

SNS Democracy Council 2023 *Global Governance: Fit for Purpose?*

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SNS – the Center for Business and Policy Studies, is an independent, non-profit organization founded in 1948 that aims to be Sweden's leading platform for objective debate and knowledge-sharing among decision-makers on key societal issues. SNS brings together representatives from the business community, public sector, academia, and politics. SNS takes no positions on policy issues, which supports its bridge-building role. Members include companies, public authorities, and organizations.

SNS Democracy Council 2023

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Foreword

Contemporary problems are increasingly transboundary in nature, requiring governance at regional and global levels. International organizations are core pillars of this system and play frontline roles in combating issues like health pandemics, military conflicts, and financial crises. Some of the most well-known international organizations with a global reach are the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Health Organization. Other organizations have regional scope, among them the European Union, the African Union, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

This report from the SNS Democracy Council provides a thorough assessment of whether this system of global governance is fit for purpose. Do current international organizations hold the power required to develop, implement, and enforce global policies? Do these institutions wield this power with sufficient effectiveness to reduce transboundary problems? And do they possess legitimacy as governing bodies in the eyes of citizens and elites?

This report explores these themes in a comparative perspective, mapping and analyzing patterns across a broad range of international organizations in areas such as development, finance, health, human rights, security, and trade. As an illustration, the report also offers an in-depth analysis of power, effectiveness, and legitimacy in respect of global climate governance.

SNS hopes that this study can contribute to current Swedish and international debates on the role of international organizations in a world that confronts a multitude of problems requiring global cooperation. Through its focus on global governance, the study complements

earlier reports from the SNS Democracy Council focused on politics at local, regional, and national levels.

The authors are solely responsible for the analyses, conclusions, and recommendations of the report. SNS as an organization does not take a position on these matters. The mission of SNS is to initiate and present research-based analyses of issues of importance for society.

The Council received feedback on the report on several occasions. SNS and the authors are grateful to all who participated at these events for their valuable input.

In April 2022, SNS organized a roundtable at which the Council presented a draft introductory chapter and received comments from experienced observers of international organizations: Anders Ahnlid, Director General, National Board of Trade Sweden; Erik Berglöf, Chief Economist, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank; Mattias Frumerie, Swedish Head of Delegation, UNFCCC, Ministry of Environment; Susanna Gable, Chief Economist, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency; Anders Nordström, Ambassador for Global Health, Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs; Anders Olofsgård, Deputy Director, Stockholm Institute of Transitional Economics; and Anna Sundström, Secretary General, Olof Palme International Center.

In June 2022, SNS arranged a meeting between the Council and Stefan Löfven, Co-Chair of the UN High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism, and Helena Rietz, Senior Adviser to Stefan Löfven, to exchange insights from the respective evaluations of global governance.

In November 2022, SNS convened an academic seminar at which Michael Zürn, Professor of Political Science at WZB Berlin Social Science Center, provided constructive comments on the full draft report.

Karin Jonnergård, Professor of Accounting and Corporate Finance, Lund University, has followed the project as a representative of the SNS Scientific Council.

SNS and the Council would like to thank the Swedish Research Council and Formas for their valuable financial support of the project.

The report is part of the SNS series of Democracy Council Reports.

Stockholm, March 2023

Stefan Sandström, Research Director, SNS

Executive Summary

Climate change, health pandemics, financial crises, military conflicts, trade barriers, and refugee flows. All manifest the transboundary nature of contemporary societal problems, and all underline the need for international cooperation. This insight has stimulated major growth of global governance over the past 75 years. Yet is this system of global governance *fit for purpose*?

This report from the SNS Democracy Council examines this issue with attention to three preconditions for well-functioning global governance: power, effectiveness, and legitimacy. It specifically focuses on the classic international organizations (or multilateral institutions) that constitute core pillars of global governance and play frontline roles in combating transboundary problems. Examples include the United Nations (UN), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Do such international organizations hold the *power* required to develop, implement, and enforce global policies? Do these institutions wield this power with sufficient *effectiveness* to reduce transboundary problems? And do international organizations possess *legitimacy* as governing bodies in the eyes of citizens and elites?

This report explores these three themes in a comparative perspective, mapping and analyzing patterns among a broad range of international organizations in areas such as development, finance, health, human rights, security, and trade. The report also offers an in-depth analysis of power, effectiveness, and legitimacy in respect of global climate governance, thereby illustrating these dynamics in an issue area of critical importance to human and ecological security.

Debates on contemporary global governance revolve around two competing accounts. On the one hand, pessimists argue that global governance is poorly equipped to effectively address transboundary challenges, since international organizations usually lack coercive means, easily become gridlocked, and generally suffer from legitimacy deficits. In contrast, optimists argue that global governance is well suited to take on the challenges of a globalized world, since international organizations enjoy growing power, only multilateral coordination can solve cross-border problems, and the public generally supports global cooperation.

This report paints a more nuanced picture, siding with neither of these perspectives, but lending some support to both. It concludes that contemporary international organizations overall have notable levels of power, effectiveness, and legitimacy, but also that current arrangements are insufficient to tackle current and future challenges. Factors that work against international cooperation include concerns with sovereignty, influence, values, finances, and domestic politics. For global governance to live up to expectations, state and nonstate actors need to reinvest in international cooperation. The report outlines three possible ways forward, with varying levels of ambition: upgrading interstate collaboration; expanding new modes of global governance; and transforming global governance.

Power

As states have increasingly sought to tackle common problems together, multilateral institutions have been equipped with significant means of power. From around 1950 until around 2010, international organizations acquired legal authority in an expanding number of policy domains, obtained far-reaching institutional means to facilitate cooperation, secured greater material resources to pursue these goals, and developed novel ways to influence state behavior through ideational power. While such capabilities vary extensively across international organizations, the general trend until recently was growth and expansion.

Yet developments over the past decade suggest that problems lie ahead. Fewer new international organizations are being created, and those that already existed are no longer obtaining increased means to

address transboundary challenges. The era of empowerment appears to have come to an end, or at least to have hit an extended plateau. Multilateral institutions are not gaining new policy competences at the same rate. The growth of institutional power has stopped, and in some respects has even gone into reverse. Material resources are not expanding and have in some ways become more constrained. While ideational power is still on the rise, this development likely reflects international organizations deliberately shifting to softer and voluntary means of influence as compensation for greater constraints on legal, institutional, and material power.

Current levels of power for international organizations are not sufficient to address urgent global problems. Governance gaps in crucial policy areas suggest that multilateral institutions do not have the necessary legal authority to develop adequate global solutions. Nor are the institutional means of international organizations optimized for effective global cooperation. The material resources of international organizations are generally very limited relative to the policy challenges that these bodies are tasked to solve. The ideational power of international organizations may be significant, but also requires that audiences in state and society listen.

These patterns are well illustrated in the area of global climate governance. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has evolved into the principal forum for cooperation on global climate rules, but it faces significant power constraints. Institutional capacity is in short supply, as states have prioritized intergovernmental cooperation over supranational authority. Material means are limited, as states primarily invest in domestic climate adaptation and mitigation. Hence, by necessity, the UNFCCC largely relies on its ideational power, that is, its capacity to spread scientific knowledge about climate change and to inspire voluntary action from state and societal actors through norms and appeals. In comparison, the European Union (EU) is better equipped both institutionally and materially, thereby showing the promise of having greater capabilities. Yet the EU is mainly focused on Europe and cannot replace global action.

Effectiveness

Despite frequent claims that international organizations suffer from political deadlock, the general picture is more positive. Multilateral institutions have continued to develop new policy in spite of tumultuous conditions, such as global power shifts, member state withdrawals, and civil society protests. Moreover, international organizations appear to be quite responsive to fluctuations in policy problems. When crises strike and situations worsen, these bodies typically respond with relevant new policy initiatives. While important cases of deadlock and failure arise, multilateral policymaking overall shows notable efficiency and responsiveness.

Yet new policies are not enough to ensure that international organizations are effective. For one thing, those initiatives must be sufficiently ambitious. Policies that hold back from tough targets and demand little or no adjustment in prevailing behavior are unlikely to solve global problems. Current ambitions of international cooperation often fall short of what is required. Multilateral negotiations typically converge on lowest-common-denominator solutions that all key parties can accept, especially when agreement requires consensus.

Effective global governance also requires state and nonstate actors to follow the adopted policies. While not as bad as sometimes depicted, rule compliance is far from perfect. On the one hand, data indicate increased compliance over time for key international organizations in the areas of international trade, financial stability, labor conditions, and European integration. This trend suggests that the compliance mechanisms of these organizations are well able to deter, detect, and correct violations of the agreed rules. On the other hand, noncompliance remains a serious issue in multilateral cooperation, especially when institutions lack adequate enforcement mechanisms. It is also important not to equate compliance with problem-solving, since high levels of compliance may reflect low levels of policy ambition.

Ultimately, the overall picture is that international organizations generally have positive effects in the areas that they govern, but often fall short of solving the problems that they are meant to address. Multilateral institutions in the areas of security, trade, development, and human rights have often helped to reduce their focal problems. Yet, despite these positive impacts, international organizations rarely achieve

their full goals. The world still overflows with military conflict, trade protectionism, human poverty, rights abuse, and other challenges.

Global climate governance well illustrates these dynamics around effectiveness. The core rules in global efforts to combat climate change have evolved over the past 30 years through successive treaties and protocols. However, this policy development has come at the expense of diluted ambitions, as well as weakened implementation mechanisms. The Paris Agreement allows each state to set its own national targets for emissions reductions, without any binding commitment to attain the global targets. Predictably, the result is good compliance with national objectives, but collectively insufficient measures to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. In comparison, the EU's ambitions go much further, including a binding and enforceable climate law. Yet the EU's capacity to mitigate global climate change is limited, since its member countries account for less than 10 percent of current total world greenhouse gas emissions.

Legitimacy

Contrary to common assertions, international organizations are not suffering from a general legitimacy crisis. Instead, multilateral institutions tend to enjoy moderate levels of approval among both citizens and elites. In fact, overall average citizen confidence in international organizations slightly exceeds average confidence in national governments.

Furthermore, there is limited evidence of a downward trend in the perceived legitimacy of international organizations. Instead, public approval of multilateral cooperation appears to hold quite steady over time, albeit with some fluctuations. For instance, both the UN and the EU experienced a decline in legitimacy in the years around 2010, but have since seen their support recover. Many international organizations have experienced no serious challenge to their legitimacy at all over the past 35 years, and among those that have, the reasons tend to be specific to the case at hand, rather than a reflection of general discontent with multilateral cooperation.

However, global governance attracts varying levels of legitimacy beliefs across organizations and countries, indicating that international organizations enjoy less approval in some circles. Certain multilateral

institutions draw greater legitimacy than others. Both citizens and elites generally express more support for organizations concerned with human security than organizations concerned with economic affairs. Similarly, international organizations are perceived as more legitimate in some countries than in others. For instance, citizens in the Philippines and Germany accord greater legitimacy to multilateral institutions than citizens in Brazil and Russia.

Particularly striking is a notable elite-citizen gap in legitimacy beliefs vis-à-vis global governance. Leaders in politics and society tend to regard international organizations as more legitimate than the general public. This divergence between elites and citizens prevails across a range of major international organizations, countries, and types of elites. However, these elite-citizen divides are not limited to multilateral cooperation, since a similar gap in legitimacy beliefs prevails toward national governments. Thus, global and national arenas are experiencing a cleavage in the legitimacy that elites and citizens accord to governance institutions.

Global climate governance illustrates many of these patterns. While no systematic cross-national data are available on citizen legitimacy beliefs toward the UNFCCC, research indicates that elites accord this organization extensive support. Yet these levels of approval among elites have not prevented anti-globalist critics (including political leaders such as Jair Bolsonaro and Donald Trump) from attacking the UNFCCC. The climate policies of the EU also enjoy broad citizen support, although the levels vary considerably between member countries.

Strategies Going Forward

Contemporary global governance has many qualities that make it well equipped to handle global problems. Yet international organizations also struggle with deficits of power, effectiveness, and legitimacy, making them unable to deliver their full potential impact. How could global governance become more fit for purpose? The report outlines three reform strategies, each entailing a different level of change.

