestrators has ramifications that future research can address in meaningful ways. First, future studies should broaden the empirical scope by evaluating new initiatives such as the GPAI, for example by taking a comparative perspective on the FATF and FSB analyzed in this article. Second, attention should be directed to normative questions raised by orchestrated multilateralism. IIGO orchestration shifts decision making to an exclusive group of major powers, undermining the voice granted to smaller states in universal organizations. At the same time, with the transition from the G7 to the G20, emerging powers could participate more rapidly and comprehensively in global regulatory governance. Lastly, future research should examine IIGOs' organizational model regarding their broader systemic implications and effectiveness. IIGOs' unique profile of organizational advantages and pathologies will have important, currently unanticipated, ramifications. Overall, as states continue looking to IIGOs to advance cooperating on high-stakes international issues, research along these lines has the potential to become an important resource for scholars and policymakers alike.

²⁹⁰ Venkataramakrishnan 2021.

²⁹¹ Reuters 2021.

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V.

Centralization without Independence: The Functional Scope and Organizational Anatomy of Informal Intergovernmental Organizations

Abstract Informal intergovernmental organizations (IIGOs) like the G20, the G7, and BRICS have become central pillars of post-Cold War multilateralism, governing critical issues ranging from financial stability to nonproliferation. This reliance on organizations lacking a legal basis and permanent secretariat or staff raises urgent questions: What functions can IIGOs provide to support state interactions? And how do IIGOs provide these without a permanent secretariat? Building on the institutional design literature, I disaggregate formality into organizational properties (P)—centralization and independence—and relate these to functions (F). Because IIGOs lack independence from member states but may achieve centralization, the P-F framework suggests that IIGOs can enhance negotiation stability, information dissemination, and issue linkage but struggle to support cooperation through initiation and enforcement. I then explore *how* IIGOs achieve centralization in the absence of a permanent secretariat. Focusing on the G20, I map the changing requirements for the organization, trace its design adaptation to create greater centralization, and chart its anatomy and operations. I finish by suggesting pathways for future research that moves beyond the dichotomy *between* informal and formal organizations and towards the study of function and design *within* the IIGO category.

*“We are 20 different countries, with 20 different political systems, with 20 different development levels. Everything must be unanimously approved. ... This is no simple task. ... It is like herding cats.”*¹
Former German Chancellor Angela Merkel on the Group of Twenty (G20)

Over the past five years, history’s most prolific international institution builder exited and re-
acceded to formal treaties and organizations—the Paris Agreement, the World Health
Organization, and multiple United Nations organizations²—with striking swiftness and ease.
Yet the United States remained a steadfast participant in informal venues like the Group of

¹ Quoted in Reuters 2017.

² See U.S. Department of State 2019; Rogers and Mandavilli 2020; U.S. Department of State 2017; and Dwyer 2018; On why states withdraw from IGOs, see Borzyskowski and Vabulas 2019.

Twenty (G20), notwithstanding its unprecedented diplomatic isolation.³ Unlike their formal counterparts (FIGOs), informal intergovernmental organizations (IIGOs), like the G20, lack a binding legal basis and permanent secretariat, staff, or headquarters.⁴ But while they are easy to exit *de jure*, they have, *de facto*, become an indispensable vehicle for state cooperation.⁵

Since the end of the Cold War, IIGOs have consolidated as a central pillar of the multilateral system. One dimension of this is their rapid proliferation. States have used IIGOs since the early 19th century.⁶ However, whereas the number of FIGOs has oscillated around the same level since the early 1990s,⁷ IIGOs have seen more than a threefold increase during that period.⁸ Another dimension, qualitative in nature and arguably even more consequential, is the change in how states use IIGOs. Amidst imminent gridlock in formal multilateral organizations, major powers are looking to IIGOs like the G7, the G20, and BRICS to facilitate major power engagement, consensus formation, and orchestration of governance activities by international organizations on issues ranging from financial stability to global health.⁹ Already, IIGOs are taking the lead on critical (re-)emerging issues such as the enhancement of pandemic preparedness and the regulation of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence.¹⁰

In this light, IIGOs' resilience to formalization is remarkable. Functional demands on IIGOs have changed drastically. States created many IIGOs, including "orchestrators" like the G20, the G7, and BRICS as vehicles for crisis management, typically in well-delimited issue

³ Repeatedly, the G20 issued 19+1 declarations. For an example, see Group of Twenty 2019.

⁴ Vabulas and Snidal 2021, 861–62; Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 197.

⁵ See Westerwinter, Abbott, and Biersteker 2021; Vabulas and Snidal 2021; and Vabulas and Snidal 2013.

⁶ The IIGO 2.0 dataset identifies the Concert of Europe (1815) as the first IIGO. Vabulas and Snidal 2021, 862.

⁷ Pevehouse et al. 2020, 493.

⁸ Vabulas and Snidal 2021, 860; For an appraisal of the larger trend towards informal global governance, see Westerwinter, Abbott, and Biersteker 2021; For data on informal intergovernmental organizations (IIGOs), see Vabulas and Snidal 2021; and Roger and Rowan 2021; For data on transnational public-private governance initiatives (TGIs), see Westerwinter 2021; For data on strategic partnership agreements (SPAs), see Hageböling 2020.

⁹ For an overview of the scope of topics and associated meetings in these IIGOs, see G7 Research Group 2021; G20 Research Group 2021; and Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa Group 2021b.

¹⁰ See Group of Seven 2021; and The Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence n.d.

areas and without plans for organizational permanence.¹¹ By contrast, these organizations now structure extensive multilevel interactions—both among member states and with other international institutions—all year round.¹² Even as states continue to rely on formal organizations to carry out implementation tasks and the management of substantive operations,¹³ states are pushing IIGOs to facilitate state interactions well beyond what they were originally constructed to support. This tension between states' informal design preference and changing demands on IIGOs is manifesting in practice. The G20 is emblematic in this regard: few IIGOs have seen such a substantial expansion of their agenda and focality—and yet, notwithstanding several high-level initiatives to create a permanent secretariat, members have resisted formalization.¹⁴ This remarkable resilience to formalization is a general phenomenon. Even as IIGOs have multiplied and are used more extensively, their rate of formalization has decreased.¹⁵

States' increasing reliance on IIGOs raises new questions for international cooperation scholars: What functions can IIGOs provide to support state interactions? And how do IIGOs provide these without a permanent secretariat? Existing scholarship focuses on the *comparative advantages* of formal and informal IGOs. It identifies informality as a superior design choice for addressing cooperation problems with speed and flexibility as well as for the management of periods of high levels of uncertainty.¹⁶ This has been instrumental in understanding why states value informality, particularly during periods of rapid change and heightened uncertainty.¹⁷ However, it does not clarify IIGOs' *functional scope*, notably the extent to which they are able to

¹¹ Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 209–13.

¹² The 2021 G7 Presidency, for example, encompassed 175 events, including 20 ministerial meetings, two special summits on health and Afghanistan, 62 working group meetings, 60 finance track meetings as well as eight engagement groups. German Federal Government 2021.

¹³ See Woods 2010; Eccleston, Kellow, and Carroll 2015; and Vabulas and Snidal 2013.

¹⁴ One example is the proposal by French President Nicolas Sarkozy to create a permanent G20 secretariat in 2010. See Euractiv 2010; See also Barston 2012, 110.

¹⁵ Author's analysis of data from Vabulas and Snidal 2021.

¹⁶ Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 209–213; See also Patrick 2015; and Slaughter 2004.

¹⁷ See Vabulas and Snidal 2020.

support more extensive and regular state interactions. Crucially, scholarship associates related functions, for instance negotiation stability, with formal IGOs.¹⁸ Thus, through the study of IIGOs, the relationship between institutions' functions and design re-emerges as a relevant theme for scholarship and practice alike.¹⁹

I address the questions raised in two steps. First, I build on the institutional design literature to theorize IIGOs' functional scope. I advance a Property-Function (P-F) framework that disaggregates the broad notion of formality into two organizational properties (P), centralization, which describes "a concrete and stable organizational structure and administrative apparatus,"²⁰ and independence, which refers to an organization's "degree of autonomy, and often neutrality, in defined spheres."²¹ The P-F framework relates these properties to specific functions (F) through which organizations support state interactions. In FIGOs, the presence of both properties circumscribes the functional scope. By contrast, IIGOs may achieve (some) centralization but, absent a legal personality and a permanent staff, lack autonomy as actors in their own right. The P-F framework infers that IIGOs will struggle to initiate cooperation and enforce agreements but, where centralization is achieved, can plausibly support state interactions by enhancing negotiation stability, information dissemination, and issue linkage.

Second, I explore how IIGOs may achieve centralization—without independence. Focusing on the G20, I explore its organizational anatomy below the leaders' level summits that inform popular and, to a significant extent, scholarly knowledge of IIGOs. I proceed in three steps. First, I map states' changing requirements for the organization and show that the growing

¹⁸ See Abbott and Snidal 1998, 10–12; See also Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 211.

¹⁹ For two recent contributions that underline the importance of moving beyond a focus on high-level political (leaders') meetings and understanding IIGOs' lower-level operations and administration, see Vabulas 2019; and Cooper 2019a.

²⁰ Abbott and Snidal 1998, 9.

²¹ *Ibid.*

interactions among its members and with external actors put pressure on the initial setup. Second, I trace the G20's gradual adaptation of its organizational structure and administrative apparatus through three principal mechanisms: a troika rotating Chair system, the designation of Sherpas and their teams, and the use of information technology. Lastly, I look at how this "centralization without independence" affects state interactions within the G20. To that end, I dissect the G20's organizational structure as well as its operations during the 2017 German Presidency, leveraging new data on institutionalization and meetings.

I finish by contextualizing my findings and introduce the comparative study of IIGO models as a promising field of inquiry. The article champions a conceptual shift away from the dichotomy *between* informal and formal IGOs ("organization without delegation") to the study of the function and design spectrum *within* the IIGO category ("centralization without independence"). To that end, I suggest several vectors for the systematic analysis of states' choice among IIGO models on this spectrum: functional effectiveness, organizational pathologies, and cost structure. This heeds Vabulas's cautioning that the sharp differentiation of IIGOs from FIGOs creates a "false dichotomy"²² which moves attention away from the variety of organizational and administrative models that do not build on a permanent secretariat. Future research along these lines promises to shed new light on states' organizational choices in international politics.

The article's structure follows the steps of my argument as outlined above. In the next section, I briefly discuss the changing role of IIGOs in international organization. I then theorize IIGOs' functional scope through the P-F framework. I build on this with an in-depth exploration of the G20's inner workings. Before a brief conclusion, I develop possible pathways towards a comparative study of IIGO models.

²² Vabulas 2019, 402.

What Is in an IIGO?

The fabric of international organization is undergoing a gradual but important change. FIGOs remain at the heart of interstate cooperation, in terms of both their sheer number and the indispensable role of universal organizations like the United Nations, the International Financial Institutions, and the World Health Organization in the provision of global public goods. At the same time, IIGOs have not just proliferated but have also graduated from being vehicles for crisis responses and issue-specific arrangements into much more extensively, frequently, and routinely used organizations.²³ During the Covid-19 pandemic, major IIGOs such as the G20, the G7, and BRICS have switched back into crisis management mode and coordinated members' responses to this global health emergency.²⁴ In normal times, however, these IIGOs have come to operate as platforms for regular coordination on an expansive range of issue areas. Today, they are central pillars of the multilateral institutional system and frequently take the role of "orchestrators,"²⁵ providing political guidance to and steering governance activities by other international institutions.²⁶

International cooperation scholarship stresses the differential use cases for and complementarity of IIGOs and FIGOs. On the one hand, FIGOs are best suited to managing routine problems, offer greater capacity and stability, and are superior where binding commitments and ongoing implementation are required.²⁷ On the other hand, IIGOs are preferable for managing crises and situations of high levels of uncertainty, involve lower costs, and are an optimal choice where flexibility and speed are important.²⁸ The principal distinguishing factor in this dichotomization is the absence or presence of a permanent

²³ See Vabulas and Snidal 2021; and Roger and Rowan 2021.

²⁴ See, e.g., Group of Seven 2020; Group of Twenty 2020c; and Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa Group 2020.

²⁵ On orchestration, see Abbott et al. 2015a; and Abbott et al. 2015b.

²⁶ See Viola 2015b; Cooper 2019b; and Kirton 2010.

²⁷ Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 211; See also Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001; and Abbott and Snidal 1998.

²⁸ Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 211; On cost specifically, see Abbott and Faude 2020.

secretariat.²⁹ Where it is absent, as in IIGOs, states lower costs and gain speed and flexibility. In turn, they sacrifice the capacity required for the routine governance of complex issues.