A first strategy is to *upgrade the classic interstate system of cooperation* by strengthening international organizations. This approach suggests that current international organizations work reasonably well and that

the best way forward is to build on this proven track record, rather than to venture into risky experimentation. Reforms in this vein could include: giving international organizations greater legal power to regulate; shifting toward more majority voting in decision-making; giving international organizations more extensive enforcement powers; and boosting the core funding of multilateral institutions. Such upgrades have the advantage of being fairly straightforward and more readily achievable.

A second strategy is to *increase reliance on new modes of global governance*. This approach suggests that the classic interstate system is not sufficient to handle contemporary global challenges and that more ambitious governance innovations are necessary. New modes of global governance include transgovernmental networks, transnational hybrid institutions, transnational private initiatives, and translocal cooperation arrangements. These governance modes are less sensitive to the sovereignty constraints of states and more flexible for tackling transboundary problems. Reforms in this vein could include: allowing new modes of governance to take the lead in areas of global cooperation with regulatory gaps; further integrating civil society, business, and local actors into global governance; and harnessing the private sector to secure greater funding for global governance.

A third strategy prescribes a larger *transformation of global governance*. This approach reflects pessimism about the potential of achieving a fully functioning system of global governance through incremental reform. Instead, it calls for a fundamental shift toward more supranational and democratic forms of global governance. Advocates suggest that the world is facing a new “Bretton Woods moment”—a juncture, similar to the end of the Second World War, when the underlying order is in flux and novel solutions are within reach. Reforms in this vein could include: creating new fully empowered institutions, such as a World Environmental Organization; equipping existing organizations with supranational authority that overrides state sovereignty; developing stronger democratic mechanisms, such as global political parties and legislative assemblies; and expanding judicial power by strengthening international courts as well as the role of national courts in enforcing international law.

List of Abbreviations

ADB, Asian Development Bank
AF, Adaptation Fund
AFDB, African Development Bank
AMU, Arab Maghreb Union
APEC, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASDB, Asian Development Bank
ASEAN, Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU, African Union
BRICS, Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
CACM, Central American Common Market
CAN, Andean Community
CARICOM, Caribbean Community
CDB, Caribbean Development Bank
CDM, Clean Development Mechanism
CEACR, Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions
and Recommendations
CEN-SAD, Community of Sahel-Saharan States
CERF, Central Emergency Response Fund
CGIAR, Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CIF, Climate Investment Funds
CITES, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
of Wild Fauna and Flora
CO₂, Carbon dioxide
CO₂eq, Carbon dioxide equivalent of one ton of GHGs
COE, Council of Europe
COM, Commonwealth Secretariat

COP, Conference of the Parties
 CORSIA, Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation
 DG CLIMA, Directorate-General for Climate Action
 EBRD, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
 EC, European Community
 ECOWAS, Economic Community of West African States
 EDF, European Development Fund
 EEA, European Environmental Agency
 EFA-FTI, Education for All – Fast-Track Initiative
 EFTA, European Free Trade Association
 EFW, Expanded Delivering as One Funding Window for the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals
 ESG, Environmental, social, and governance
 EU, European Union
 EU ETS, European Union Emissions Trading System
 FAO, Food and Agriculture Organization
 FSC, Forest Stewardship Council
 FTA, Free trade agreement
 G7, Group of Seven
 G20, Group of Twenty
 GAVI, Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization
 GCC, Gulf Cooperation Council
 GCDT, Global Crop Diversity Trust
 GDI, Gender Development Index
 GEF, Global Environment Facility
 GFATM, Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
 GFDRR, Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery
 GHGs, Greenhouse gases
 GOV, Government
 GPI, Global Performance Indicator
 HDI, Human Development Index
 HIPC, Heavily indebted poor countries
 IADB, Inter-American Development Bank
 IASB, International Accounting Standards Board
 ICANN, Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers
 ICC, International Criminal Court
 ICRC, International Committee of the Red Cross

IETA, International Emissions Trading Association
IFAD, International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFC, International Finance Corporation
IFRC, International Federation of the Red Cross
ILO, International Labour Organization
IMF, International Monetary Fund
IO, International organization
IOM, International Organization for Migration
IPCC, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IRENA, International Renewable Energy Agency
ISA, International Solar Alliance
ITC, International Trade Centre
IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature
IWC, International Whaling Commission
KOF, Konjunkturforschungsstelle der Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule
LAIA, Latin American Integration Association
LDCF, Least Developed Countries Fund
LDCs, Less/least developed countries
LegGov, Legitimacy in Global Governance research program
LULUCF, Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry
MERCOSUR, Common Market of the South
MLF, Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol
MoCA, Ministerial on Climate Action
MOPAN, Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network
NAFO, Northwest Atlantic Fishery Organization
NAFTA, North American Free Trade Agreement
NATO, North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NC, Nordic Council
NCM, Nordic Council of Ministers
NGO, Non-governmental organization
NSG, Nuclear Suppliers Group
OAS, Organization of American States
OCHA, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

OIC, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
 OPEC, Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
 OSCE, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
 PBF, Peacebuilding Fund
 PIDG, Private Infrastructure Development Group
 PIF, Pacific Islands Forum
 PISA, Programme for International Student Assessment
 REEEP, Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership
 SAARC, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
 SADC, Southern African Development Community
 SCO, Shanghai Cooperation Organization
 SDGs, Sustainable Development Goals
 UK, United Kingdom
 UN, United Nations
 UN-HABITAT, United Nations Human Settlements Programme
 UNAIDS, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
 UNCDF, United Nations Capital Development Fund
 UNCTAD, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
 UNDP, United Nations Development Programme
 UNEP, United Nations Environmental Programme
 UNESCO, United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural
 Organization
 UNFCCC, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate
 Change
 UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund
 UNHCR, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
 UNICEF, United Nations Children's Fund
 UNIDO, United Nations Industrial Development Organization
 UNISDR, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
 UNITAID, United Nations International Drug Purchasing Facility
 UNODC, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
 UNRWA, United Nations Relief and Works Agency
 UNSC, United Nations Security Council
 UNW, United Nations Women
 UNWTO, United Nations World Tourism Organization
 US, United States
 USMCA, United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement
 WB, World Bank

WFP, World Food Programme
WHO, World Health Organization
WMO, World Meteorological Organization
WTO, World Trade Organization
WWF, World Wildlife Fund

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I. Global Problems, Global Solutions

Climate change, health pandemics, financial crises, military conflicts, trade barriers, and refugee flows. All manifest the transboundary nature of contemporary societal problems, and all underline the need for global cooperation. Meeting such global challenges with national and local government alone is at best suboptimal and at worst detrimental. Global problems demand global solutions.

This insight has been a key driver in the growth of global governance. As early as the nineteenth century, and especially over the past 75 years, considerable governance has shifted to arenas beyond the nation state. A dense network of regional and global organizations has emerged to address transboundary problems. Examples include the United Nations (UN), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the World Trade Organization (WTO). In addition, recent decades have seen the development of additional forms of global governance, often with a prominent role for nonstate actors, such as business, civil society, and science. The result is a system of global governance that in large parts emphasizes ideals such as democratic government, human rights, open markets, rule of law, peaceful settlement of disputes, and multilateral cooperation, and is therefore often described as a liberal international order.

While the demands on global governance to deliver have never been higher, this system also appears to be more contested than ever before. On the one hand, (re)emerging major states such as China and Russia are challenging the liberal international order from the outside, bringing other political ideals to the table, raising fears of an “autocratization” of global governance. On the other hand, anti-globalist

populists such as Donald Trump, Jair Bolsonaro, Rodrigo Duterte, and Marine Le Pen are mobilizing against multilateral cooperation from the inside in the name of “regaining control.” As a result, global governance is caught between demands for effective problem solving on the one hand and attempts to revise or undermine the prevailing international order on the other.

This report from the SNS Democracy Council explores the overarching question of *whether global governance is fit for purpose*. Do existing global governance institutions have the necessary means to solve transboundary problems? While local and national government carry the main responsibility for addressing concerns of an intra-state nature, global and regional institutions are particularly well placed to address cross-border challenges that require collective international efforts.

Our report examines three key *preconditions for well-functioning global governance*: power, effectiveness, and legitimacy. We specifically focus on a range of classic international organizations that constitute core pillars of global governance and play frontline roles in combating transboundary problems. Consider the WHO and disease control, the IMF and financial crises, the UN in various conflict settings, and the WTO in trade politics. Do such international organizations (here also alternatively called multilateral institutions) hold the *power* required to develop, implement, and enforce global policies? Do they wield this power with sufficient *effectiveness* to address transboundary problems? And do they possess *legitimacy* as governing institutions in the eyes of policy elites and wider public opinion? Moreover, what are the main challenges that international organizations encounter in terms of power, effectiveness, and legitimacy? How could international organizations become better equipped to deal with urgent global governance problems?

This report examines these three themes in a comparative perspective, mapping and analyzing *patterns among a broad range of international organizations* in areas such as development, finance, health, human rights, security, and trade. In addition, we offer an in-depth analysis of power, effectiveness, and legitimacy in the context of global climate cooperation, as a way of illustrating these dynamics in a critical area of contemporary global governance. The report is based on the latest findings from scientific research into international organizations and offers a uniquely comprehensive and integrated analysis of whether

global governance is fit for purpose as it confronts key current and future challenges.

The fitness of global governance is an issue *at the top of the global policy agenda*. Events over the past fifteen years, such as the global financial crisis, large irregular migration flows, the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the continuing challenge of climate change have all underlined the need for concerted international action. Yet whether existing international organizations are capable of meeting such challenges is an open question. In September 2021, UN Secretary-General António Guterres presented his vision on the future of global cooperation, “Our Common Agenda” (UN 2021). The Agenda makes a strong call to reinvigorate multilateralism and accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition, the Secretary-General created a High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism, tasked with developing concrete recommendations for more effective multilateral arrangements by 2023. These efforts speak to the topicality of this report and the importance of its findings.

Our main conclusion is that contemporary international organizations have many positive qualities for solving transboundary problems, but not in sufficient measure to tackle the major global challenges of today and tomorrow. As later chapters detail, international organizations have come to possess multiple means of power, have become quite effective at developing and executing global policies, and have gained legitimacy on par with that of national governments. However, multilateral institutions also have obvious deficits in power, effectiveness, and legitimacy. While transboundary problems continue to proliferate and intensify, the empowerment of international organizations has slowed, the effectiveness of global policies often falls short of key goals, and the legitimacy of the institutions suffers from systematic gaps between elites and citizens. Our concluding chapter therefore outlines three strategies, at varying levels of ambition, for how global governance may become more fit for purpose: upgrading interstate cooperation; expanding new modes of global governance; and transforming global governance.

Global Problems

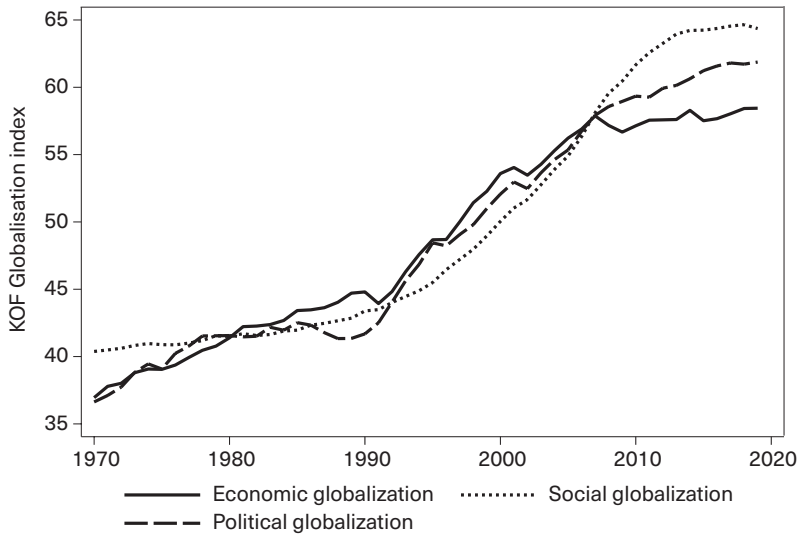
With globalization—the widening, deepening, and acceleration of worldwide interconnectedness—contemporary societal problems are increasingly transboundary in nature (Scholte 2005). While globalization has occurred in multiple waves throughout human history, its development over the past 50 years is characterized by an unprecedented scale, breadth, speed, intensity, and impact. Few spheres of social activity are untouched by globalization, which nowadays also reaches every corner of the planet.

While skeptics suggest that globalization may be exaggerated, most statistics tell a different story. According to the widely respected KOF Globalisation Index (Figure 1.1), interconnectedness in economic, social, and political fields has steadily risen since at least the 1970s (KOF Swiss Economic Institute 2022). Economic globalization comprises worldwide interconnectedness in trade, finance, and production. Social globalization includes worldwide interconnectedness in interpersonal relations, communication, and culture. Political globalization encompasses worldwide interconnectedness through interstate relations and nonstate actors.

While globalization has had significant positive effects, greater global interconnectedness also generates notable challenges. In an interconnected global world, the consequences of decisions or events in one country are no longer confined to this territory (if they ever were), but readily spread to other countries and continents (Keohane and Nye 1977/2011). Consider the effects of environmental pollution, financial instability, military armament, trade protectionism, uncontrolled migration, and virus contagion.

Crises are moments in time when the effects of growing globalization and interdependence truly come to the fore. In Europe alone, the past fifteen years have seen a succession of crises that have demonstrated the challenges of global interconnectedness:

- › The *financial crisis* of 2007–2009, starting with the collapse of the mortgage market in the United States (US), generated far-flung economic repercussions. Europe experienced the Eurozone crisis in 2009–2015, when high fiscal debt and deficit levels in several countries led to domestic austerity packages, economic recession, and rising unemployment.

Figure 1.1 Economic, Social, and Political Globalization, 1970–2019

Source: Based on data from the KOF Globalisation Index 2022.

- › The *migration crisis* of 2015, particularly provoked by the war in Syria, led many people to seek refuge in neighboring countries and Europe. Poorly functioning regional and global migration regimes exacerbated humanitarian hardship for refugees, as well as difficulties to manage inflows of migrants in many countries.
- › The *COVID-19 crisis* erupted in 2020 when a highly contagious virus, first discovered in Wuhan, China, rapidly spread across the world. The resulting pandemic led to more than six million deaths, locked down societies, and had massive economic, social, and political implications. The crisis also demonstrated the sensitivity of global supply chains, whose disruption led to shortages in many goods and accompanying price increases.

- › The *Ukraine crisis* flared up in February 2022, with a large-scale military invasion by Russia, generating immense regional and global consequences. Millions of Ukrainians have sought refuge in nearby countries. Global energy and food prices have soared. Stock markets have tumbled. A number of states have reoriented their military and security policies.

Other problems arising from growing global interdependence are unfolding more gradually and continuously than immediate crises, but their effects and challenges are no less significant.

- › *Climate change*, involving long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns, mainly stems from human activities, especially the burning of fossil fuels, over the past two centuries. While the worst is likely yet to come, the effects of climate change are already being felt. As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2022) concludes, “The impacts of climate change are increasing in frequency and intensity around the world, particularly life-threatening heatwaves, floods, storms and droughts.”
- › *Trade protectionism*, through tariff and non-tariff barriers to cross-border commerce, has been on the rise over the past fifteen years, reflecting a growing willingness of national governments to intervene in global economic flows, mainly by way of subsidies to domestic industries (Global Trade Alert 2022). Widespread trade protectionism can generate significant economic disruption and political conflicts.
- › *Human rights abuses* around the international trafficking of women, children, workers, and migrants have been a recurring problem. Unscrupulous smugglers have exploited social precariousness and poorly enforced regulations. Forced labor, modern slavery, and human trafficking are a particularly dark side of a globalized economy.
- › *Economic inequality*, in the shape of disparities in incomes and assets, has widely increased in recent decades. The benefits and costs of globalization have been unequally distributed. Higher income groups have gained far more than lower income groups, often challenging the social fabric of societies (OECD 2015).
- › *Technological transformations*, involving new and far-reaching ways for people to mold society and nature, are unfolding at his-

torically unprecedented rates. Innovations around nuclear fission and fusion, digitalization, biotechnology, nanotechnology, and geo-engineering have profound implications for employment, health, inequality, geopolitics, democratic processes, and culturally sensitive moral choices.

Despite the deeply global nature of these multiple interconnected systemic challenges, one potential response is to revert to national solutions. Yet such a strategy means foregoing the many potential benefits of globalization, including economic specialization, technological development, welfare improvement, and cultural enrichment. While a national, unilateral route may bring a sense of autonomy, control, and sovereignty, it removes opportunities for the collective management of problems that affect all countries. Thus, the more viable option is to invest in political coordination and collaboration beyond the nation state.

Global Solutions

The principal way in which states and societies have sought to manage growing worldwide interdependence is to build a complex system of global governance. These arrangements emerged in the mid-19th century, accelerated after the First World War, expanded after the Second World War, and have developed even further in recent decades through the addition of new organizations, treaties, and means of governance.

It is a system of global *governance*—not global government (Rosenau and Czempiel 1992). While this architecture contains elements of order, hierarchy, and command, it does not amount to government in the conventional sense. Instead, global governance is characterized by complex patterns of authority, involving a variety of actors and institutions with the collective purpose of developing and implementing global rules and norms for managing transnational problems (Rosenau 1995).

Global rules and norms encompass both voluntary measures and legally binding regulations. They include principles such as human rights, laws such as EU directives, standards such as Internet protocols, and codes of conduct such as environmental, social, and governance (ESG) provisions. While states are often party to the formulation and

implementation of global rules and norms, global governance also involves various types of nonstate actors, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), multinational corporations, and scientific communities.

The traditional pillars of the contemporary system of global governance are the international (also often called intergovernmental or multilateral) organizations. These bodies have been created by states to manage global problems, often in specific issue areas. Prominent examples of international organizations at the global level are the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (food security), the International Criminal Court (ICC) (war crimes), the International Labour Organization (ILO) (labor conditions), the IMF (financial stability), the World Bank (development), the WHO (health), and the WTO (trade). In addition, the central organs of the UN cover a broad range of issues, from military security to women's rights.

In addition, the system of global governance involves a range of international organizations at regional level that manages problems and develops rules with a focus on a specific geographic region (Börzel and Risse 2016). Key examples include the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the African Union (AU), the EU, the Common Market of the South (Mercosur), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). Some regional international organizations are general purpose institutions that address a variety of issues, while others are more specialized.

International organizations (both global and regional) share four characteristics that set them apart from other forms of global governance: they are formal, interstate, multilateral, and permanent (Pevehouse et al. 2020). Expressed differently, these organizations have all been established by international treaties, have states as constituent members, comprise at least three members, and are reasonably durable. While international organizations vary in their more specific design, most of them have an intergovernmental branch of member state decision-making bodies, a supranational branch of bodies such as secretariats and courts, and a transnational branch of bodies for engagement with civil society, business, media, and academia (Rittberger et al. 2019).

In governing their respective issues, international organizations

pursue a variety of functions. Regulation through collective rules and norms is a particularly common function and lies at the core of organizations such as the ILO and WTO. Redistribution occurs less frequently in global governance compared to domestic politics, but is a key component of, for instance, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank. Information-sharing through the collection and analysis of data is a feature of most international organizations, but particularly for bodies such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). Conflict management, focused on mitigating and settling disputes among members, is central to the activities of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the UN. Defending collective interests vis-à-vis external parties is a core function of alliances such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and cartels such as the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

The number of international organizations has grown considerably over time (Pevehouse et al. 2020). While the 19th and early 20th centuries saw a gradual increase in the number of these bodies, the end of the Second World War marked a historical turning point. Over subsequent decades, states expanded the number of international organizations almost five-fold. This proliferation spanned both global and regional organizations and was driven by a combination of factors, including efforts to secure postwar order after 1945, growing transboundary challenges, decolonization, and a rise of new international norms such as human rights and sustainable development.

Yet contemporary global governance involves more than traditional international organizations, even if these institutions continue to occupy critical roles in world politics. Recent decades have witnessed the expansion of newer forms of global governance with greater reliance on informality, networks, private actors, and market solutions (Barnett et al. 2022). This shift has led scholars to speak of “global governance 2.0” (Kasper 2020), “post-Westphalian global governance” (Dryzek 2012), “new multilateralism” (Hampson and Heinbecker 2011), and “complex multilateralism” (O’Brien et al. 2000).

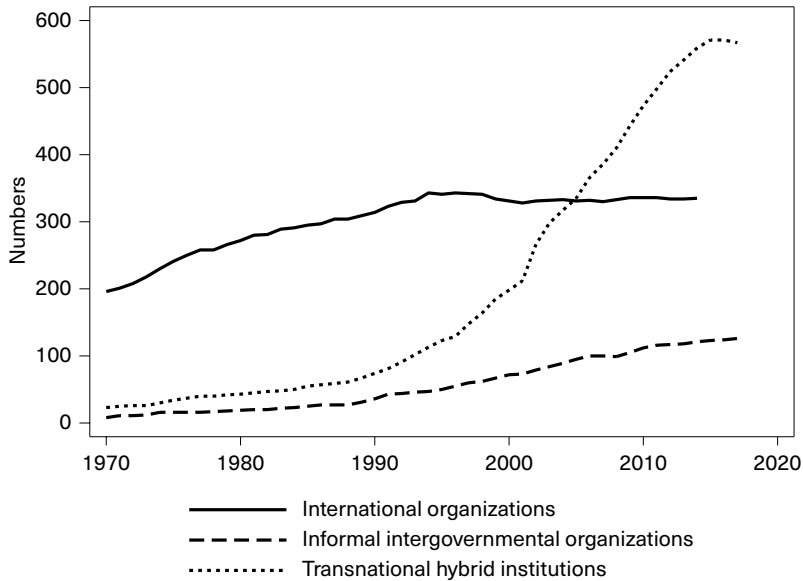
The newer forms of global governance come in multiple shapes. Informal international organizations, also called transgovernmental networks, build on the interstate model of cooperation, but involve a

shift to informal governance through networks among government representatives (Slaughter 2004; Vabulas and Snidal 2021). Examples include the Group of 20 (G20) and the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). Transnational hybrid institutions, such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), build on cooperation between public and private actors (Westerwinter 2021). Transnational private arrangements, such as the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB), bring together nonstate actors to develop certification schemes, regulatory standards, and rating systems (Bütte and Mattli 2011). “Trans-local” global cooperation arrangements, such as C40 Cities, harness the efforts and resources of subnational actors for global action.

Figure 1.2 tracks the development of three institutional forms in global governance since 1970. It illustrates how classic international organizations increased in number until around 1990. In contrast, the ranks of informal international organizations and transnational hybrid institutions have continued to expand until recent years. While classic international organizations remain core pillars of global governance, occupying key roles in their respective domains, other institutional forms increasingly complement and, in some cases (such as banking regulation and Internet governance), even partially displace these organizations.

The explanations for this shift in institutional forms are manifold (Barnett et al. 2022). For one thing, the complexity of new global problems, such as climate change, has often called for more flexible forms of governance. In addition, neoliberal ideas of recent decades have stressed private sector involvement, outsourcing, voluntarism, and market solutions. Technological change has enabled more flexible structures that are organized as markets or networks rather than hierarchies. Geopolitical shifts may also have contributed, as rising multipolarity has challenged previous US and European dominance in traditional international organizations, encouraging those older hegemonic forces to develop new forms of governance that allow them to exert greater influence.

Whatever the precise drivers, global governance has become more diverse and more complex. The various initiatives surrounding a given global policy challenge are often interlinked and overlapping. Academics speak in this regard of “regime complexes” (Keohane and Victor

Figure 1.2 Institutional Forms in Global Governance, 1970–2017

Sources: Based on data from Pevehouse et al. 2020; Vabulas and Snidal 2021; Westwinter 2021.

Note: The time series for international organizations (Pevehouse et al. 2020) ends in 2014.

2011) and “polycentrism” (Koinova et al. 2021). A key challenge facing policymakers is therefore to capture synergies and avoid contradictions among the many global governance players.