Therefore, when states use IIGOs extensively and frequently, formalization through the addition of a permanent secretariat is an obvious pathway for adaptation. In 2002, for instance, the charter-based Shanghai Cooperation Organization superseded the informal Shanghai 5 Mechanism.³⁰ Given the goal of deepening joint security and military capabilities on the political as well as the operational level, informality represented a capacity bottleneck.³¹ Another example is states' decision to add a permanent secretariat to the China-Japan-South Korea Trilateral Summit in 2010.³² The formalization followed an expansion of the organization's mandate and the establishment of a "quasi-secretariat," the Trilateral Cooperation Cyber-Secretariat, to archive and administrate agreements and documents a year earlier.³³ Officials of the newly created secretariat later highlighted formalization as a means for "reducing inefficiencies" and ensuring that the growing number of interactions through dialogue mechanisms would be "better coordinated."³⁴ In both instances, the growing scope and depth of interactions as well as regular usage of these organizations induced states to opt for formalization.

Changing organizational requirements crystalizes as the key driver of formalization. Out of 149 IIGOs created since the early 19th century, 36 have undergone formalization (see Table 1). In almost all cases, formalization encompassed the addition of a permanent secretariat. In the large majority of cases (21), in fact, formalization occurred through the addition of a permanent secretariat *without* legalization. Only in a very small number of instances (4) do we see formalization by legalization. Overall, whereas most IIGOs remain informal, empirical

²⁹ Vabulas 2019, 402.

³⁰ Shanghai Cooperation Organization Member States 2002.

³¹ Shanghai Cooperation Organization n.d.

³² China-Japan-South Korea Trilateral 2010.

³³ Zhang 2018, 250.

³⁴ The Korea Herald 2011.

evidence suggests that in a significant fraction of cases, states have reassessed the comparative benefits of (in)formality and added a permanent secretariat to cope with changing requirements for the organizational structure and administrative apparatus.

TABLE 1. *The fate of IIGOs, 1815-2017*

<i>The fate of IIGOs</i>	<i>No.</i>
Continuing pure IIGO	94
Legalized through a treaty	4
Added permanent secretariat	21
Both treaty and secretariat	11
Died without replacement	19
Total	149

Notes: IIGO: Informal intergovernmental organization; Adopted from Vabulas and Snidal, 2021.³⁵

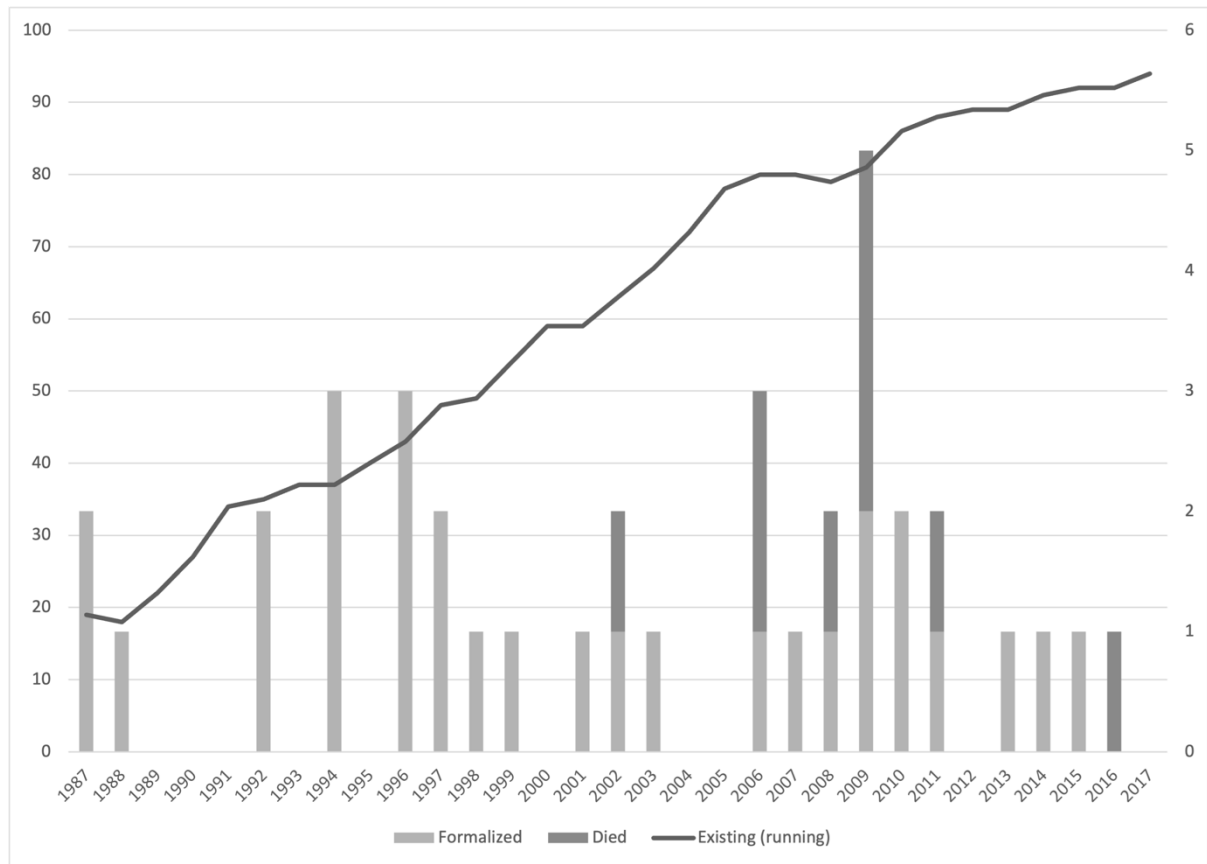
It is a remarkable, albeit unacknowledged development, therefore, that IIGOs have become more resilient to formalization. As we have already seen, the number of IIGOs in existence has seen more than a fourfold increase over the past 30 years. Moreover, states have come to rely more routinely and extensively on many IIGOs for cooperation. This suggests that states should more frequently encounter (informal) design-related capacity issues. Yet the likelihood of an IIGO undergoing formalization has fallen markedly. During the 30-year period that stretches back to the end of the Cold War (1987–2017), the frequency of formalization (in absolute terms) remained roughly the same—notwithstanding IIGOs’ continued and rapid proliferation (see Figure 1). In fact, because “IIGOs do not have their own bureaucracy to defend them and can be abandoned readily by dissatisfied states,”³⁶ their longevity instead suggests that states actively keep these organizations alive.³⁷ In short, states consciously refrain

³⁵ Vabulas and Snidal 2021, 865.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Note that the IIGO 2.0 dataset adopts a ten year period of non-activity as a criterion for ‘death’. Ibid.

from formalizing IIGOs even as their own use of and requirements regarding these organizations evolve.



Notes: Based on data from the IIGO 2.0 dataset.³⁸

FIGURE 1. *IIGO formalization and death vs. total number of existing IIGOs, 1987-2017*

The literature offers several complementary explanations as to why states may refrain from formalizing IIGOs. One line of argument focuses on factors that make IIGOs more effective or efficient at supporting state cooperation and thus reduce the need for formalization. Manulak and Snidal suggest that improvements in supply-side factors, most notably advances in transport and communications technology, enable states to dispense with a permanent secretariat or headquarters in some cases.³⁹ They discuss the G7's relationship with the

³⁸ Vabulas and Snidal 2021.

³⁹ See Manulak and Snidal 2021.

Proliferation Security Initiative to show that technology enables states to govern effectively through IIGOs without recourse to a FIGO.⁴⁰ Abbott and Faude also acknowledge technology as a driver⁴¹ and argue that states favor informal organizations as “low-cost institutions” that can be more easily created, operated, changed, and exited from.⁴² In short, this line of argument suggests that states may resist formalization due to their improved ability to leverage informal design effectively for cooperation purposes.

Another line of argument focuses on deep-running trends in international politics to explain states’ commitment to informality. Hale et al. argue that FIGOs struggle to sustain the provision of global public goods because of the concurrence of several major developments. These include greater multipolarity, increasing issue complexity, and inertia of multilateral institutions that limits their ability to adapt.⁴³ Arguments centered on power shifts specifically stress the limitations of FIGOs in the face of the current transition towards a more multipolar order. They problematize their slow adaptation to shifts in political power and the resulting discrepancy between de facto and de jure influence. This discrepancy leads to contestation and increases the incentives for states to shift cooperation to flexible and autonomy-preserving IIGOs during the transition to a reformed institutional system.⁴⁴ From this perspective, states avoid formalizing IIGOs due to the prospect of trading greater capacity for a design that is susceptible to gridlock and contestation. Instead, they choose more adaptive institutions to—at least temporarily—mitigate these fundamental international trends.⁴⁵

While scholarship thus offers various lenses through which to explain states’ preference for informality and their reluctance to formalize IIGOs, it remains vague when it comes to

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 204–9.

⁴¹ Abbott and Faude 2020, 7.

⁴² See Abbott and Faude 2020.

⁴³ See Hale, Held, and Young 2013b; and Hale, Held, and Young 2013a.

⁴⁴ See Vabulas and Snidal 2020.

⁴⁵ Cf. Hale and Held 2018; and Vabulas and Snidal 2020.

understanding how IIGOs cope with the changing organizational requirements. If IIGOs have become more potent vehicles for state cooperation due to the new possibilities offered by information and communication technologies, this should be reflected in their organizational anatomy and their ability to support state interactions. Similarly, if states rely on IIGOs beyond their optimal use case to absorb the cooperation that is gridlocked in other (formal) arrangements, this is likely to transpire in design adaptations intended to cope with this challenge. Indeed, as Vabulas and Snidal suggest, “IIGO longevity may be explained by learning and adaptation.”⁴⁶ Hence, IIGOs’ functional scope and organizational anatomy crystallize as critical aspects of contemporary international organization.

Theorizing the Functional Scope of IIGOs

The previous discussion raises a key question: what functions can IIGOs provide to support state interactions? As previously discussed, existing contributions use a binary contrasting of formality and informality to identify unique strengths, such as binding commitments vs. greater flexibility.⁴⁷ This clarifies for which cooperation problem structure IIGO or FIGO ideal types represent the more effective choice. For the question at hand, by contrast, we are concerned with possibility rather than optimality. States prefer IIGOs because of their comparatively greater flexibility and lower sovereignty costs (*optimality*). Yet states’ changing use of IIGOs shifts our focus to the extent to which they can provide functions that support more extensive and protracted state interactions, a capacity traditionally associated with formality (*possibility*). My starting point is, therefore, to examine the degree to which IIGOs can plausibly provide functions that are conventionally associated with FIGOs—without formalizing.

⁴⁶ Vabulas and Snidal 2021, 865.

⁴⁷ Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 211.

The Property-Function Framework

To theorize IIGOs' functional scope, we may start by inverting the question and asking how functions that support state interactions depend on organizational formality. This allows for an embedding of my reasoning about IIGOs in the broader institutional design literature. Specifically, I build on Abbott and Snidal's seminal discussion of why states use (formal) IIGOs as a suitable starting point in two respects. First, it distinguishes two categories of *functions* (F) that roughly correspond to the division of labor that manifests between IIGOs and FIGOs. Second, it breaks down the notion of formality into organizational *properties* (P), thereby facilitating a more graduated analysis of IIGOs' functional potential and limitations vis-à-vis FIGOs.

Abbott and Snidal identify two basic categories of functions that render FIGOs valuable to states: their support for direct state interactions and their management of substantive operations.⁴⁸ Key functions that FIGOs provide in support of member state interactions are a stable negotiation environment, effective information dissemination, the linkage of issues to, for example, expand the space of possible agreements, the initiation of cooperation regarding neglected issues, and enforcement of compliance with agreed terms.⁴⁹ The main functions that enable FIGOs to manage substantive operations are the pooling of risk and resources, the joint production of output such as scientific knowledge or military doctrine, the elaboration and coordination of norms, the laundering of policies for legitimization, and neutrality, for instance as a trustee or allocator of resources.⁵⁰

IIGOs' ability to provide these functions is associated with their formality. Notably, formality defines IIGOs' functional scope through its manifestation in two key organizational

⁴⁸ Abbott and Snidal 1998, 10.

⁴⁹ See *ibid.*, 10–12, 17.