Yet, although contemporary global governance exhibits this complexity, classic international organizations remain very much at the heart of the system. Global multilateral institutions such as the UN agencies and regional intergovernmental arrangements such as ASEAN and the EU continue to be the main reference point for states as they seek to collaborate on global policy challenges. International organizations also have a longer history than other forms of global

governance, enabling us to better assess their power, effectiveness, and legitimacy over time. Moreover, international organizations have received far greater attention from researchers than the newer types of global governance, so that we have much more data and analysis about their performance. Hence, while this report refers to other institutional designs where evidence is available, our assessment primarily addresses international organizations.

Fit for Purpose?

The core question of this report is whether global governance (and in particular international organizations as centerpieces of contemporary global governance) is fit for purpose. Are these institutions and processes well adapted to address global collective problems? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current arrangements? How, if at all, can the shortfalls be overcome?

The credibility of contemporary global governance is a topic of extensive debate. Pessimists argue that global governance in its current shape is ill-suited to deal with present and future challenges (Hale et al. 2013; Rodrik 2016; Broome et al. 2015). Skeptics stress stalemates with competing interests, gridlocks with overwhelming complexity, deficits in coercive power, chronic implementation deficits, weak democratic foundations, and general ineffectiveness in delivering on promises. Optimists, in contrast, claim that current and emergent global governance is or can be well adapted to the challenges of a globalized world (Ikenberry 2018; Lake et al. 2021; UN 2021). Enthusiasts argue that the system has the necessary tools to take on transboundary problems, grows organically to close gaps in governance, shows the strengths of multilateral cooperation, enjoys broad support around the world, can reinvent democracy for the 21st century, and generally offers a viable alternative to ineffective nation states.

Our report examines whether global governance is fit for purpose on three main axes: power, effectiveness, and legitimacy. So, first, does global governance have the necessary means of power to develop, implement, and enforce global rules and norms? Second, does global governance wield these powers with sufficient effectiveness to address transboundary problems? Third, does global governance possess legitimacy, the kind of foundational support that any political system

requires among its constituents (elites as well as the general public) in order to survive and thrive?

For reasons previously indicated, our empirical assessment of the power, effectiveness, and legitimacy of current global governance mainly focuses on international organizations. If suitably equipped with power, effectiveness, and legitimacy, international organizations can make a significant positive contribution to global problem solving. In addition, albeit secondarily, our report considers how newer forms of global governance fare in terms of power, effectiveness, and legitimacy.

The report approaches these questions with a comparative outlook, on the principle that comparison makes it possible both to identify general patterns and to place single cases in a broader context. So, our discussion does not focus on a particular international organization, or a particular policy field, or a particular member state. Rather, we compare power, effectiveness, and legitimacy across up to 80 multilateral institutions, involving a range of different issue areas, and from the perspectives of multiple countries. While this comparative approach limits the detail we can provide on particular institutions and issues, it points to broader conclusions about global governance that are of interest to policymakers and citizens, as well as academic researchers. Meanwhile, literature references guide the reader to more detailed studies.

Our report also avoids too much focus on the most recent events by placing diagnoses of the current condition of global governance in a longer historical perspective. Our analyses largely focus on the period from 1970 to 2020, with two main points of comparison with the present day: the period from 1970 to 1990, when international organizations operated under the constraints of the Cold War; and the period from 1990 to 2010, when liberal optimism about democracy and international cooperation was at its peak.

The exception to the general comparative outlook of the report is our in-depth focus in Chapter 5 on global climate governance. Global warming likely represents the most critical transboundary problem currently confronting the world. Examining the extent to which global governance in this area is fit for purpose is therefore of special importance. In addition, delving deeper into climate governance makes it possible to illustrate how the general dynamics of power, effectiveness, and legitimacy identified in earlier chapters come to the fore in a concrete case.

Our report is presented at a time when the world is experiencing significant political turmoil, economic uncertainty, and geopolitical struggle, particularly around the war in Ukraine. These troubles reverberate negatively on global governance. The shift in global power from the US and Europe toward major states in other areas of the world raises questions about the viability of the liberal international order established after 1945 (Ikenberry 2018). The rise of anti-globalist populism in many countries around the world, including traditional advocates of international cooperation, is putting pressure on the political support for global governance (De Vries et al. 2021). A wave of autocratization in the world is further undermining the foundations of international cooperation, which typically has been more popular among democracies, creating new rifts and tensions within existing international organizations (Adler-Nissen and Zarakol 2021). Economic instabilities can tempt states to engage in protectionism. These challenges, and more, will be considered as we analyze whether global governance has the requisite power, effectiveness, and legitimacy.

Power

We now introduce the three core concerns of our report: power, effectiveness, and legitimacy. Starting with power, we take this concept to refer to the means that international organizations have at their disposal for dealing with transboundary problems. By power we therefore denote the capabilities of international organizations.

Key issues around power include: what kinds of means do international organizations require; how far do they have or lack these resources; and what challenges do they face in order to obtain the necessary capabilities? To what extent do these organizations have mandates to develop policy in their assigned areas? How far do international organizations possess institutional designs that favor effective cooperation? To what degree do multilateral institutions have the material resources necessary to shoulder their given responsibilities? In what ways can these organizations exert ideational power through expertise and moral authority? What principal challenges do international organizations confront in terms of obtaining the necessary means of power?

As suggested by these questions, our analysis (fully elaborated in

Chapter 2) focuses on four complementary types of capabilities for international organizations: legal power, institutional power, material power, and ideational power. International organizations that amply possess all four kinds of power resources are well equipped to address global challenges. In such cases, they have sufficient jurisdiction to develop policy in a particular area, adequate policymaking processes to adopt and implement new rules, enough financial and staff resources to execute their tasks, and the necessary policy expertise and moral authority to shape global policies and state actions. Yet, more commonly, international organizations face constraints and deficits around one or several of these capabilities, thus reducing their ability to deliver on expectations.

Looking more closely at *legal power*, it entails the extent to which international organizations have been given the formal competence to address a particular policy area (Hooghe et al. 2017). The mandates of international organizations are typically regulated in treaties that are negotiated, adopted, ratified, and amended by the member states. International organizations thus cannot take on new issues by themselves but are dependent on the member states granting them the jurisdiction to handle these subjects.

Whether international organizations should have more or less legal power is a bone of contention since it touches on the division of responsibility between member states and international organizations. Giving an international organization an official mandate in a certain policy area means giving up some of the power to decide those issues nationally. Hence, member states are often reluctant to equip international organizations with far-reaching policy competences. Indeed, calls are sometimes made for member states to “take back control” by reducing the mandates of multilateral institutions. However, pulling in the other direction is the need for coordinated policy through international organizations if member states are to adequately address joint problems.

As for the *institutional power* of international organizations, it relates to the extent that these bodies have policymaking processes that enable them to exercise their mandate (Hooghe et al. 2017). It is not enough for an international organization to be assigned a policy area: it also needs adequate institutional means to take decisions about that policy area.

In particular, international organizations with a supranational design are procedurally more powerful than multilateral agencies with an intergovernmental design. In the case of supranational design, international executives, courts or parliamentary assemblies have a degree of autonomous power over the member states, their decisions are based on majority voting rather than consensus, and their rules are binding rather than non-binding. Yet greater power to the policymaking apparatus of international organizations means a reduction in state power. When member states confer institutional power on international organizations, they reduce their own room for maneuver. Member states therefore think twice before equipping international organizations with strong procedural powers and may conclude that national sovereignty is more precious than collective problem solving.

Meanwhile, the *material power* of international organizations relates to the degree to which these bodies have the physical means to execute their tasks, in terms of funds, premises, staff, equipment, and so on (Patz and Goetz 2019). Material resources are necessary for international organizations to operate their policymaking procedures and fulfil their mandates. In the absence of sufficient material capabilities (e.g., adequate money, soldiers, and weapons for a peacekeeping operation), international organizations cannot successfully address the problems that they are tasked to solve. At the same time, member states want their financial contributions to be well spent, since those funds could otherwise be put to other uses.

Thus, the funding of international organizations is frequently a subject of political debate. Few negotiations around international organizations are as contentious as those pertaining to budget contributions and allocations. Consider discussions on EU finances and UN budgets. Next to the *level* of funding, an increasingly debated issue is the *type* of funding. While international organizations themselves typically prefer a high share of core funding, which gives them predictability and flexibility, member states increasingly prefer project funding or earmarked funding, as a means of controlling and influencing the activities of international organizations.

Finally, the *ideational power* of international organizations concerns the degree to which these institutions possess the knowledge, expertise, and moral authority to influence states and other actors (Barnett and Finnemore 2004). In contrast to legal, institutional, and material

power, ideational power is largely within the scope of international organizations themselves to develop. Ideational power is about the ability to shape how people think: for example, what constitutes a problem that demands a multilateral response? What ideas and values are relevant to the problem? And what policies appear most promising for solving this problem?

Ideational power is a key source of authority for international organizations, particularly when—as is often the case—they have few other capabilities. Instead, deficits in other means of power compel multilateral institutions to rely on narratives, persuasion, socialization, and shaming as a way to influence the behavior of state and nonstate actors in world politics. The ideational power of international organizations is grounded in information, knowledge, and moral authority. It is often contested, not because it is costly in terms of control, funding, or sovereignty, but because it aims to shape what is perceived as factually correct and incorrect, as well as normatively appropriate and inappropriate.

Effectiveness

Moving to our second core issue, effectiveness refers to the ability of international organizations to shape transboundary problems in an intended manner (Young 2011). It is one thing for international organizations to have power, but another thing for them to deploy their means in ways that generate positive results. By effectiveness we therefore denote the success of international organizations in making a difference to policy challenges.

Key questions around effectiveness include: to what extent are international organizations efficient and responsive decision-making machineries—or inefficient and deadlocked negotiation systems of declining relevance? To what degree are these organizations able to command compliance with collectively agreed rules and norms? How far do the policies developed by international organizations actually reduce the societal problems that they are meant to address? What principal challenges do international organizations confront in terms of securing effectiveness?

As these questions suggest, our analysis of effectiveness (fully elaborated in Chapter 3) focuses on three dimensions: policy development

(output), rule compliance (outcome), and problem solving (impact) (Underdal 2002). International organizations that produce policies and achieve compliance with such policies are more likely to attain their goals and affect global challenges in beneficial ways. However, they can fall short in all three areas, and then it is important to establish why they have failed, and what could be done to improve their record.

The first dimension of effectiveness, *policy development*, refers to the extent to which international organizations produce rules, norms, and policies (Sommerer et al. 2022b). While enforcing peace, reducing poverty, preventing pandemics, and so on, require more than simply taking decisions, agreeing what needs to be done is a necessary first step if international organizations are to be effective. Still, responding efficiently to deteriorating global conditions with new measures is often challenging for international organizations which, like other decision-making machineries, regularly face information shortages, competing interests, and institutional barriers.

Identifying what needs to be done is sometimes a challenge, since information about the transmission of a virus, the condition of an environmental ecosystem or the eruption of a conflict may be in short supply, difficult to interpret, or contested. Even more challenging are competing interests among member states, which produce conflicts over the right course of action and can lead to deadlocked decision-making (Hale et al. 2013). Deadlocks are particularly common when institutional rules require consensus decisions.

The second dimension of effectiveness, *rule compliance*, refers to the degree to which state and nonstate actors implement the rules and principles that are agreed through international organizations (Börzel 2021). While compliance is no guarantee of effective problem solving—particularly if the adopted policies lack ambition and precision—it is difficult to imagine international organizations attaining their goals if member states do not implement the measures they have agreed on. Compliance typically requires member states to pass national laws that put the agreed measures into effect and then abide by that legislation.

Yet individual member states frequently fail to implement and follow policies that they have agreed in international organizations. In some cases, such noncompliance arises from a lack of willingness, when member states find the costs of following through too high and prefer

others to carry the burden. In other cases, noncompliance results from a lack of capacity, as member states cannot mobilize the resources to put the agreed policies in place, despite their best intentions. In yet other cases, noncompliance results from legal uncertainty, as member states struggle to implement opaque rules that are open to multiple interpretations.

The third dimension of effectiveness, *problem solving*, refers to the extent to which the policies of international organizations, once adopted and implemented, have positive effects in terms of reducing transboundary problems (Simmons 2009). For example, do the measures put in place by international organizations reduce the speed of climate change, bring greater respect for human rights, lower the incidence of violent conflicts, enhance global development, and limit the spread of deadly diseases? While such impact is arguably the ultimate indicator of effectiveness, it may also be the most challenging dimension for international organizations to achieve.

Certainly, it is difficult for international organizations to design policy measures that have the intended effect. After all, countless factors come into play, including many that are beyond an international organization's control. A particular challenge in contemporary global governance are the complex interrelations between global policies in different issue areas, as well as the complex interplays between policies at local, national, regional, and global levels. These interactions sometimes reinforce the potential for effective problem solving, but at other times create conflicts that make it more difficult to achieve the intended effects.

Legitimacy

Concerning our third core issue, legitimacy refers to the belief or perception that international organizations have the right to rule and exercise it appropriately (Tallberg et al. 2018). Legitimacy involves an underlying approval, confidence, faith, and trust in a governance apparatus—in other words, more than support for a particular policy. Beyond having value in its own right (in terms of bolstering an international organization's moral authority), legitimacy can also enhance the institution's power and effectiveness.

Key questions around legitimacy include: to what extent do people

in general regard international organizations to be legitimate? Are international organizations currently suffering from a crisis of legitimacy? How does the perceived legitimacy of international organizations vary across institutions, countries, and societal groups? In what ways can the legitimacy of international organizations be further strengthened, and what principal challenges face such efforts to legitimize global governance?

Legitimacy is of great importance to all governance arrangements, but particularly to international organizations, which do not have recourse to the same coercive power as national governments (Hurd 2007). Legitimacy can make it easier for international organizations to secure mandates, obtain resources, attract participation, take decisions, ensure compliance, and generally progress with addressing critical transboundary problems. In this sense, legitimacy is closely intertwined with power and effectiveness. In addition, legitimacy is critical for the democratic quality of international organizations. If international organizations suffer from weak legitimacy among citizens, this shortfall contributes to a democratic deficit in global governance.

Our analysis of the legitimacy of international organizations (fully elaborated in Chapter 4) focuses on three principal themes. The first theme concerns whether international organizations are undergoing a general *crisis of legitimacy* (Sommerer et al. 2022a). Many observers point to declining rates of public approval, advances for anti-globalist populist parties, and state withdrawals from organizations and treaties. Frequently invoked examples include civil society protests against international economic organizations, the UK's decision to leave the EU, the election of Donald Trump as US president, and the pushback against the WHO's handling of COVID-19. Do these examples represent a general pattern of legitimacy crises in global governance, or are they just isolated events?

We explore whether international organizations suffer from a general legitimacy crisis by considering several complementary forms of evidence. What levels of legitimacy do international organizations enjoy around the world—and how do those levels compare with legitimacy beliefs toward national governments? To what extent have international organizations experienced declining rates of popular approval over time? Finally, insofar as many international organizations have experienced moments of heightened criticism, do these instances add

up to a general legitimacy crisis?

Our second theme considers the contemporary legitimacy of international organizations in a *comparative perspective* (Dellmuth et al. 2022a). Do levels of perceived legitimacy vary across institutions, countries, and societal groups? Do some international organizations consistently attract more legitimacy than others? Do the populations in some countries regard international organizations more (or less) favorably than others? Do legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations vary depending on age and gender? And how do the views of citizens at large compare with the views of political and societal elites?

Any such differences can be politically significant. Those international organizations that enjoy greater legitimacy are in a more favorable position than those organizations that struggle to win approval. If levels of legitimacy toward international organizations differ substantially between countries, then it may be more difficult to find common ground and advance multilateral problem solving. Persistent gaps between citizens and elites in the perceived legitimacy of international organizations would present challenges for democracy and make it more difficult for political leaders to pursue ambitious global cooperation.

Our third theme examines the *dynamics of legitimacy*, i.e., how states, nonstate actors, and international organizations themselves seek to shape perceptions of legitimacy (Bexell et al. 2022; Dellmuth and Tallberg 2023). The legitimacy of international organizations is not fixed, but open to change, making it an attractive target for political actors with competing agendas. What are the key strategies that actors use to shape the perceived legitimacy of international organizations? How influential are the efforts to shape popular attitudes toward global governance through political messaging?

A broader question is whether and how legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations can be strengthened going forward. Next to political communication, research has identified three principal sources of legitimacy: individual conditions, such as socioeconomic positions and political values; institutional conditions, such as organizational procedures and performances; and societal conditions, such as cultural norms and geopolitical contexts (Tallberg et al. 2018). How might political leaders affect these individual, institutional, and societal conditions in ways that make international organizations more legitimate in the eyes of citizens? To this end, what strategies are likely

to be the most effective, and what challenges are likely to be the most difficult?

The Plan of the Report

The remainder of this report is divided into five chapters. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 analyze, in turn, whether international organizations possess the power, effectiveness, and legitimacy necessary for well-functioning and robust global governance. The three chapters present broad comparative outlooks, based on the most recent available research. Chapter 5 complements these three thematic chapters by providing an in-depth study of power, effectiveness, and legitimacy in global climate governance. Chapter 6 summarizes the main conclusions of the report, identifies key obstacles to well-functioning global governance, and outlines three potential strategies for making global governance more fit for purpose in the future.

2. Power

We begin by evaluating whether international organizations have the power required to address transboundary problems. If multilateral institutions are going to help solve global challenges, they need capabilities—legal mandates to take on issues, institutional processes to develop policies, material resources to fund operations, and moral standings to shape solutions.

Yet whether international organizations have adequate power is a topic of debate. In times of international crisis, multilateral institutions are often described as impotent organizations without the necessary capacities to make a difference. In the wake of Russia's war against Ukraine, for instance, many commentators bemoaned the weakness of the UN, which seemed to lack the means to solve the conflict. Similarly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many observers lamented the powerlessness of the WHO, which appeared to miss the capabilities to deal with the crisis. However, at other times, international organizations are instead criticized for being too powerful. Consider, for example, the recurring claims that the EU has grown into a dominant superstate or that the IMF dictates the destiny of countries that are subject to its financial conditions.

This chapter evaluates the power of international organizations with a focus on four complementary forms of authority. We begin by examining *legal power*, that is, the extent to which multilateral institutions have been given formal mandates to develop policy in a particular area. We then analyze *institutional power*, that is, the degree to which these bodies have policy-making processes that enable them to exercise their mandates. In a third section, we assess *material power*, that is, how far

international organizations have concrete means to execute their tasks in terms of funds and staff. Finally, we discuss *ideational power*, that is, whether these institutions possess the expert knowledge and moral authority to influence states and other actors.

International organizations that greatly possess all four types of power resources are well equipped to address global challenges. In such cases, they have sufficient jurisdiction to develop policy in a particular area, adequate policy-making processes to adopt and implement new rules, enough financial and staff resources to execute their tasks, and the necessary policy expertise and moral authority to shape global policies and state actions. Yet, more commonly, multilateral institutions face deficits in one or several of these areas, thus reducing their ability to deliver on expectations. As we shall see in Chapter 3, the power means possessed by international organizations is one of the most important determinants of their effectiveness.

To evaluate the power of international organizations we draw on various sources of empirical evidence. Regarding all four dimensions of power, several comprehensive datasets are available and we can systematically describe and compare the capabilities of international organizations across different issue areas and over longer time periods. We supplement this overview of general patterns and trends with in-depth illustrations of the capabilities of specific multilateral institutions.

Our main findings are three-fold. First, multilateral institutions have come to enjoy increasing levels of power over time in response to demands for collective problem solving. This development was particularly prominent after the end of the Cold War, when international organizations saw a significant strengthening of their legal and institutional means of power, in particular. Second, the era of multilateral empowerment appears to have come to an end, or at least to have stalled. Since around 2010, international organizations have tended to see few additional reinforcements of their capabilities. While ideational power is still on the rise, this development likely reflects the tendency of multilateral institutions to shift to softer means of influence as compensation for greater constraints on legal, institutional, and material power. Third, it is questionable whether international organizations possess the means of power required to tackle global problems going forward. While transboundary challenges can be expected to increase, multilateral institutions face significant limitations on their capabili-

ties. These constraints are particularly notable for the many smaller international organizations that have key roles in global governance, yet do not possess capabilities anywhere near those of the major institutions that are most often in the public eye.

Legal Power

Legal power refers to the formal competence of international organizations to govern a particular policy area for a given membership. In its widest sense, such legal power is shaped by three developments: creation or dismantling of multilateral institutions with mandates to regulate issues that previously were governed at national or local levels; expansion or contraction in the scope of the mandates of existing organizations; and enlargement or shrinking of the membership bound by the legal authority of these institutions.

Regarding the first aspect of legal power, Figure 1.2 in Chapter 1 shows that the number of international organizations grew steadily from the end of the Second World War until the turn of the millennium. On this measure, the combined legal power of multilateral institutions in world politics increased substantially for half a century. However, as also illustrated in Figure 1.2, this trend peaked in the late 1990s, after which time the net number of international organizations has remained steady. This development extends across international organizations in all world regions (Pevehouse et al. 2020). Irrespective of whether we focus on multilateral institutions based in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, or the Middle East, the trend is one of expansion until around 2000, followed by a levelling off or even a contraction in the number of organizations. Thus, the growth in international organizations appears to have come to a halt.

There can be several reasons for this stagnation. It may reflect states deciding to limit the shift in power to international organizations, possibly in response to geopolitical tension and populist mobilization. It could also be the result of saturation in global governance. Nowadays, there are multilateral institutions for almost all issues, from global peace (UN) to the conservation of bluefin tuna (International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, ICCAT), and for the governance of all world regions, from the Nordic countries (Nordic Council, NC) to the Pacific islands (Pacific Islands Forum, PIF). It

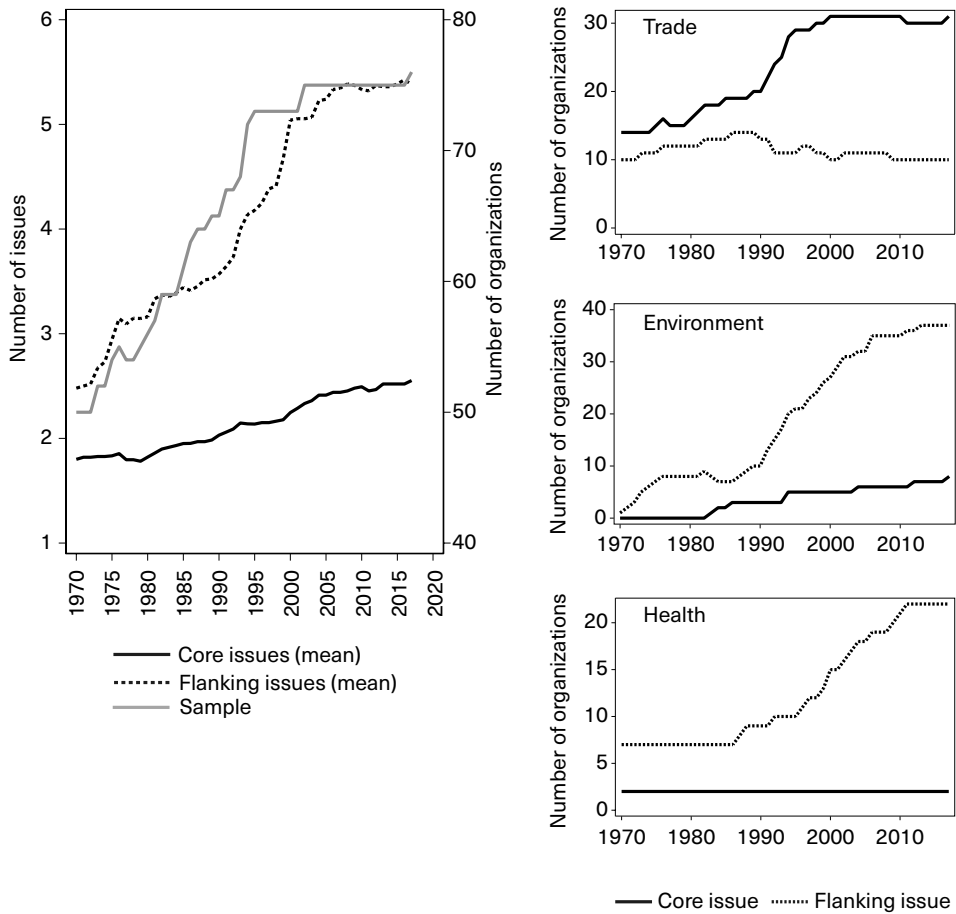
could be argued that there are not many remaining issues that could justify the establishment of new international organizations. Finally, as noted in Chapter 1, recent decades have seen a growing reliance on newer forms of global governance, from transgovernmental networks to public-private institutions and entirely private governance arrangements. This development suggests that demands for global problem solving are increasingly being met by other types of institutions than classic international organizations.