⁵⁰ See *ibid.*, 12–16, 17–23.

properties: centralization and independence.⁵¹ Centralization describes “a concrete and stable organizational structure and an administrative apparatus managing collective activities.”⁵² Centralization thus entails, on the one hand, the existence of an organizational structure through which members interact (as opposed to ad hoc engagement) and, on the other hand, the presence of an administrative apparatus that ensures the functioning of this structure. Independence designates an organization’s ability to “act with a degree of autonomy, and often neutrality, in defined spheres.”⁵³ In the sense used here, it thus refers to the organization’s agency and ability to pursue goals in a (partially) autonomous way that is separate from its political principals, the member states.⁵⁴

TABLE 2. *The Property-Function framework of intergovernmental organizations*

		FUNCTION	
		Support for state interactions	Managing substantive operations
PROPERTY	Centralization	I Negotiation stability Information dissemination Issue linkage	II Pooling Joint production Norm elaboration & coordination
	Independence	III Initiation Enforcement	IV Laundering Neutrality

Notes: Based on the discussion in Abbott and Snidal, 1998.⁵⁵

I condense this discussion from the institutionalist literature into a Property-Function (P-F) framework, which captures the relationship between the organizational properties and

⁵¹ Ibid., 9.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Other key contributions to the study of IGOs have also adopted this understanding of IGOs’ independence as autonomy from states. See, e.g., Haftel and Thompson 2006; Hawkins et al. 2006; and Barnett and Finnemore 2004.

⁵⁵ Abbott and Snidal 1998.

functions introduced above. Visually, I represent the P-F framework as a 2 x 2 matrix (see Table 2). Whereas the rows show the organizational properties (*centralization* and *independence*), the columns indicate the category of functions (*support for state interactions* and *managing substantive operations*). The P-F framework links the various functions provided by IGOs to a primary property. In practice, functions may be partially dependent on the joint presence of centralization and independence. Here, I adopt the primary dependencies established in previous work for analytical clarity.

The P-F framework allows a focus on IGOs' functional scope for supporting state interactions (left column) in line with the previous discussion. States use IGOs to craft agreements and coordinate (national) policies but rely on IGOs tasks related to support policy implementation and the management of substantive operations like the pooling of resources for technical assistance.⁵⁶ In some instances, as Manulak and Snidal have argued, states may avoid using IGOs altogether by linking engagement and decision making in IGOs to implementation through lower-level informal or networked organizations.⁵⁷ The G7's political steering of the informal Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) is an example of this. Yet the limitations are evident: the PSI serves to structure regular interactions as well as to disseminate and collect information about critical interdiction capabilities and practices. However, it merely coordinates, rather than pools, activities, risks, or assets.⁵⁸

Having established the fundamentals of the framework, we can now proceed to leverage its disaggregation of organizational formality into centralization and independence to contour IGOs' functional scope.

⁵⁶ For a concrete discussion of this division of labor in the case of the G20, see, e.g., Hagebölling 2021; Woods 2010, 12; and Eccleston, Kellow, and Carroll 2015, 302; For the general theoretical argument that IGOs are better suited for implementation, see Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 211.

⁵⁷ See Manulak and Snidal 2021.

⁵⁸ Proliferation Security Initiative n.d.; For an in-depth analysis of the PSI, see Manulak 2021, 204–9.

Centralization vs. Independence

To what extent may IIGOs display centralization and independence? And how can this inform our expectations about IIGOs' functional scope and, specifically, about their suitability for supporting regular and extensive state interactions effectively?

Although FIGOs vary regarding the degree of their centralization and independence, they feature both properties. FIGOs, by definition, are “formal entities,” that is, they have a legal personality and “possess a permanent secretariat or other indication of institutionalization such as headquarters and/or permanent staff.”⁵⁹ The presence of a permanent secretariat or staff entails centralization in the form of an organizational structure and administrative support. While the existence of a permanent secretariat does not automatically entail a high level of independence and states may choose to exercise close supervision, the existence of bodies that are separate from member states invariably creates some level of autonomy, even if only in selected spheres. In fact, “in some cases, their delegated powers can be quite significant, granting bureaucrats important decision-making capabilities.”⁶⁰ FIGOs' functional scope is thus determined by the presence of both centralization and independence.

By contrast, IIGOs, as organizations, possess no comparable independence from their member states. IIGOs, by definition, are delimited from their formal counterparts by the very absence of a legal personality.⁶¹ More importantly, they lack a permanent entity like a secretariat or staff that is distinct from the member states and able to develop proprietary agency in international politics.⁶² Across the board, IIGOs, like BRICS⁶³ or the Paris Club,⁶⁴ depend entirely on member state officials, which severely limits the development of any significant

⁵⁹ Pevehouse et al. 2020, 494.

⁶⁰ Roger 2020, 33.

⁶¹ Vabulas and Snidal 2021, 861.

⁶² Ibid., 861–862; Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 197.

⁶³ Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa Group 2021a.

⁶⁴ Paris Club n.d.

independence.⁶⁵ In fact, the lack of independence and minimal infringement on state sovereignty have been established as key drivers of why states choose to cooperate through IIGOs.⁶⁶

In her comparison of formal and informal IGOs, Viola draws an insightful parallel with Scharpf's distinction between collective and corporate actors.⁶⁷ Scharpf defines collective actors as "dependent on and guided by the preferences of their members" and contrasts this with corporate actors, who "have a high degree of autonomy from the ultimate beneficiaries of their action and whose activities are carried out by staff members whose own private preferences are supposed to be neutralized by employment contracts."⁶⁸ Similar to collective actors, IIGOs possess minimal independence from their member states. By contrast, formal IGOs resemble corporate actors and are based on a relationship involving (contractual or treaty-based) delegation that circumscribes a certain degree of autonomy. In Scharpf's words, such actors (or organizations) "may thus achieve identities, purposes, and capabilities that are autonomous from the interests and preferences of the populations they affect and are supposed to serve."⁶⁹ This type of independence underlying several functions in the P-F framework is absent in IIGOs.

This comparative assessment of independence as a property of IGOs serves as a point from which to approach the scope of functions that we should expect IIGOs to be able to provide in support of state interactions. Given the reduced independence of IIGOs, the P-F framework suggests that they will struggle to provide primarily independence-related functions like the *initiation* of cooperation and the *enforcement* of agreed terms.⁷⁰ An organization possessing a strong degree of independence does not just facilitate interactions among its members but can

⁶⁵ Albeit the absence of a body that is institutionally separate from member states severely weakens IIGOs' independence, an argument for limited autonomy could be constructed with view to the potential for transgovernmental coalitions to emerge. Cf. Keohane and Nye 1974, 46–50.

⁶⁶ See Vabulas and Snidal 2020, 43; Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 210; and Abbott and Faude 2020, 3.

⁶⁷ Viola 2015b, 28.

⁶⁸ Scharpf 1997, 54.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁷⁰ For a full discussion, see Abbott and Snidal 1998, 17.

actively invite states to consider issues it identifies as neglected but worth prioritizing. This kind of initiation is distinct from the kind of catalytic role that IIGOs play in crisis situations. Here, as outlined earlier, the flexibility of informal design lowers the barriers to progression so that states can advance speedily on a commonly identified set of issues. By contrast, the initiation by IGOs fills a gap in cooperation that stems from states' national heuristics or interests. A well-known instance of this is the level of autonomy of the UN Secretary-General, which extends to being able "to bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security."⁷¹ Another example is the OECD's identification of pressing issues—from economic reforms⁷² to internet freedoms⁷³—and its calls for states to act on these jointly. This initiation hinges on independence, given the necessity of actorness being detached from parochial member state biases and interests.

Independence is also critical to IGOs' ability to support member cooperation through enforcement. IGOs without significant autonomy may still require states to self-report on their policies and disseminate information about compliance. However, greater autonomy from member states and direct monitoring of member states is key to "producing credible neutral information necessary for effective enforcement."⁷⁴ Whereas major economies use the Financial Stability Board, an IGO with little autonomy from its members draws heavily on monitoring by the International Monetary Fund to review members' adherence to regulatory standards.⁷⁵ Such credible information about noncompliance and the "naming and shaming" can amplify reputational effects, raise the costs of renegeing on commitments, and improve compliance.⁷⁶ Indeed, as Koremenos et al. note, "the informational capacities of international organizations to expose states' behavior can influence the activities of even the most powerful states by

⁷¹ United Nations 1945, Chapter XV, Article 99.

⁷² Prager 2019.

⁷³ Pfanner 2011.

⁷⁴ Abbott and Snidal 1998, 26.

⁷⁵ See Financial Stability Board 2020.

⁷⁶ See, e.g., Morse 2019; and Hafner-Burton 2008.

imposing international reputational costs or, sometimes, domestic audience costs.”⁷⁷ An independent IGO is also in a position to highlight noncompliance, which can lead to (legitimate) retaliatory action among member states. The World Trade Organizations’ Dispute Settlement Body is a point in case. If it deems a violation of laws to have occurred and the violator does not restore conformity, it entitles the losing member to temporary retaliatory measures.⁷⁸ Thus, independent IGOs can play a central role in motivating, coordinating, and legitimizing enforcement.

Notwithstanding these independence-related limitations on IGOs, several key functions depend primarily on the presence of centralization—that is, the development of an organizational structure and an administrative apparatus. The P-F framework stresses that centralization underlies IGOs’ ability to support state interactions in a number of ways, including through enhanced *negotiation stability*, *information dissemination*, and *issue linkage*.⁷⁹ A centralized IGO can provide a stable forum for negotiation, thereby facilitating repeated interactions and, as a result, lengthening the “shadow of the future” and allowing reputational effects to play out.⁸⁰ It can disseminate relevant information to the parties and ensure a common basis for negotiation, for instance, by creating organizational memory through the tracking of past activities and agreements.⁸¹ Centralized organizations can also create or strengthen issue linkages, thereby generating opportunities for tradeoffs and, consequently, a larger zone of possible agreement among members.⁸²

⁷⁷ Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001, 790.

⁷⁸ World Trade Organization n.d.

⁷⁹ I condense Abbott and Snidal’s discussion into several key functions here. For the full discussion, see Abbott and Snidal 1998, 10–12.

⁸⁰ For a discussion of the role of future payoffs from expected repeated interactions (shadow of the future), see Fearon 1998, 270.

⁸¹ Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001, 771–72; As Manulak notes, “[w]ithout centralizing organizational infrastructure, such as secretariats, the distribution of information can be highly uneven.” Manulak 2021, 427.

⁸² Cf. Sebenius 1983, 292–293; For an empirical assessment of issue linkage in international institutions, see Davis 2004.

Unlike independence, which is inherently constrained by IIGOs' lack of legal personality and lack of an organizational entity that is distinct from member states, informal designs can display centralization. Indeed, some level of centralization unites all IIGOs, even those that are designed to take a deliberately minimalistic institutionalist approach, like the PSI. The PSI purposefully fosters networked interactions among member country representatives and even eschews placing any kind of hosting expectations on member states, privileging voluntary and situational contributions over predictability.⁸³ Nevertheless, it differentiates itself clearly from decentralized and ad hoc cooperation through the presence of both organizational structure and administrative support. The so-called Operational Experts Group—a 21-state committee—effectively serves as an executive board coordinating activities that are distributed across a set of working groups and review teams.⁸⁴ The host country and the OEG also provide essential administrative support to sustain this structure.⁸⁵ The PSI also maintains an online platform and a password-protected digital repository in support of its work.⁸⁶ Clearly, the PSI has basic centralization properties that, in other instances, may be realized through a permanent secretariat or international staff.

IIGOs' organizational structure and administrative support provisions take varying forms. A key distinguishing factor of IIGOs, as opposed to other forms of informal cooperation like transgovernmental networks (TGNs), is the “high-level participation ... with authority to make political commitments on behalf of their respective states.”⁸⁷ Only now is the literature beginning to turn attention towards the significance of IIGOs' anatomy underpinning their capacity—as political organizations—to support member state interactions. Cooper, for instance, deplores the disproportionate focus on the “top of the iceberg” leaders' meetings and

⁸³ See Manulak 2021, 416–421.

⁸⁴ See Proliferation Security Initiative n.d.

⁸⁵ Cf. Manulak 2021, 417.

⁸⁶ Proliferation Security Initiative n.d.

⁸⁷ Vabulas and Snidal 2021, 861.

raises awareness of the development of unique forms of “transnational management” in IIGOs like the G20.⁸⁸ Recently, Vabulas has suggested a basic typology of what she labels “administrative designs” that support cooperation without creating independence in the form of a permanent secretariat.⁸⁹

IIGOs’ inner workings and means to achieve centralization emerge as a frontier for research on informal intergovernmentalism. Institutional theory, condensed in the P-F framework, indicates that IIGOs can be a rational choice for enhancing negotiation stability, information dissemination, and issue linkage, particularly when states simultaneously attach a high value to comparative advantages of informality such as reduced sovereignty costs. However, our empirical understanding of *how* IIGOs achieve such “centralization without independence” remains thin. Amidst “a relative dearth of detailed case study investigations of informal institutions,”⁹⁰ most discussions of IIGOs’ organizational anatomy and operations remain based on cursory examples.