The second aspect of legal power is the scope of the mandates enjoyed by international organizations. If mandates expand in scope to cover more issues, then the legal power of multilateral institutions will also expand, all else being equal. Figure 2.1 presents data on the policy scope of 76 international organizations between 1970 and 2017, both in the aggregate and for institutions in three different policy areas (trade, environment, health). Core issues refer to policies that are central to the purpose of the organization, and flanking issues to policies that are more peripheral and complementary. The figure reveals a clear and universal trend of growing policy mandates over time, but with a leveling off in the rate of expansion from around 2000.

The average number of core issue areas per organization increased continuously from 1.8 in 1970 to 2.5 in 2017. However, these averages hide significant variation. Those task-specific organizations that by design have a very clear focus on a single issue area, such as trade or health, experience limited expansion in core mandates, whereas those general purpose organizations that have more open mandates, such as developing regional cooperation, experience greater expansion in the core issues they cover. In this latter category, ASEAN saw an expansion from 2 to 4 core issues, Mercosur from 3 to 5, and the EU from 4 to 10. Figure 2.1 also reveals a dramatic rise in the number of flanking issues, from an average of 2.5 issues in 1970 to 5.5 issues in 2017. ASEAN, for example, experienced an increase from 8 to 17 flanking issues, while the EU saw an increase from 3 to 15 flanking issues. The FAO illustrates another pattern: while having a relatively stable core focus on agriculture and food, this organization has seen its mandate expand by way of a growing number of flanking issues that include development, environment, fisheries, and humanitarian aid.

The right-hand panels of Figure 2.1 further show that some issue areas are more often a part of the core mandates of international orga-

Figure 2.1 Expansion of Mandates of 76 International Organizations, 1970–2017

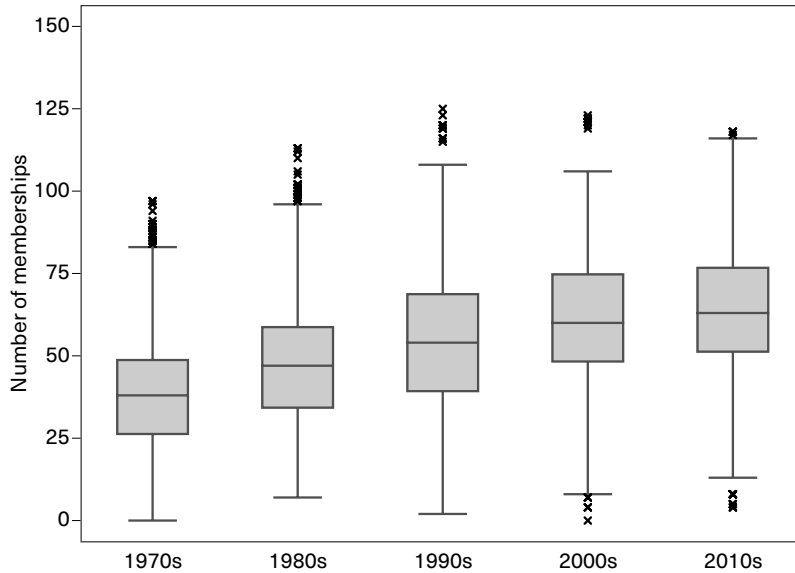


Source: Based on data from Hooghe et al. 2019b.

nizations than others. Trade is a core mandate in more than 30 of the 76 multilateral institutions in this sample, followed by security politics as the second most common core mandate (not shown). Other issue areas, such as environment (8), health (2), and migration (not shown), are more rarely a core focus of international organizations. This pattern could be interpreted as an indication of regulatory gaps. However, the limited core attention to those issue areas in multilateral institutions at large is compensated for in two ways: First, as illustrated in Figure 2.1, environment and health have instead become flanking issues in many international organizations. Second, those issue areas are in large part subject to regulation through other forms of global governance, such as international treaties and transnational hybrid institutions (Mitchell et al. 2020; Westerwinter 2021).

The third aspect affecting the legal power of international organizations is the geographical scope of their jurisdiction. All else being equal, the European Free Trade Agreement (EFTA) with its three member states and 14 million inhabitants has less legal power than the EU with its 27 member states and a population of 450 million. The legal power of a multilateral institution with a larger membership is greater because its policy mandates apply to a larger geographical jurisdiction. Figure 2.2 provides insights into this dimension of legal power by portraying the average number of organizational memberships per state over time. The boxplots show that the median state (the solid line in the box) in the 1970s was a member of 38 international organizations. This number then grew constantly over time and reached 54 organizations after the end of the Cold War, and 63 organizations at the end of the observation period in 2014. The length of the boxes, the whiskers, and the outliers show that there is considerable variation across countries. In 2014, France had the most organizational memberships ($n=115$), followed by Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and Sweden. Kosovo ($n=5$) and Taiwan ($n=8$) were the least integrated in multilateral institutions. These figures illustrate that the legal power of international organizations continued to grow even as the absolute number of institutions no longer increased, due to states becoming members of more organizations. Prominent illustrations of this trend are the Eastern enlargement of the EU, the Eastern expansion of NATO, and the accession of China (2001) and Russia (2012) to the WTO. That said, the rate of growth in the average number of

Figure 2.2 Number of Memberships in International Organizations per State, 1970–2014



Source: Based on data from Pevehouse et al. 2020.

Note: The length of the box is defined by the 25 percentile and the 75 percentile. The length of the whisker is defined by the interquartile range, multiplied by a factor of 1.5. Outliers are marked by asterisks.

memberships per state appears to be declining over time.

It is sometimes the case that international organizations suspend memberships and thus voluntarily limit the geographical scope of their legal power. Recent examples are the expulsion of Russia from the Council of Europe (COE) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in the wake of Russia's war against Ukraine. Suspensions are not particularly common: 95 cases between 1980 and 2010 in a sample of 308 organizations (von Borzyskowski and Vabulas 2019b). At other times, it is the member states themselves that choose to leave and thus weaken the legal power of multilateral institutions. EFTA is

a good example. In 1972, the organization had nine member states, including Sweden and the UK, compared to six member states in the European Community (EC). During the following decades, six member states left EFTA and instead joined the EC/EU.

Withdrawals from international organizations and agreements became a widely debated political topic with the Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump in 2016. However, the implications of these events turned out not to be particularly constraining on the legal power of international organizations. No other EU member state has yet followed the UK's example. And despite Trump's many efforts, the US only left a handful of international organizations—the International Coffee Organization (ICO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), and the WHO—during his period at the helm. Moreover, the Biden administration subsequently rejoined some of these organizations. Recent scholarship indicates that state withdrawals from international organizations overall are a rare phenomenon and that such exits tend not to be driven by nationalism and populism, but rather by geopolitical factors (von Borzyskowski and Vabulas 2019a).

In all, our examination of the legal power of international organizations indicates that the numbers, mandates, and memberships of multilateral institutions have grown over time. However, this expansion in legal power seems to have slowed down or come to a halt over the past two decades. Recent trends could reflect political decisions to curtail the legal power of multilateral institutions, but also saturation as international cooperation already has come to encompass most issues and states.

Institutional Power

Next to a legal mandate to govern, international organizations need institutional power to develop, implement, and enforce policies. Institutional power refers to the policy-making processes that enable international organizations to exercise their mandates. Multilateral institutions have various ways to make and enforce decisions, depending on their design. We distinguish between three aspects of institutional power in international organizations: the degree to which suprana-

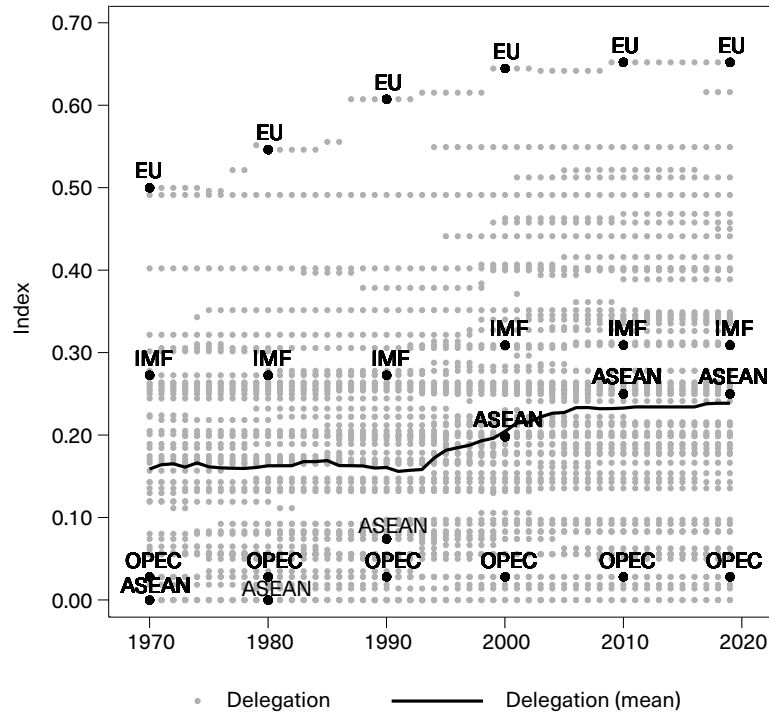
tional bodies, such as secretariats and courts, enjoy independence from member states (delegation); the extent to which member states take decisions through majority voting in interstate bodies (pooling); and the level of bindingness of the rules adopted by these institutions (bindingness) (Hooghe et al. 2017; Zürn et al. 2021).

Based on these three aspects of institutional power, we can distinguish between two institutional ideal types: supranational international organizations with high levels of delegation, extensive reliance on majority voting, and binding decisions; and intergovernmental international organizations with low levels of delegation, extensive reliance on unanimous decision-making, and non-binding decisions. Thus, supranational organizations score higher on institutional power and can generally be expected to be more effective in developing, implementing, and enforcing policies. Yet such extensive power comes with a drawback that frequently leads states to avoid this institutional form, namely, perceived constraints on sovereignty. While the EU is an example of a supranational organization, the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) is an illustration of an intergovernmental organization.

While the concepts of delegation, pooling, and bindingness apply most readily to classic international organizations, they can also shed light on the (often limited) institutional power of newer forms of global governance. Informal intergovernmental organizations rarely involve the delegation of authority to independent bodies, seldom make use of majority voting, and usually avoid binding rules in favor of non-binding recommendations or declarations. To some degree, these features also apply to transnational hybrid institutions, such as the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme for the regulation of conflict diamonds, the UN Global Compact, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Only around one-half of these organizations have secretariat-like bodies to which tasks could be delegated, and less than ten percent have enforcement mechanisms or dispute settlement procedures (Westerwinter 2021: 160). A few hybrid institutions use majority voting, but most issue recommendations rather than binding decisions.

Returning to classic international organizations, the first dimension of institutional power consists of the delegation of authority to independent supranational bodies, such as secretariats, commissions, courts and assemblies. These bodies are tasked with a variety of func-

Figure 2.3 Delegation in International Organizations, 1970–2019



Sources: Based on data from Hooghe et al. 2017; Hafel and Lenz 2022.

tions, such as setting the agenda for decision-making, implementing policy through day-to-day managerial decisions, and monitoring compliance through rule interpretation and dispute settlement. Examples of delegation in the EU context are the independent powers conferred on the European Commission, European Parliament, European Court of Justice, and European Central Bank (Tallberg 2002). More delegated powers and greater independence from member states is generally seen as being conducive to the effectiveness of international organizations (Lall 2017; Sommerer et al. 2022b).