Most notably, the field lacks an exploration of how IIGOs develop and adapt their organizational structure and administrative support in response to changing requirements regarding their capacity to support state cooperation. In the next section, I complement this section’s theoretical discussion of IIGOs’ functional scope with an empirical investigation into the G20’s centralization.

⁸⁸ Cooper 2019a, 642.

⁸⁹ Vabulas 2019, 402.

⁹⁰ Manulak 2021, 429.

Exploring the Group of Twenty's Inner Workings

The preceding discussion of the institutionalist literature, condensed in the P-F framework, indicates that IIGOs can plausibly provide several functions that support state interactions, principally negotiation stability, information dissemination, and issue linkage. Yet this expectation rests on a cursory account of organizational centralization in IIGOs. Empirical studies that relate changing demands on IIGOs to their inner workings remain absent.

How, then, do IIGOs achieve organizational centralization? To address this question, I conduct an in-depth exploration of the G20's inner workings. Given its influential role in the practice and study of global governance, our current lack of insight into the G20's anatomy presents a particularly acute gap in the literature. The G20 has consolidated as a focal point and orchestrator of the multilateral institutional system. Its inner workings—and its related ability to support state interactions—are thus of critical importance for international cooperation on a broad scale. Unsurprisingly, it is at the center of a decade of controversy, among analysts and policymakers alike, on the limitations of informal design.

Beyond its intrinsic relevance to scholars of international cooperation, the G20, as a case, lends itself to exploratory analysis.⁹¹ Few IIGOs have undergone a comparable transformation from nimble crisis vehicle to global steering body—and thus a similarly dramatic change in organizational requirements.⁹² This quality as an extreme case makes it valuable for exploring organizational centralization in IIGOs.⁹³ The case may also guide scholars' expectations concerning how other IIGOs (or a subset thereof) achieve centralization. As I detail in the final section of this paper, it may serve as a baseline for comparative studies aimed at deriving generalizable findings about design choices in IIGOs.

⁹¹ On exploratory case studies, see Levy 2008, 5–6; and Mills, Durepos, and Wiebe 2010.

⁹² These are, notably, the G7 and the BRICS. See Kirton 2010, 2; Also cf. Ayres 2017.

⁹³ On the usefulness of extreme cases for exploratory analysis, see Seawright and Gerring 2008, 301–2; Levy 2008, 7–8.

In this section, I thus begin by setting the stage with a brief *background* on the decade-long controversy surrounding the G20's informal design. I then proceed with a three-step analysis of the G20's organizational model. First, I map the *changing requirements* regarding its capacity to support state interactions. Second, I trace its *design adaptation* through the development of an organizational structure and administrative apparatus without legalization or the creation of a permanent secretariat. Third, I provide a first assessment of how this *centralization without independence* manifests in state interactions by dissecting the 2017 presidency's organizational anatomy and operations.

Background: A Decade of Controversy around (In)formality

For a decade now, scholars and policymakers have been debating the advantages and drawbacks of setting the G20 on a path to formalization. A key concern among observers is the G20's ability to handle the multiplicity and technicality of issues it covers, as well as the growing array of external governance relationships. As early as 2010, Cooper and Bradford suggested that creating a permanent secretariat presented a way to increase the effectiveness of both internal operations and the management of relationships with nonmember states and organizations.⁹⁴ Others have since reiterated the need for formalization in the form of a secretariat to ensure that the G20 can cope with the complex set of themes and state interactions it structures.⁹⁵ Alongside effectiveness, observers frequently advance legitimacy and accountability as reasons for formalization. Slaughter, for instance, contends that “a call for greater accountability implies the development of a more formal G20,” stressing that “the expanding ambit and increasing impact of the G20 ... are too significant for the G20 to merely be a shadowy and informal ‘talk fest.’”⁹⁶ Benson and Zürn suggest that one remedy for creating a more legitimate global

⁹⁴ Cooper and Bradford 2010, 9, 13.

⁹⁵ Payne 2014, 7–8; Cooper and Thakur 2013, 127–28.

⁹⁶ Slaughter 2013, 90.

governance system would be the creation of “[a] G20 executive, complete with a permanent secretariat and influence over other global governance institutions like the OECD, IMF, and World Bank.”⁹⁷ Concerns about the limitations of informal design have thus been persistent and varied.

Others caution against formalization, however. These voices generally emphasize that states retain the G20’s informality for a reason. It allows states to “learn about each other’s intentions and preferences without locking into a new order or giving a secretariat autonomy that could run astray.”⁹⁸ Informality is also praised for its ability to “reduce diplomatic tensions and enhance cooperation and understanding over time.”⁹⁹ Formalization, it is feared by some, could undercut what enabled the G-groups to succeed where formal organizations stagnate. As Woods underlines, “[t]he G20’s effectiveness has sprung from its informal, non-institutionalized form.”¹⁰⁰ Concerns about formalization also resonate with those focused on questions of legitimacy. Wouters and Gerates, for instance, discuss the accountability and legitimacy deficits of the G20, but conclude that they “do not consider a formalization of the G20 or the establishment of new multilateral institutions ... as solutions to the deficiencies of the G20.”¹⁰¹ Kelly et al. reject the idea of formalization because this may invite an impression of a world government-type organization that challenges the more inclusive UN in magnitude and reach, which “may cost the G20 some legitimacy, regardless of its merits.”¹⁰² Among some observers, skepticism regarding the purpose and desirability of formalization prevails.

Policymakers have repeatedly haggled and wavered over the urgency of formalizing the G20. Proposals to formalize the G20 were advanced almost immediately after the group had

⁹⁷ Benson and Zürn 2019, 556.

⁹⁸ Vabulas and Snidal 2020, 47.

⁹⁹ Luckhurst 2016, 275.

¹⁰⁰ Woods 2011, 46.

¹⁰¹ Wouters and Gerates 2012, 30.

¹⁰² Kelly and Cho 2012, 562.

coordinated the first policy responses to the global financial crisis and states took an interest in expanding its mandate. South Korea had reportedly called for a G20 “cyber” secretariat when it assumed the 2010 G20 presidency, but the issue was not prominently discussed at the summit.¹⁰³ A high-level proposal by the French President Nicolas Sarkozy for a permanent secretariat followed in the run-up to the French hosting of the summit in 2011.¹⁰⁴ He envisaged a broader role for the group and a corresponding change in its organizational setup.¹⁰⁵ The G20’s membership was divided over this proposal. A number of members, including France, South Korea, Brazil, Canada, and China were sympathetic to creating a secretariat.¹⁰⁶ Others, including Japan, Italy, and the United States, remained opposed to formalization.¹⁰⁷ As Luckhurst explains, “[f]ears about creating a G20 secretariat are partly due to the concern that its flexibility and informality would suffer as a consequence.”¹⁰⁸ The creation of a permanent secretariat, it became clear, carried the risk of alienating significant parts of the membership from the organization.

Even after the rejection of the French proposal, the G20’s institutional design remained a concern in policy circles. Another proposal came in the form of a report by UK Prime Minister David Cameron in late 2011, advancing the option of a “small secretariat, possibly staffed by seconded officials from G20 countries and based in and chaired by the Presidency.”¹⁰⁹ Cameron’s proposal was an attempt at reconciling the greater burden on the G20 as an organization with the reluctance to create an independent entity. Yet the proposal was not taken further at the following summit, with the final declaration acknowledging the report but reemphasizing that the G20 “is a Leader-led and informal group and it should remain so.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰³ Chosun Media 2010.

¹⁰⁴ Euractiv 2010.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ See Chosun Media 2010; Culpeper and Ingram 2010; and Chen 2013.

¹⁰⁷ Barston 2012, 110.

¹⁰⁸ Luckhurst 2016, 274.

¹⁰⁹ Cameron 2011, 18.

¹¹⁰ Group of Twenty 2011, 18.

The 2014 Australian Presidency sought an alternate approach: instead of adapting the G20's design to its expanding role, it sought to streamline the G20's role and agenda and thus adapt it to the existing design.¹¹¹ We now know that this has had little success in slowing states' intensifying use of the G20.

The history of the G20 indicates that, for many members, formalization would not only reduce key benefits but also undermine their commitment to the process altogether. As a result, increasingly, the G20 faces a major challenge: “[t]he need for extensive preparation must be reconciled with the antipathy towards creating a formal bureaucracy for summits.”¹¹² How has the G20 adapted to and absorbed these conflicting demands?

Changing Requirements: Mapping Member Interactions and Governance Relationships

Before analyzing the G20's organizational model, it is helpful to draw a systematic picture of how the conditions under which the G20 must provide support for state interactions have changed. I focus on two types of interactions: internal interactions among G20 members and external interactions that take place through governance relationships with other organizations.

A key metric for gauging the change in requirements for the G20 is the development of *member (state) interactions* within the organization's framework. I use the G20's agenda as a proxy for the complexity of member state interactions that it supports. G20 summits and political leaders operate under severe time constraints. A broader agenda necessitates the involvement of a larger number of specialists from member governments, and their interactions need to be structured and integrated with the summit process. This makes preparations for the summit itself, as well as follow-ups on negotiations, more demanding. This is particularly so where issues

¹¹¹ Greco 2014.

¹¹² Carin et al. 2010, 8.

have a distant time horizon and where repeated interactions as well as institutional memory are crucial.

The fact that the complexity of interactions among states within the G20's organizational framework has increased over time is hardly surprising to observers. Yet the magnitude of this is astounding when captured through a measurable metric like its agenda. To measure agenda expansion over time, I draw on the University of Toronto's G20 Research Group's line-by-line analysis of G20 commitments fixed in leaders' declarations.¹¹³ I analyze the number of issue areas and share of topics in G20 summit commitments over the ten-year period from 2008 to 2017. A visual representation of this analysis of G20 commitments (see Figure 2) demonstrates the stark broadening of the agenda and a marked change in the importance attributed to particular topics. Between the creation of the leaders' level G20 in 2008 and the 2017 G20 summit in Hamburg, the number of issue areas had tripled (see Issue Areas in Figure 2). Shortly after the global financial crisis, states clearly shifted to using the G20 as a much broader organizational platform for cooperation.

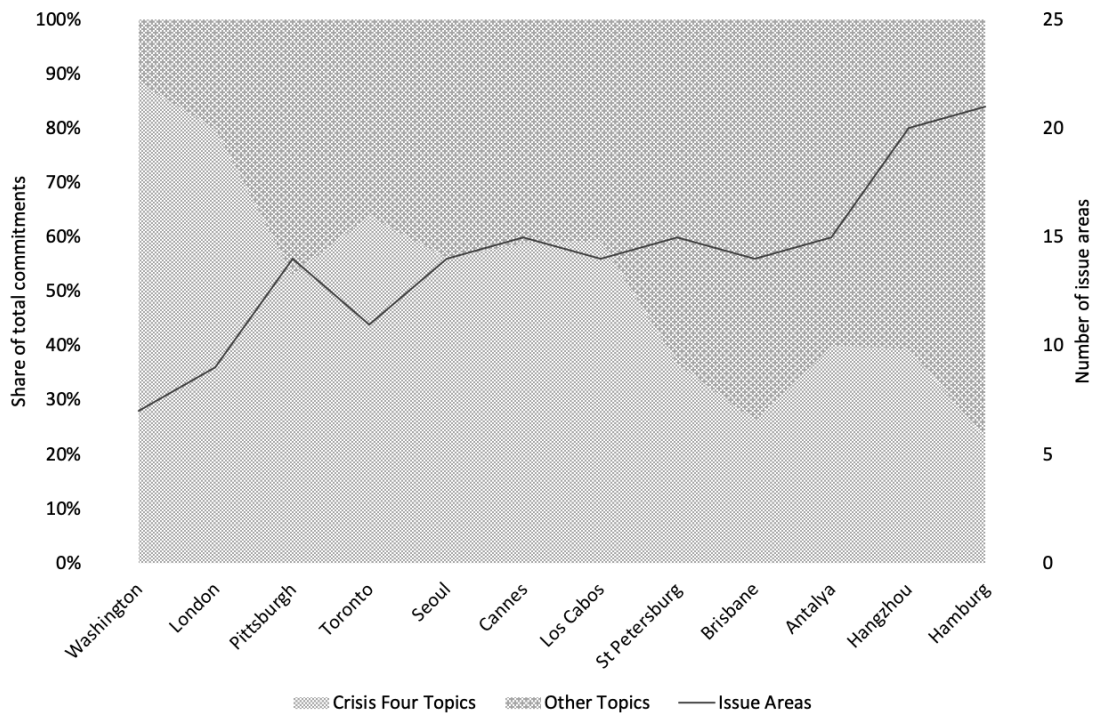
Three additional features stand out. First, the G20 has become an organization for primarily producing commitments in issue areas not directly related to the financial crisis. At its inception in 2008, nearly the entire governance activity focused on four issues of immediate relevance to the management of the financial crisis: financial regulation, the reform of the international financial institutions, macroeconomic policy, and trade (see Crisis Four Topics in Figure 2). The G20's redefinition as the "premier forum for international economic cooperation"¹¹⁴ in 2011 and the following 2012 summit in Los Cabos represent an inflection point in its trajectory.¹¹⁵ After the Los Cabos summit, the original main topics lost their relative importance alongside new ones such as climate change and digitization (see Other Topics in

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Group of Twenty 2020b.

¹¹⁵ Lei and Rui 2016, 354.

Figure 2). Between the inaugural 2008 Washington summit and the 2017 Hamburg summit, the share of original main topics in total commitments fell from 88 percent to a mere 23 percent.



Notes: Based on data from author’s dataset, compiled from the University of Toronto G20 Research Group’s identification of G20 leaders’ commitments.¹¹⁶

FIGURE 2. Number of issue areas and share of topics in G20 summit commitments, 2008-2017

Second, states have added issues to the G20’s agenda on which they face difficulties in reaching a political agreement in FIGOs. Recent examples include the G20’s attempts to reach baseline agreement on climate goals¹¹⁷ and a push to use the group to resolve disagreements that hamper WTO negotiations on digital trade.¹¹⁸ The complexity and distant time horizon of these issues result in the need to facilitate protracted negotiations in the run-up to summit meetings and across presidencies, especially at the working level. Third, and relatedly, states use the G20 for long-term engagement on such issues. On average, during the ten-year period examined, issues figured on the G20 agenda for seven summits, transcending yearly changes in

¹¹⁶ G20 Research Group 2020.

¹¹⁷ See Reuters 2020a.

¹¹⁸ See Palit 2019.

presidencies. Due to right censoring, this is a conservative estimate, and member states have included new topics such as the digital economy on a regular basis at later summits.

Beyond structuring member state interactions, the G20 also maintains *governance relationships* with other organizations and actors. From the start, the G20 had been premised on working in conjunction with the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) on financial and economic policy matters.¹¹⁹ In fact, before it was constituted as an independent body at the finance-ministerial level in the 1990s, “one option was for the chairs of the IMFC and Development Committees to jointly preside over the new forum, with the Fund’s Managing Director and the World Bank’s President invited to the meetings as full participants.”¹²⁰ Since its inception, the G20 thus had a special relationship with the Bretton Woods organizations,¹²¹ and both the IMF and the World Bank had been included as core members since 2001.¹²²

However, the G20 now also manages external interactions with a host of other organizations. Between the 2008 Washington summit and the 2017 Hamburg summit, the number of IGOs involved in the summit process had doubled from four to eight, adding, among others, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the World Health Organization (WHO).¹²³ Some of these new governance relationships require careful balancing, because G20 members perceive the benefits and legitimacy of these organizations differently. The OECD, for example, is a resourceful and competent but also “Western” organization, which makes its involvement in

¹¹⁹ Group of Eight 1999.

¹²⁰ Group of Twenty Study Group 2007, 19.

¹²¹ Group of Eight 1999.

¹²² Kirton 2010, 2.

¹²³ G20 Research Group 2011; Group of Twenty 2017b.

issues such as the global steel excess capacity—a heavily politicized issue among major G20 players, including the US and China—more contentious.¹²⁴

The G20 has also created, or taken the lead on orchestrating, a range of club-style institutions such as the Financial Stability Board (FSB), the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), and the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes (Global Forum).¹²⁵ These institutions are distinct from the G20 but rely on it as a political orchestrator. Therefore, the determination of their agenda and the review of their operations are permanent components of the G20 work process. Lastly, the G20 has expanded its outreach activities to business and civil society groups. The G20's expanding mandate means that its decisions also affect a larger share of transnational actors. For that reason, the G20 now also maintains external relationships with organizations that represent interest groups internationally. In 2010, the G20 created the Business 20 dialogue to engage with private sector organizations and by 2015 had added an additional five such outreach formats, including the Civil 20 (civil society), the Labor 20 (for labor unions) and the Think 20 (for think tanks).¹²⁶

Within the span of just a decade, the G20, which started as a crisis response vehicle, saw a rapid and significant change in demands on it as an organization. At the early stages of the leaders' level G20, the organization facilitated member cooperation on a very delimited agenda and drew on established working relationships with the IFIs for support and implementation. A decade later, the number of issue areas for which it structured intergovernmental engagement had tripled, and governance relationships had diversified to include twice as many international organizations and a spectrum of transnational outreach formats.

¹²⁴ In the area of global steel excess capacity, the OECD facilitates the G20 Global Forum on Steel Excess Capacity with technical advice and meeting assistance. Global Forum on Steel Excess Capacity n.d.; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2017.

¹²⁵ See Financial Stability Board 2021; Financial Action Task Force n.d.; and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development n.d.; See also Hagebölling 2021.

¹²⁶ Slaughter 2015, 171–72.

Design Adaptation: Tracing Organizational Structure and Administrative Support

We have seen that from the early 2010s, the G20 faced growing organizational requirements in terms of its capacity to support interactions among member states and with external governance actors. At the same time, proposals for formalization met staunch resistance. At first sight, the G20 has undergone little organizational change. It has not seen the establishment of a permanent secretariat or a grounding of its work in a binding international agreement. As member states have eschewed the creation of such organizational and legal independence, our focus shifts to the development of greater centralization in response to changing requirements. I trace the G20's design adaptation by looking at the two main components of centralization: first, the manifestation of a concrete *organizational structure*, and second, the emergence of *administrative support* that sustains activities within this structure.¹²⁷

Organizational Structure: Institutionalized Cooperation Architecture

Since 2008, the G20 has developed from a minimally institutionalized framework for high-level political meetings into an organization featuring an extensive organizational structure for facilitating member interactions at all levels. Initially, given its focus on issues immediately related to the global financial crisis, it conducted the majority of its preparatory work through just four working groups.¹²⁸ The proclamation of its new mission as a generalist steering committee for the global economy in 2011 and programmatic broadening at the 2012 Los Cabos summit (see earlier discussion) sparked significant changes in the G20's organizational structure. By 2017, "the G20 ha[d] established a myriad of working groups and workstreams, such as on infrastructure, development, employment, and trade."¹²⁹ The face-to-face interactions among

¹²⁷ Abbott and Snidal 1998, 9.

¹²⁸ These working groups were: Enhancing Sound Regulation and Strengthening Transparency; Reinforcing International Cooperation and Promoting Integrity in Financial Markets; Reforming the International Monetary Fund; The World Bank and Other Multilateral Development Banks. Guebert 2009, 18–19.

¹²⁹ Fues and Messner 2016, 1.

member state representatives saw a massive expansion over these years. By 2013, the Russian Presidency had already overseen a total of 65 face-to-face meetings within the span of just twelve months—up from merely a dozen or so preparatory meetings annually in the first years after the crisis.¹³⁰ The German Presidency administrated a total of 114 face-to-face meetings in 2017 involving thousands of officials from member states and international bodies.¹³¹

The G20 working groups and work streams have been integrated into a multilevel organizational architecture. At the top of this architecture is the annual summit meeting attended by heads of state and government. Summits form the basis of shared expectations about the purpose and design of the organization, expressing support for the creation of or changes to institutional mechanisms like working groups and formulating demands.¹³² One level below the summit, ministerial meetings draw on the work that is done by government departments and regulatory agencies with the aim of “building consensus around specific shared deliverables,” even before the start of the summit.¹³³ Finally, working-level interactions are institutionalized in working groups or task forces, where “they address specific issues linked to the broader G20 agenda, feeding into the Ministerial segments and ultimately the Summit itself.”¹³⁴ They are firmly embedded in the superstructure of ministerial meetings and the leaders’ summit.

It is important to note that in this organizational structure, transgovernmental relations among government officials and regulators emerge neither spontaneously nor detached from intergovernmental processes.¹³⁵ New arrangements, as well as larger changes to working groups’

¹³⁰ Own data, compiled from the official website of the 2013 Russian G20 Presidency.

¹³¹ Own data, compiled from the official website of the 2017 German G20 Presidency.

¹³² The leaders’ summit declarations, for instance, ultimately sanction the development of the G20’s organizational structure by welcoming the creation or change of institutional mechanisms and formulating expectations regarding their mandate. For an example, see paragraphs 22 and 25 in Group of Twenty 2016.

¹³³ Group of Twenty 2021b.

¹³⁴ Group of Twenty 2021c.

¹³⁵ Analogously, Slaughter distinguishes transgovernmentalism that ‘operate[s] within a framework agreed on at least by the heads of their respective governments’ from other types of networked relations. Slaughter 2001, 357.

agendas and operations, are generally pre-agreed in nonbinding memoranda or joint declarations at the ministerial level. They are then institutionalized following their confirmation at the leaders' summit. The transformation of the G20 Task Force on Employment into a standing Employment Working Group, for instance, followed a recommendation addressed jointly to the G20 heads of state and government by the labor and employment ministers.¹³⁶ In turn, administrators at the working level follow up on summit decisions, and their technical elaborations feed back into negotiations at higher (political) levels. Annexes that specify agreed terms and are brought together in summit declarations are the product of working groups that operate in this larger architecture.¹³⁷

Administrative Apparatus: Troika, Sherpas, and Technology

With thousands of officials and other stakeholders regularly engaging through the G20's organizational structure, it compares in scope to established FIGOs. Yet the G20 continues to operate without a permanent secretariat or international staff. To compensate for the lack of a traditional administrative apparatus and to avoid the creation of an independent agency, the G20 has adopted alternative mechanisms: a troika rotating Chair system, Sherpa teams, and extensive use of information technology.

The first mechanism is the *troika* rotating Chair system through which the preceding, current, and succeeding Chairs work together to maintain continuity between annual summits.¹³⁸ Each year, the presidency of the G20 rotates between members.¹³⁹ The country assuming the presidency hosts the summit and the majority of the dozens of ministerial and working group meetings, effectively replacing a permanent physical location in the form of a headquarters. The presidency has the privilege of defining priorities of the agenda. Despite that, it operates on the

¹³⁶ German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs 2011, 20.

¹³⁷ Hilbrich and Schwab 2018, 14.

¹³⁸ Kirton 2016, 143.

¹³⁹ German Federal Government 2017.

explicit understanding that it coordinates with past and future presidencies, thereby ensuring continuity of deliberations and follow-up on decisions. For example, Grattan recalls that during the transition of the G20's presidency from Australia to Turkey, the latter "has been given extensive guidance and information ... including the archives, talking points and advocacy plan."¹⁴⁰ The host undertakes many essential secretarial functions to ensure the smooth operation of the organizational machinery, including the preparation of draft documents, distribution of information, and coordination of the work of members and the various institutional mechanisms.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, the troika system is typically replicated at the level of individual institutional mechanisms, although co-Chairs of working groups and task forces can be selected based on substantive grounds related to the issues at hand.¹⁴²

The troika mechanism saw a stepwise development and consolidation. In its basic form, it was introduced in 2002 and then inherited from the G20's ministerial-level predecessor. It was reinforced after 2008 with the practice of seconding officials to other member states. British politician Shriti Vadera, for example, stepped down from her role as a cabinet member in 2009 to liaise between the outgoing and incoming Chair.¹⁴³ The United Kingdom also seconded a senior official to Canada, which took over the presidency a year later.¹⁴⁴ Finally, at the 2011 Cannes summit, recognizing that the G20, in this format, would see continued and more extensive use, leaders included confirmation in their final declaration that they intended to "formalise the Troika" as a permanent pillar of the group's operations.¹⁴⁵ This affirmation of the troika mechanism came at the same time as leaders rejected proposals for formalization (see earlier discussion), which indicates its centrality in the G20's organizational model. Finally, in 2012, the principle of regional alternation was added to the troika mechanism in order to ensure

¹⁴⁰ Grattan 2015.

¹⁴¹ See Group of Seven 2017; and Group of Twenty 2020a.

¹⁴² For an example, see Group of Twenty 2017c.