Figure 2.3 plots the level of delegation in 76 international organizations from 1970 to 2019 on a scale of 0 to 1. The solid line represents the mean level of delegation, which has increased over time, with the most significant period of growth occurring between 1995 and 2005, when the index score increased by almost one-third. Since around 2005, the line is flat, indicating modest or no growth in the average level of delegation. Member states as the principals of these organizations rarely change their mind with regard to the level of delegation. Although there are a few prominent examples of changes in delegation over time, like the EU and ASEAN, most of the growth in delegation stems from the establishment of new organizations with high levels of delegation, or from large organizational reforms resulting in higher levels of delegation, such as the transition from the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) to the WTO. Thus, without newly created organizations (Figure 1.2), it is less likely that the level of delegation will continue to increase.

The grey dots in Figure 2.3 represent individual international organizations and point to extensive variation in delegation in this sample of 76 organizations. Institutions located at the bottom of this distribution with basically no delegation include OPEC, the International Whaling Commission (IWC), and the SCO. The Commonwealth is another example of very limited delegation. According to the Memorandum on the Commonwealth Secretariat from 1965, “the Secretariat should not arrogate itself to executive functions” (Art. 6; see Hooghe et al. 2017: 49). Among organizations with higher levels of delegation are the EU and the IMF. Several international organizations score high on delegation because of powerful courts and tribunals, among them the Council of Europe with the European Court of Human Rights (Hawkins and Jacoby 2008) and the WTO with the Appellate Body (Shaffer et al. 2016). However, high delegation is still an exception. Around 50 of the 76 organizations in the sample fall below 50 percent of the score for the EU, and a substantial proportion of the sample is very close to a level of zero delegation.

When multilateral institutions score low on delegation, they sometimes choose to act as orchestrators instead. As orchestrators, international organizations bring together stakeholders and activate, coordinate, and support state and nonstate actors as intermediaries between international organizations and their targeted actors (Abbott

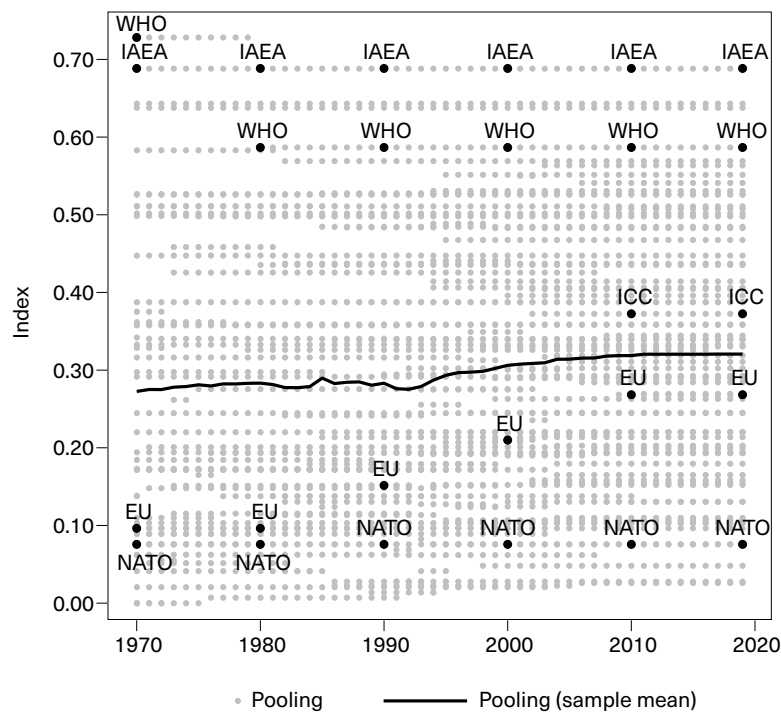
et al. 2015). In the absence of institutional power, international organizations have to rely on the capacities of these intermediaries. For example, the secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) supported the creation of a network of environmental NGOs as an intermediary to monitor member state compliance (Tallberg 2015). Orchestration is also a way in which informal organizations, which typically lack delegated capacities, can exercise institutional power. The G20 is often seen as an influential orchestrator in global financial politics. The institutionally weak G20 has been successful in becoming a focal forum for the coordination of economic and financial politics in times of crises, and has engaged conventional international organizations as intermediaries in order to achieve its goals (Viola 2015).

With respect to the second dimension of institutional power—pooling—international organizations have greater authority when member states cannot easily block collective decision-making. The most common types of decision-making in multilateral institutions are majority voting, qualified (weighted) majority voting, and consensual decision-making. Institutional power is greatest when decisions only require the support of a simple majority of states, since it is very hard to put together a coalition that is sufficiently large to block such decisions. Institutional power is somewhat lower when a qualified majority of weighted votes (often around 70 percent) is required to adopt decisions, since the blocking coalition necessary to stop a decision can then be smaller and it is easier for powerful members to obstruct decision-making. Finally, institutional power is at its lowest when consensus or unanimity is required, since all states then retain the formal ability to veto a decision.

Member states have to varying degrees shifted away from unanimity as the principal mode of decision-making in international organizations and toward forms of majority voting. Research based on a sample of 258 organizations shows that simple majority voting has become the most common voting rule in the main decision-making bodies of multilateral institutions (Blake and Lockwood Payton 2015). In 2010, 46 percent of all organizations in this sample used simple majority voting, while 18 percent used qualified weighted voting and 36 percent unanimity voting.

Figure 2.4 puts these numbers in a historical perspective by plotting

Figure 2.4 Pooling in International Organizations, 1970–2019



Sources: Based on data from Hooghe et al. 2017; Haftel and Lenz 2022.

the average level of pooling in international organizations from 1970 to 2019. It shows that the mean level of pooling (solid line) has grown modestly over time, and mainly so between the mid-1980s and 2010, mirroring the rise in delegation. A case in point is the development of pooling in the EU, which has increased with every new treaty reform from the Single European Act to the Treaty of Lisbon. However, for most international organizations, including major institutions such as the IMF, the UN, and the World Bank, voting rules have hardly

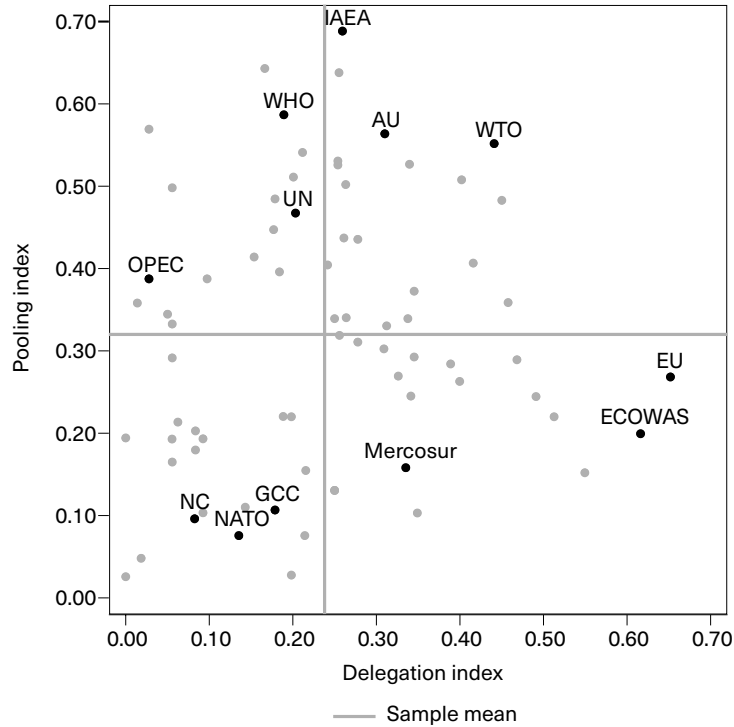
changed. As in the case of delegation, part of the rise comes from the establishment of new institutions with higher levels of pooling, such as the ICC. Yet, compared to delegation, pooling has seen less of an increase over time, as member states have apparently been more reluctant to give up national vetoes than to delegate power to independent bodies.

Figure 2.4 further points to extensive variation in the degree of pooling across multilateral institutions. Several task-specific organizations within the UN system display very high levels of pooling, among them, the IAEA and the WHO. For instance, the IAEA can suspend a member state on the basis of a two-third majority of its main decision-making bodies (Hooghe et al. 2017: 125). Although a prominent example of the use of majority voting, the EU only has an average rating with this measure, mainly because of low scores for pooling on decisions related to accessions, constitutional reforms, and financial compliance. At the lower end of the scale, we find an organization like NATO, which overwhelmingly relies on consensual decision-making.

This pattern can be interpreted as an indication of a general and growing willingness of states to sacrifice the national veto for the sake of efficient cooperation. However, the formal rules that allow for majority voting do not necessarily mean that the member states make use of such rules. In the EU, for instance, member states often adopt decisions unanimously, even when the formal rules allow for majority voting, in order to abide by a well-known norm of consensus (Heisenberg 2005; Novak 2013). Thus, the presence of national vetoes might be more widespread than the voting rules suggest, which could have negative consequences for decision-making in international organizations (Sommerer et al. 2022b). In many organizations, particularly at the regional level, consensual decision-making is the preferred choice—not only due to a reluctance to give up sovereignty, but also because of a desire to project a sense of community. However, if such a sense of community is not forthcoming or erodes due to domestic political change, then unanimity becomes a recipe for complicated negotiations and gridlock.

Figure 2.5 combines data on delegation and pooling in order to identify those international organizations that score highest and lowest in terms of institutional power. It shows the distributions of delegation and pooling in 2019. Dividing these two distributions by the sample

Figure 2.5 Delegation and Pooling across International Organizations, 2019



Sources: Based on data from Hooghe et al. 2017; Haftel and Lenz 2022.

mean results in four categories. The first group of organizations, such as the AU, the COE, and the IAEA, has a high (above-average) level of institutional power on both dimensions. The second category of institutions scores low on both dimensions, among them, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), NATO, and the NC. The third and fourth categories comprise the 33 organizations that score high on one dimension and low on the other. The EU, for instance, combines high delegation and relatively low pooling, while the WHO combines high

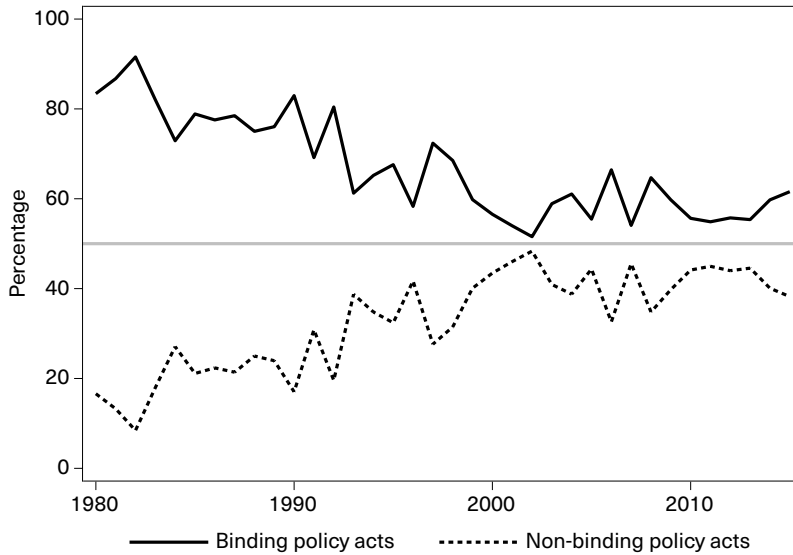
pooling and relatively low delegation.

The third component of institutional power is bindingness. When international organizations have the authority to adopt binding policy decisions that oblige member states to follow the rules, they are institutionally more powerful than when they are only able to formulate non-binding recommendations. Binding policy acts are often described as “hard law,” while non-binding policy acts amount to “soft law” (Abbott et al. 2000).