¹⁴³ Carin et al. 2010, 11.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Group of Twenty 2011, 19.

regular change and socialization effects between presidencies of wealthy and less wealthy member states. Since then, presidencies have rotated not just on a per-country basis but per geographically defined group.¹⁴⁶

The second mechanism that the G20 employs is that of *Sherpas* and their teams. The so-called Sherpas are personal representatives of member state leaders and are generally based in executive offices.¹⁴⁷ The Sherpa mechanism comes closest to a secretariat in the G20 and, in Berle and Means's terms, to the "separation of ownership and control" that characterizes the management of processes in large organizations.¹⁴⁸ At the same time, members do not cede control to an international entity whose supervision requires some majority or consensus among member states.¹⁴⁹ Instead, states' political leadership yields control to a national high-level bureaucrat or appointee under their direct and exclusive supervision. From that position, Sherpas build a coordination structure out of executive offices and in parallel to standard ministerial procedures. Sherpas and their teams effectively represent an intermediate level that links the technical coordination carried out by the working groups with high-level political negotiations. Within the Sherpa track, which now encompasses the majority of issues and G20 activities, Sherpas have thus come to "delegate policy and technical analysis to working groups drawn from officials from each member country and international organisations."¹⁵⁰ Although officials engaged in the G20's institutional architecture formally respond to their heads of department, Sherpas and their teams thus project leaders' authority throughout government administrations.

¹⁴⁶ German Federal Government 2017; Luckhurst 2016, 128.

¹⁴⁷ Examples of executive offices are the United States Executive Office of the President, the Presidential Administration of Russia, and the German Federal Chancellery.

¹⁴⁸ Berle 1932, 4–5.

¹⁴⁹ This is the default setup for most FIGOs. A prominent example is the IMF Board of Governor's delegation of power to the Executive Board, which, in turn, formally selects, oversees, and reviews decisions by the Managing Director. The Executive Board takes decisions by consensus or, less frequently, by formal vote. See International Monetary Fund 2017.

¹⁵⁰ Fues and Messner 2016, 3.

Moreover, Sherpas have an important brokerage role in the run-up to each summit. Leaders typically only meet once a year in the G20 context, while Sherpas frequently meet to coordinate both face-to-face and remotely. The actual summit leaves only limited time for negotiations and is focused on resolving outstanding issues. Therefore, leaders rely on pre-agreement by Sherpas on items that figure in final declarations. In addition, the Sherpa meetings operate in greater isolation from political oscillations than those among leaders, thus increasing the continuity of negotiations. The Russian G20 Sherpa, for instance, recounts that, following the Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 incident and notwithstanding political considerations of excluding Russia from the following summit, the Sherpas—especially those from the troika countries—maintained working relationships with little interruption.¹⁵¹ Together, this enables the G20 to structure the thematically broad and highly technical coordination around political decision making by leaders.

The role of the Sherpas was firmly anchored in the G20 process with the 2012 Los Cabos summit, flanking the organization's transition from crisis responder to a permanent and broader organization. At that point, member states introduced regular Sherpa meetings as a de facto steering group with bimonthly face-to-face meetings “to coordinate daily communication and negotiation among G20 members.”¹⁵² As more and more work took place on items from the agenda that the traditional finance track could not readily accommodate, the Sherpas' role gained importance. Over time, Sherpas have come to rely on larger teams that often exceed a dozen dedicated officials, particularly when a country holds the presidency.¹⁵³ They are assisted by Sous-Sherpas, who are focused on specific issues areas (e.g., foreign affairs), prepare the

¹⁵¹ Interview with Russian G20 Sherpa Svetlana Lukash, quoted in Luckhurst 2016, 128–29. Luckhurst also reports that the continuation of the working relationships during the political tensions surrounding the Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 incident were confirmed by officials from the other G20 troika states at the time, Australia and Turkey.

¹⁵² Lei and Rui 2016, 358.

¹⁵³ For instance, during the 2017 Presidency, Germany more than tripled its Sherpa staff to well over a dozen civil servants. Author's fieldwork observations.

ministerial meetings, oversee working groups, and work with their counterparts in other member states to ensure unity of action and consistency over time.¹⁵⁴ In short, the Sherpa mechanism has become critical to the G20s' continuous operation throughout the year and across presidencies.

Lastly, the presidencies, as well as the individual institutional mechanisms that make up the G20's organizational machinery, rely heavily on information *technology* for administration. Permanent secretariats and headquarters lower logistical and technological barriers to organizational centralization. They reduce the necessary travel activity significantly and discharge national officials from the need to engage in distance communication with foreign counterparts, which was once unreliable and costly.¹⁵⁵ Manulak and Snidal find that advances in information and communication technologies and reduced costs of transportation have been vital enablers of informal intergovernmental design.¹⁵⁶ In the case of the G20, just as fast, reliable, and cheap transportation allows political leaders to regularly attend summit meetings, national officials can more easily undertake routine tasks that were once reserved for international staff based in some permanent location.

Technology underpins the G20's organizational logistics and facilitates work between sessions. A central component of the organization's good functioning and day-to-day operations is an online platform that the host country sets up. Here, a partition with restricted access is maintained to disseminate documents and materials for officials, including those produced by working groups.¹⁵⁷ The relatively seamless transition of G20 summits to a virtual format during the Covid-19 pandemic testifies to the degree to which IIGOs are able to base their operation on the use of communication technologies.¹⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the G20 employs technology as an

¹⁵⁴ See, e.g., Gronau 2015, 49; See also Cooper and Pouliot 2015, 347.

¹⁵⁵ Manulak and Snidal 2021, 187–192.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 192–204.

¹⁵⁷ Group of Twenty Study Group 2007, 24–25.

¹⁵⁸ Reuters 2020b.

enabler to supports its organizational structure in the absence of conventional administrative support rather than as a replacement for in-person interactions. Face-to-face meetings remain integral to the building of working relationships at all levels of the G20's organizational framework.¹⁵⁹

Centralization without Independence: An Anatomy of the 2017 G20 Presidency

The recognition of the growing demands on the G20 for supporting extensive state interactions, on the one hand, and states' reluctance to formalize it, on the other hand, have given rise to an organizational structure and administrative apparatus that operates without a permanent secretariat or legalization. In this final section of my empirical analysis, I look at how this "centralization without independence" manifests in the structuring of state interactions within the G20. To that end, I dissect the G20's anatomy as well as the operations that took place during the 2017 German Presidency, leveraging a new dataset on institutionalization and meetings.¹⁶⁰ This serves, beyond illustration, as a first plausibility test of the G20 model's enhancement of negotiation stability, information dissemination, and issue linkage compared with ad hoc or decentralized cooperation.

I begin by mapping the G20's organizational structure under the 2017 presidency (see Figure 3). It reflects the earlier discussion on the G20s' organizational adaptation and reveals the scale of its institutionalization. Working-level interactions among government officials in 2017 were bundled in a total of 18 working groups and task forces. These, in turn, were collected under the umbrella of higher-level meetings, generally at the ministerial level, that set the

¹⁵⁹ See, e.g., Sugiyama 2020.

¹⁶⁰ While the yearly change of host means that we should expect some year-on-year variation in the details of the G20's anatomy, a cursory examination of other presidencies indicates that the features highlighted in this section are stable across time. For comparison with the working groups, ministerial meetings, and events calendar of the 2021 G20 Presidency, for example, see Group of Twenty 2021c; Group of Twenty 2021b; and Group of Twenty 2021a.

political direction for issue complexes such as foreign, digital, and trade policy. At the top of this structure is the yearly summit meeting, which brings together heads of state and government. The Sherpa teams and their regular meetings form the connective tissue between the working level, the political level, and the presidency. An important exception to their reach is the semiautonomous finance track, which is a remnant of the G20's original conception as a forum for global financial governance. Here, the Sherpa functions are assumed by the Finance Deputies.

Summit					
Ministerial					
Foreign Policy, Trade, Energy, Digital, Labor, Agriculture, and Health Ministerials				Finance Ministers & Central Bank Governors	
Coordination					
Sherpa and Deputy Meetings				Finance Deputy Meetings	
Expert					
Agriculture	Anti-Corruption	Consumer Protection	Development	Climate Finance	Green Finance
Digitization	Employment	Energy	Financial Inclusion	International Financial Architecture	Investment and Infrastructure
Health	Steel Excess Capacity	Sustainability	Trade and Investment	Sustainable and Balanced Growth	Tax Certainty

Notes: Based on data from the official website of the 2017 Business 20.¹⁶¹

FIGURE 3. *Organizational structure of the 2017 German G20 Presidency*

The mapping indicates that the G20's organizational structure integrates interactions among the various parts of member states' government apparatuses and creates opportunities for linkages between issues. In this structure, the summit serves primarily as a last-minute opportunity for firefighting severe disagreement and amending contentious wording in declarations. As an observer from the German federal government's principal advisory think tank on foreign issues noted, "this means that summit declarations are prepared and agreed over

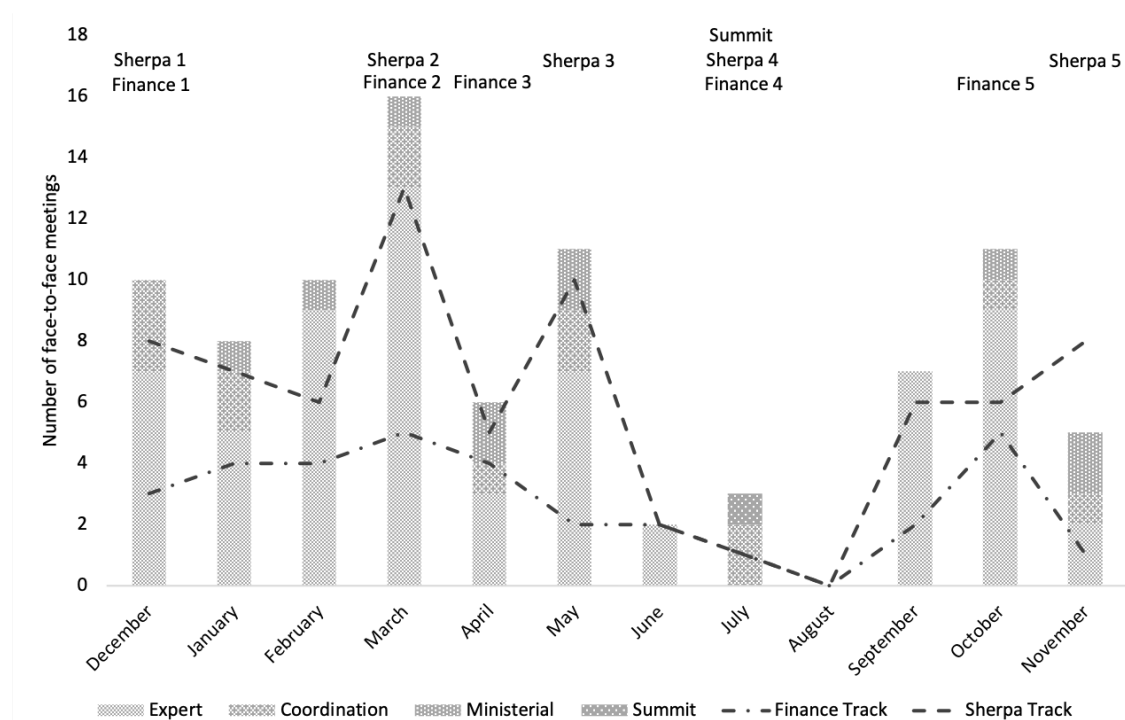
¹⁶¹ Business 20 2017.

months in tedious bureaucratic processes among member government's officials."¹⁶² The summit process functions as the focal point for the G20 machinery and an opportunity to establish links and tradeoffs between issue areas that are politically difficult or administratively cumbersome to create directly among government experts. The output of the summit meetings reflects their integrative function. At the Hamburg summit, the declaration made 37 references to the various internal ministerial meetings, dialogues, and working groups within the G20 organizational framework. Furthermore, in 31 references, it connected the G20's work to outside organizations such as the OECD.¹⁶³

Moving beyond a static mapping of the 2017 G20 and towards a dynamic view of its operations provides further insights into how the G20 model operates. To illustrate its operations during the German Presidency, I compile a new dataset of the G20's institutionalized face-to-face meetings. I code each meeting with respect to its timing and level in the organizational structure (see Figure 3, Summit, Ministerial, Coordination, Expert). Additionally, for each meeting, I code whether it is associated with the Sherpa or the Finance track. I use this data to visualize the temporal distribution of the G20's face-to-face meetings during the German Presidency in Figure 4 below. The figure shows the monthly number and types of meetings (bar chart height and pattern) and the month-to-month trend in the meeting frequency for each of the two tracks (line chart overlay). The figure also highlights the principal coordinatory meetings, namely the leaders' summit (Summit) and the Sherpa and finance deputy meetings (Sherpa 1–5; Finance 1–5).

¹⁶² Maull 2017, translated by author.

¹⁶³ Kirton and Warren 2018, 22.



Notes: Sherpa: Sherpa meetings; Finance: Finance (deputy) minister meetings; Based on data from the official website of the 2017 German G20 Presidency.¹⁶⁴

FIGURE 4. G20 face-to-face meetings during the 2017 German G20 Presidency

The figure illustrates how the G20 integrates government-to-government interactions into a more stable and predictable environment for negotiations. The G20's institutional mechanisms operate continuously and with relatively uniform intensity throughout the year, even in the absence of immediate political inertia in the run-up to the summit meeting. On average, around ten face-to-face meetings—each involving between a few dozen to hundreds of participants—take place each month. Crucially, the transition from one presidency to another towards the end of a calendar year does not appear to lead to interruptions. After a month without significant activity following the summit, interactions pick up pace again immediately and continue at a normal level until the transition to the next presidency.

A second aspect that stands out is the regularity with which Sherpa teams (and finance deputies) share information and coordinate the G20 processes. We have seen earlier that the

¹⁶⁴ Group of Twenty 2017a.

Sherpa teams and meetings form the connective tissue between the working level, the political level, and the presidency. Besides their role as key negotiators for the heads of state and government, Sherpas assume a coordinating function and centralize information across the institutional architecture. Sherpa and finance deputy meetings pace year-round operations through five major meetings held at regular intervals of approximately two months. The Sherpa and finance deputy meetings form the framework for information dissemination within which individual institutional mechanisms—the working groups and task forces—have their own additional procedures and reporting requirements in place.¹⁶⁵

Overall, my analysis provides a first illustration of the basic scope of the G20's organizational model for supporting state interactions through enhanced negotiation stability, information dissemination, and issue linkage—without relying on a partially autonomous organizational entity. Crucially, my findings are relevant to the analysis of other key IIGOs, including the G7 and BRICS. In fact, cursory accounts of these IIGOs' inner working echo the findings in this article. Gstöhl, for instance, stresses the G7's "complex network of close relationships in a process running 365 days/year, 24 h/day."¹⁶⁶ Similarly, a Brazilian senior foreign service official recounts the development of the BRICS into an organization "whose activities are not limited to an exercise from one Summit to the next but provides for intense and continuous activity among its members in different areas."¹⁶⁷

This look into the inner workings of the G20 is only a first step towards a systematic understanding of design and function in the increasingly diverse landscape of IIGOs. Before closing this article, therefore, I lay out pathways towards a systematic comparative study of IIGO models.

¹⁶⁵ For an overview of reports by the G20 working groups and task forces, see Hilbrich and Schwab 2018, 17.

¹⁶⁶ Gstöhl 2007, 2.

¹⁶⁷ Fontenele Reis 2013, 61.

Towards the Comparative Study of IIGO Models

The article offers a baseline for studying IIGOs' functional scope and organizational anatomy. The P-F framework served as a theoretical guardrail by disaggregating formality into the organizational properties of centralization and independence. The subsequent empirical analysis built on this by illustrating the origins, development, and practical manifestation of “centralization without independence” in the G20.

From this, further questions present themselves: How effectively (and efficiently) can IIGOs provide functions that support state interactions based on this model? What unique pathologies do IIGOs display? What costs do states incur or avoid by choosing IIGOs? Crucially, addressing these questions has to account for the variety of IIGO models that now exist. Given the recency of IIGOs' rise in number and centrality, the literature has traditionally focused on explaining design variations among FIGOs and how these related to specific cooperation problem structures and functional demands.¹⁶⁸ Moving forward, scholarship has an opportunity to take a similar approach to IIGOs by, first, distinguishing the various organizational models within the larger IIGO category and, second, analyzing how these differ in ways that inform states' institutional choices within the spectrum of informal intergovernmentalism. In this last part of the article, I highlight several basic IIGO model *types* and suggest three *vectors* for comparison that align with the questions raised above.

As IIGOs proliferate and assume new roles in international organization, their designs become more diverse. Informal governance scholarship has made great strides towards establishing analytical boundaries between decentralized cooperation, IIGOs, and FIGOs.¹⁶⁹ However, these boundaries remain too coarse to capture design and choice within informal intergovernmentalism. IIGOs can be divided into several *types* of models. In a recent

¹⁶⁸ See Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001; and Koremenos 2016.

¹⁶⁹ See, especially, Vabulas and Snidal 2013.

contribution, Vabulas distinguishes IIGOs as belonging to three different types, those “1. relying on an established organisation to host the IIGO; 2. relying on a state to provide a technical secretariat; 3. creating a rotating Chair where leadership revolves between members.”¹⁷⁰ Whereas the G20 is representative of the third type, the typology highlights that at least two other basic types can be identified that achieve centralization, that is, a defined organizational structure and administrative apparatus, without independence.

Besides making a static comparison of different IIGOs, the suggested typology enables an analysis of organizational change that goes beyond formalization. Specifically, we may trace under what circumstances organizations change type *within* the IIGO category—as opposed to *between* IIGOs and FIGOs. Consider the Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM) as an example. The CEM started in 2010 as an IIGO with a secretariat based at the US Department of Energy (type 2).¹⁷¹ However, in 2016, this secretariat moved to the International Energy Agency (IEA) in Paris (type 1).¹⁷² The key takeaway is that states face a more extensive menu of organizational choices in response to changing requirements than can be captured by a binary distinction between formality and informality.

The suggested types necessarily strike a balance between clarity and precision. My empirical analysis of the G20 has shown that IIGOs can adapt their design to changing requirements without changing type as defined here. Furthermore, although members ultimately rejected the 2011 UK proposal for a “small secretariat, possibly staffed by seconded officials from G20 countries and based in and chaired by the Presidency,”¹⁷³ it would have transformed the G20 in important ways without registering as a change in type according to the typology

¹⁷⁰ Vabulas 2019, 409.

¹⁷¹ International Energy Agency 2016.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Cameron 2011, 18.

used here. In short, while the typology is a major step towards a more detailed understanding of IIGOs, it will benefit from further calibration in empirical analyses.

To approach organizational choice within the IIGO category, I suggest three *vectors* for comparison that reflect the questions raised above. First, *functional effectiveness* will differ between types. The P-F framework provides a theoretical orientation for the set of functions that IIGOs can plausibly provide. Yet some IIGO types may be more adept at providing some functions than others. Importantly, it is unclear how their effectiveness in providing these functions scales with unique advantages associated with IIGOs. Are, for instance, IIGOs that rely on support from an established organization (type 1) better equipped to provide a stable environment for negotiations and for disseminating information to members but at the cost of speed and flexibility? Research along these lines would contribute to our understanding of the functional tradeoff that states face when choosing how to design or change informal arrangements.

Second, IIGO types will display varying *organizational pathologies*. The literature has studied pathologies in FIGOs extensively, stressing that international bureaucracies often act “in ways unintended and unanticipated by states at their creation.”¹⁷⁴ We may see similar pathologies in type 1 IIGOs. The Budapest Process, for instance, is administrated by international bureaucrats from the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, which “serves as the Secretariat.”¹⁷⁵ By contrast, in the case of type 3 IIGOs, such as the G20 examined earlier, a hallmark is the shift of the administrative burden from international to national bureaucracies. In some cases, in fact, this shift “stretches the capacities of most national bureaucracies to the limit.”¹⁷⁶ While states may avoid a loss of agency to international bureaucrats in such a setting, national bureaucratic politics may spill over into the

¹⁷⁴ Barnett and Finnemore 1999, 699.

¹⁷⁵ Budapest Process n.d.

¹⁷⁶ Fues and Messner 2016, 1.

organization.¹⁷⁷ Therefore, we should expect organizational pathologies to differ between IIGO types and, correspondingly, vary regarding how they affect state cooperation.

Lastly, IIGO types will come with different *cost structures*. Recent contributions reiterate the importance of cost, broadly conceived, as a criterion for explaining states' institutional choices. Abbot and Faude, for example, argue that informal "low-cost institutions" (LCIs) can be more easily created, operated, changed, and exited from.¹⁷⁸ States, they claim, choose LCIs because they "provide substantive and political governance benefits based on their low costs, including reduced risk, malleability, and flexibility."¹⁷⁹ The distinction between IIGO types invites a more detailed assessment of how different informal arrangements compare in terms of cost. Type 3 IIGOs like the G20, for instance, may reduce sovereignty costs at the expense of operational costs by forcing an inefficient reliance on national bureaucracies. Are certain IIGO types a low-cost choice? If so, for what type of cost? Hence, rather than assuming that IIGOs are low cost by default, cost structure can be employed as a useful differentiator between types and as an explanatory factor for institutional choice.

These IIGO types and vectors for comparison do not, on their own, lead to an exhaustive contouring of this field of inquiry. Rather, they illustrate that the article's focus on IIGOs' functional scope and organizational anatomy ("centralization without independence") can serve as a stepping stone for making sense of the astonishing informalization of intergovernmental cooperation that has characterized the past decades.

¹⁷⁷ On bureaucratic politics and foreign policy generally, see Allison and Halperin 1972.

¹⁷⁸ Abbott and Faude 2020, 3.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

Conclusion

IIGOs have not only rapidly proliferated but have also seen a change in and a diversification of their roles in international organization. Whereas some IIGOs remain issue-specific and lean bodies, others have transformed into platforms that routinely structure state interactions concerning a complex set of global challenges. Strikingly, even as the requirements for IIGOs change, states show remarkable reluctance to formalize and to respond with the creation of a permanent secretariat. For scholars of international cooperation, this raises questions about IIGOs' limitations and what mechanisms exist to support state cooperation effectively.

In this article, I took a first step towards addressing these questions. Building on the institutional design literature, I introduced a theoretical framework to analyze the relationship between (in)formal design and the capacity to support state interactions. Formality is associated with two key organizational properties: centralization and independence. Arguing that IIGOs may develop centralization but lack any significant independence, I delineated a set of functions that they can plausibly provide to support member state engagement, namely enhanced negotiation stability, information dissemination, and issue linkage. However, even though recourse to the theoretical literature clarifies IIGOs' functional scope, there is little insight into how these informal organizations achieve centralization without the establishment of a permanent secretariat or staff.

Against the background of this theoretical discussion, I thus proceeded to explore how IIGOs achieve "centralization without independence" in the face of changing functional requirements. I focused on the G20 as an influential case for the study of contemporary global governance systems and as an organization that looks back at almost a decade of controversy concerning the suitability of its informal design. Beginning with an examination of changing requirements for the organization, I traced its design adaptation in the context of members' reluctance to formalize, and, finally, dissected the G20's anatomy as well as its operations during

the 2017 German Presidency. Beyond demonstrating that IIGOs dynamically respond to changing requirements with centralization mechanisms, the case also offered an illustration of how this affects state cooperation, including through the stabilization of repeated interactions and the linkage of transgovernmental work streams.

Opening the black box of IIGOs matters. IIGOs' ability to adapt to their changing role in state cooperation has repercussions well beyond their immediate organizational realm. Organization like the G20, the G7, and BRICS are orchestrators, that is, they provide political guidance to other organizations, including formal multilateral organizations like the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Health Organization. This means that their inner workings have rippling effects globally. A concrete concern is, as Viola points out with respect to the G20, that "the ad hoc and institutionally undisciplined G20 might exacerbate coordination and overlap problems."¹⁸⁰ In short, the functional scope and organizational anatomy that underpins these IIGOs emerge as important frontiers for studying the multilateral system at large.

Accordingly, I closed by laying out pathways to comparative research on IIGO models. This article serves as a starting point because it shifts heuristics from the dichotomy between IIGOs and FIGOs ("organization without delegation") to the analysis of IIGOs' inner workings ("centralization without independence") and thus variation *within* the IIGO spectrum. I set out a typology of IIGO models recently introduced by Vabulas and highlighted three vectors for comparison: functional effectiveness, organizational pathologies, and cost structure.

Ultimately, the study of IIGOs' functions and design can enrich fundamental scholarly debates about power and legitimacy in 21st-century international organization. Scholars have

¹⁸⁰ Viola 2015a, 113.

recognized the significance of informal governance for power relations.¹⁸¹ Similarly, the rise of IIGOs creates winners and losers. However, IIGO design will affect power relations differently. IIGOs relying on a permanent host state, for instance, will concentrate influence very differently than IIGOs using rotating hosts or leveraging FIGO support. It remains unclear precisely how IIGO types redistribute influence and who they favor. Yet it is highly plausible that power political calculations—rather than just “functional” considerations—also motivate states’ organizational choices on the spectrum of IIGO types.

IIGOs also raise acute concerns about the legitimacy of global governance. Again, the focus on IIGOs’ inner workings and the spectrum of IIGO models has significant potential to add to the current debate. IIGOs like the G20 have seen intense debate about legitimacy deficits and possible remedies.¹⁸² How different IIGO models are “more” legitimate than others, in what ways (their processes, input, or output), and from whose perspective thus remain important and underexplored aspects of informal intergovernmentalism.

Overall, as gridlock in formal multilateral organizations persists, the centrality of IIGOs in international cooperation is set to grow. As a result of this, the study of IIGOs’ functions and design presents itself as a promising field of scholarly inquiry and a lever that can help policymakers make better-informed institutional choices.

¹⁸¹ See, generally, Westerwinter, Abbott, and Biersteker 2021, 13–14; For informal governance in FIGOs, see, e.g., Stone 2011; For IIGOs, see, e.g., Vabulas and Snidal 2020; For TGNs, see, e.g., Slaughter 2017.

¹⁸² See, e.g., Benson and Zürn 2019; Slaughter 2013; Wouters and Geraets 2012; and Kelly and Cho 2012.

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VI.

Conclusion

Summary of Arguments and Findings

The institutional fabric of international organization is changing. After the Second World War, leading states envisioned a multilateral order centered on a set of formal and universal intergovernmental organizations. This set of organizations governs a very different world today than it once did. The political, economic, and social interdependencies and the unprecedented human development that it helped propel create new global challenges. These are broader in scope and bleed deeper into the domestic policy space. Multilateral organizations also witnessed a substantial change in stakeholders. The number of states in the international system has roughly tripled since the mid-20th century and power has dispersed to a much more heterogeneous group of countries.

Against this background, one of the most significant transformations in international organization has been the rise of major IIGOs like the G7, the G20, and BRICS as modern-day concert governors. These IIGOs have come to guide global governance well beyond their original financial remit. Their purpose is not to set, implement, and enforce global rules directly. Rather, they leverage the power and influence of their members to orchestrate regime complexes built around the formal postwar universal organizations. Scholarship has begun to paint a detailed picture of the informalization of international cooperation. It has focused on explaining *why* it is that states prefer informal arrangements and has linked the emergence of the G7 and G20 as global steering bodies to the changing scope and depth of cooperation problems, the shifting constellation of major powers, and technological advancements increasing the feasibility of informal institutional design.

In this thesis, I shed light on *how* this hybrid system of concert diplomacy and global governance works—that is, how IIGOs orchestrate global governance. Two sets of questions crystallized as being central. One set of questions relates to the *governance logic* of IIGO orchestration, especially the challenges that IIGOs' governance through international institutions encompasses. IIGO orchestration walks a fine line between steering a multilateral system in distress and undermining the independence and unique competencies of the universal organizations that form its bedrock. A second set of questions relates to the *organizational foundations* of IIGOs. IIGOs' potential as governance directorates ultimately rises or falls with their ability to provide adequate support for cooperative engagement and consensus formation among major powers. Today's principal IIGO orchestrators were originally designed as crisis response vehicles rather than permanent platforms for continued negotiations and orchestration. Yet IIGOs have largely remained a black box: their functional scope is undertheorized and their organizational anatomy little explored empirically.

In a series of three research articles, I studied how IIGOs orchestrate global governance. I began by laying the groundwork for examining the governance logic of IIGO orchestration. To that end, I developed a strategic theory of regime design that explains how governors (like IIGOs) can structure governance relationships to mitigate a fundamental constraint in indirect governance: the competence-control (CC) tradeoff. My central claim was that differentiation—the complementary enlistment of multiple institutions—is a key way for states to mitigate this tradeoff and thus a source of institutional overlap and regime complexity. With this, I presented the first fully developed theoretical argument about regime design strategies available to governors for mitigating the CC tradeoff. I found support for the plausibility of my claims across a range of issues areas from the economic and security realms, highlighting the broad relevance of approaching regime design from the perspective of indirect governance dynamics.

I then applied this theoretical approach specifically to the analysis of how IIGOs orchestrate global governance. I argued that, as indirect governors, IIGOs will frequently have

incentives to mitigate the CC tradeoff through regime design, differentiating governance activities between multiple institutions. I specified this further, contending that IIGOs leverage formal universal organizations' credibility and legitimacy as independent organizations to garner international support and advance the broad implementation of governance responses but draw on the expertise and capacity of club institutions—that are more anticipatory of their preferences—for the setting and enforcement of preferred rules. I demonstrated the presence of such strategic regime design patterns in two major G7/G20-orchestrated regulatory regimes: market integrity and financial stability. My empirics thereby also expanded our understanding of the design rationale behind these influential cases in regulatory governance. Importantly, they brought to light an underlying regime design pattern that is looking to repeat itself in new IIGO-orchestrated global regulatory initiatives.

The growing use and centrality of IIGOs like the G20 invigorate skepticism regarding their informal design and processes. Many voices have called for a formalization, particularly the creation of a dedicated secretariat, and are finding a new resonance. I built on the institutional design literature to theorize IIGOs' functional scope for supporting state interactions without the creation of organizational independence, mainly in the form of a permanent secretariat. I contended that the development of organizational “centralization without independence” enables IIGOs to support state interactions through several key functions, including enhanced negotiation stability, information dissemination, and issue linkage. Returning to the crucial case of the G20, which introduced this thesis, I demonstrated that this IIGO adapted to changing requirements and added centralization mechanisms for supporting interactions both among member states and with external actors and institutions. In this vein, I championed a conception of IIGOs as a spectrum of possible organizational designs as opposed to a uniform category defined in contrast to their formal counterparts. Rather than providing a conclusive answer regarding the suitability of IIGOs like the G20 for the immense

responsibilities that they now have, my discussion thus laid the basis for examining more systematically the potential and limitations of models *within* the IIGO category.

Avenues for Future Research

The thesis opens several avenues for future research on informal intergovernmentalism as well as the broader fields of indirect governance, regime complexity, and international institutions to which it contributes.

The research articles in this thesis point to several promising lines of inquiry into informal intergovernmental cooperation. First, IIGOs' use of regime design strategies when orchestrating global governance should be probed further empirically. One avenue would be to broaden the empirical analysis to include international regimes, which this thesis could only give cursory attention to. For the G7 and G20 specifically, this could include efforts in domains such as tax transparency, macroeconomic policy, and nonproliferation. This would also contribute to further assessing the generalizability of my theoretical proposition and refining its scope conditions. An equally relevant way forward is to focus on variation between IIGO-orchestrated regimes. My research demonstrates strong similarities in basic regime design patterns for the global market integrity and financial stability regimes. Yet it would be worthwhile to carve out the differences, first, with a view to where exactly the lines of differentiation are drawn between institutions and, second, in relation to how the design of and control over like-minded club institutions varies.

Empirical research applying insights into IIGO orchestration developed in this thesis can also contribute policy-relevant and future-oriented insights. IIGOs are seeing a striking expansion of their agenda. Take the realm of emerging technologies. Here, states are looking to the G7—and, more cautiously, the G20—to incubate and orchestrate a global regulatory coordination and standards regime. What insights from more developed regimes can we distill

to evaluate the nascent G7-incubated Artificial Intelligence regime, which is centered around the recently created Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence?¹ What should we make of the proposals put to the G7 for creating a Data and Technology Forum that is explicitly modeled on the Financial Stability Board?² IIGO orchestration as examined in this thesis is establishing itself as the blueprint for the multilateral governance of emerging regulatory challenges. Policy-oriented research can play a key role in clarifying how to best address these challenges institutionally.

Second, the thesis points to a number of ways in which our theoretical understanding of IIGO orchestration—but also indirect governance at the regime level more generally—can be refined. One is to account for temporal dynamics. Learning and feedback effects can change an IIGO's or an enlisted institution's preferences over time and shift the relative power between the parties.³ This may impact regime design and the sequencing of enlistment. A related avenue is looking at the agency of enlisted international institutions in regime design. Institutions may sometimes resist enlistment or use it as an opportunity to co-define the configuration and implications of institutional overlaps. In the G7/G20-orchestrated global market integrity regime that I examined, for instance, the IFIs made their governance contributions conditional on the temporary suspension of enforcement through “naming and shaming.” Finally, scholarship would greatly benefit from future efforts at exploring the interrelation between regime design and IIGO members' ability to agree internally. The intuition here is that striking a bargain within the IIGO, as orchestrator, can be helped or hindered by the anticipation of what and how institutions may be enlisted and combined for the governance of an issue.

Third, future work should investigate in both greater detail and breadth the inner workings of IIGOs. This should include how IIGOs develop over time, how they adjust to

¹ The Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence n.d.

² IBM 2021.

³ Abbott et al. 2020b, 23.

changing requirements, and how resulting design differences affect their performance and distributive consequences for states. As IIGOs further consolidate as orchestrators, their organizational advantages and pathologies will have important international ramifications. For that reason, I suggested the comparative study of IIGO models as a promising field of inquiry. This entails a conceptual shift away from the dichotomy *between* informal and formal organizations (“organization without delegation”) to the study of the function and design spectrum *within* the IIGO category (“centralization without independence”). I suggested several initial vectors along which states’ rationale for choosing from among the IIGO models could be studied: functional advantages, organizational pathologies, and cost structure. Furthermore, it is highly plausible that power political calculations—rather than just “functional” considerations—also motivate states’ organizational choices that they make from the spectrum of IIGO types. A related avenue for research would be to look at the organizational anatomy of IIGOs from the vantage point of domestic foreign policy processes. This could include examining whether and how IIGO models change the centrality of domestic policy actors, particularly that of institutions headed directly by heads of state and government, such as the US’s White House, France’s Élysée Palace, and Germany’s Chancellery.

Lastly, the consequences of IIGO orchestration for power and legitimacy are critical topics for scholarly work. The power political implications of IIGO-centered global governance are likely significant. Recent scholarship has emphasized that crises present opportunities for formal intergovernmental organizations and their bureaucracies to expand authority and discretion.⁴ Yet successive financial crises have also strengthened the centrality of IIGOs in global governance—and with that the influence of select groups of states. IIGO orchestration, in other words, creates winner and losers among both states and international institutions. When and how IIGO orchestration strengthens or weakens states and institutions, however, remains

⁴ See, e.g., Kreuder-Sonnen 2020.

largely unexplored. A promising way to approach this topic would be to examine the effects on smaller states' participation in and influence on global governance processes as well as their strategic reactions to the shift towards an IIGO-orchestrated multilateral system.

IIGOs also raise acute concerns about the legitimacy of global governance. IIGO orchestration shifts decision making on key international issues to exclusive groups of major powers. Furthermore, their informal design makes IIGOs notoriously opaque, with outsiders—including other states, civil society, and academia—having only sporadic access to the content of meetings and details of agreements. At the same time, IIGOs have allowed emerging powers to participate more rapidly and comprehensively in global governance while formal multilateral organizations continue a slow process of gradual reform. In addition, accountability mechanisms and outreach activities in key IIGOs like the G20 have grown considerably over the years. Much ambiguity thus remains regarding the many ways in which IIGO orchestration undermines or bolsters the legitimacy of global governance.

Outlook

The surge of complex interdependencies, global challenges, and new power political rivalries over the past few decades has propelled IIGOs to a central position in international organization. As the great power competition between the US and China is heating up and Western countries are experiencing impulses towards greater isolationism, this position is likely to solidify further.

The G20 is becoming increasingly important for reaching agreement on inherently global issues such as climate change and global health. It has also remained a lifeline for these issues since the previous US administration temporarily exited from the Paris Climate Accords and the World Health Organization. Yet IIGO orchestration is also set to define governance within geopolitical spheres of influence. Attention is shifting to the G7, which, for some time,

appeared to face an uncertain future. Just as the G7 has recently turned into a focal point for the vision of a democratically orchestrated global order, China and other excluded countries like Russia may well react with a renewed focus on the BRICS or new IIGOs altogether. If, as some fear, the world is indeed moving towards more decoupled economic and political spheres, each subject to their own system of governance, IIGOs are already looking to be the formats of choice to orchestrate—as well as bridge—these.

The signs are that concert governance—in one format or another—is here to stay as a foundational element of international politics. The study of IIGOs' orchestration of global governance will thus remain an exciting and important field for International Relations scholarship.

Bibliography (Introduction and Conclusion)

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