Figure 2.6 shows the proportion of binding and non-binding policy acts for 13 multi-issue international organizations, including the UN and all the major regional institutions, from 1980 to 2015. It suggests that international organizations increasingly govern by way of soft law at the expense of hard law. Whereas more than 80 percent of policy acts were binding in the 1980s, this figure dropped to 52 percent in the early 2000s and then remained at about that level. Conversely, the proportion of non-binding output increased from 20 percent in the 1980s to 48 percent in the early 2000s and then remained close to that level. This trend also holds if we exclude the EU as a major source of policy and if we account for a growing volume of policy over time.

This pattern reflects greater reliance on declaratory and administrative types of policy, which are usually non-binding, rather than regulatory and constitutional types of policy, which are typically binding (Lundgren et al. 2022b). It is also compatible with observations that multilateral institutions increasingly turn to governance models that involve less top-down command and more bottom-up voluntarism. Prominent examples include the SDGs of the UN and the Paris Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This development toward voluntarism is predominantly a sign of institutional weakness. While an absence of binding rules and targets likely attracts more participants, such voluntarism strips international organizations of crucial institutional means to influence the behavior of state and nonstate actors.

In sum, the overall institutional power of international organizations has expanded over time, but not at the same rate as their legal authority to tackle transboundary problems. Instead, member states appear to be quite cautious about conferring institutional power on international organizations. This trend has grown stronger in recent years, as the increase in delegation and pooling has stalled, and as bind-

Figure 2.6 Bindingness in International Organizations, 1980–2017

Source: Lundgren et al. 2022b.

ingness has weakened. Research suggests a number of explanations for this reluctance on the part of member states to equip international organizations with strong institutional tools, notably, concerns about a national sovereignty and fear of losing control.

Material Power

Material power refers to the financial and human resources that international organizations can deploy to achieve their goals. Material resources are critical to the ability of multilateral institutions to restore peace, stabilize the global economy, monitor human rights, provide disaster relief, and so on. While many observers describe these bodies as underfunded and understaffed, especially in view of their demanding

and complex tasks, other observers depict them as bloated bureaucracies which misuse financial resources that are desperately needed elsewhere.

Figure 2.7 presents data on the core administrative budgets (solid line) and permanent full-time staff (dashed line) of 32 international organizations. It is generally difficult to compare the level of financial and human resources across organizations with different tasks and mandates, like the UN and the IWC. However, the figure suggests three broader observations about the material power of international organizations. First, and in contrast to legal and institutional power, it is not possible to identify common periods of growth and stagnation across a large number of organizations. Generally, changes in material resources seem to be highly organization specific and do not follow broader trends.

Second, and again different from legal and institutional power, we find evidence of a downward shift in material power over time. Whereas rising levels of human and financial resources are a widespread pattern, material resources have also been known to decrease. Examples include shrinking staff numbers at UNESCO and declining budgets for the OSCE.

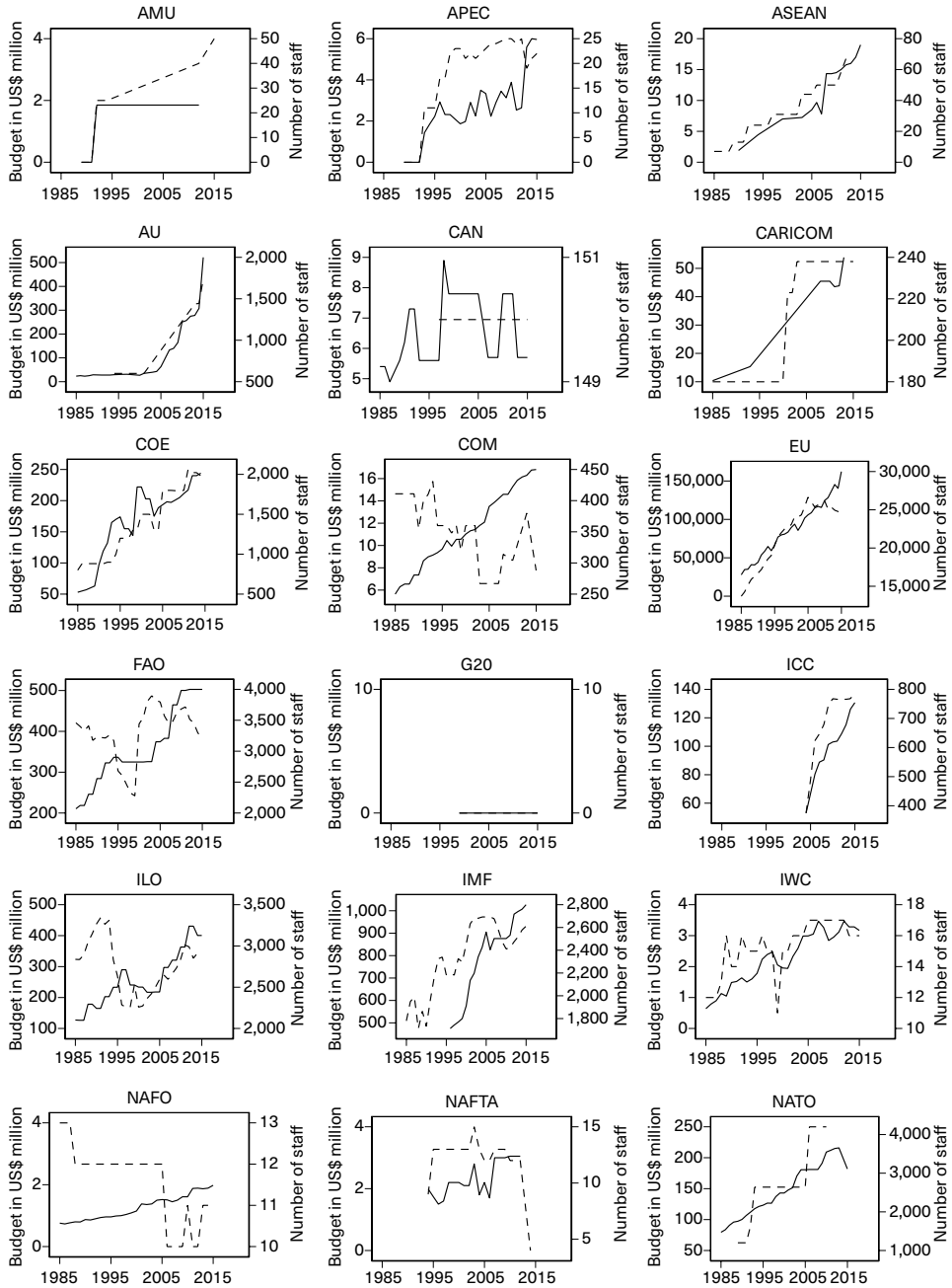
Third, there are dramatic differences in human and financial resources across organizations. Figure 2.7 indicates variations ranging from a dozen permanent staff and an annual administrative budget of little more than US\$ 1 million at the lower end of the scale, to thousands of employees and billion-dollar budgets at the higher end. However, with the exception of the EU and the UN, the material resources of most international organizations are limited, especially compared to authorities at the domestic level. The WTO, for example, has around 600 permanent staff, compared to 2,800 at the UK Department of International Trade. Similarly, the headquarter of the AU employs 1,700 permanent staff, compared to 4,500 permanent staff at the South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation. The secretariat of the UNFCCC in Bonn counts around 370 employees, which is not much compared to the 1,200 employees at the German Federal Ministry for the Environment.

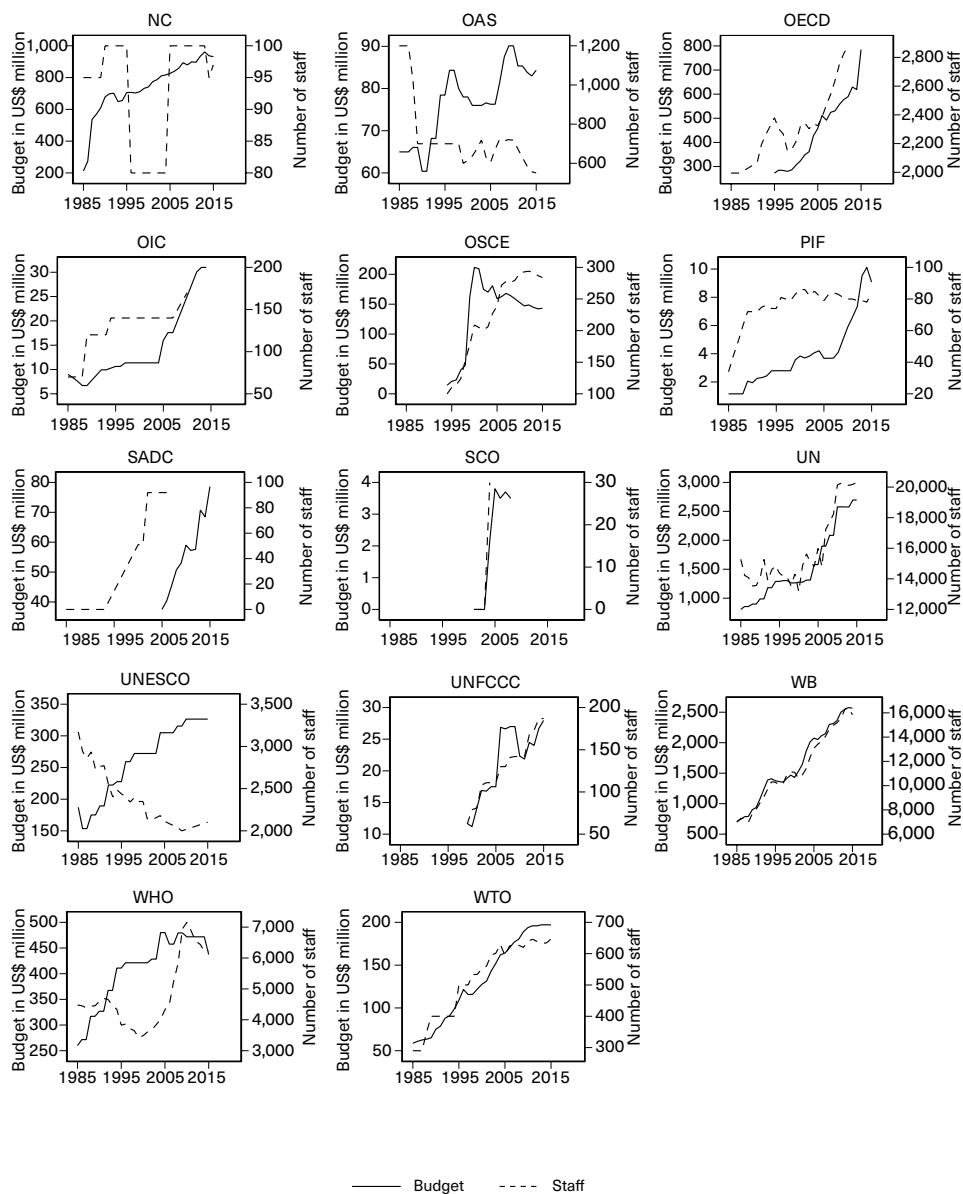
Material resources also vary extensively if we move beyond the category of classic international organizations to consider newer types of global governance. Some transnational hybrid institutions have

considerable material power, although this is rather the exception. ICANN has around 400 permanent staff and an annual budget of US\$ 137 million, while the budget of the FSC is around US\$ 28 million. Informal international organizations such as the G20 typically do not have any permanent staff or centralized budget at all. Instead, they rely on the material capacity of the host government to support summit meetings and on the material capacity of the member states for other administrative tasks. This does not mean that this type of international cooperation is less costly. For instance, the bill for the G20 summit in Buenos Aires in 2018 ran to US\$ 112 million (G20 Information Centre 2019).

Two developments add to the overall impression of the limited material power of international organizations. First, multilateral institutions increasingly rely on funds from other sources than their member states. Funding from private companies and philanthropic foundations has become an important complement to public financing of the core activities of these organizations. For example, in 2015, Coca Cola contributed US\$ 3 million to the UNDP water partnership, while between 2014 and 2017 the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation donated US\$ 1 billion to the WHO (Seitz and Martens 2017). Such engagement with business has increased significantly in the UN system as a whole, resulting in around 3,200 private sector partnerships in 2021 (UN 2021). The fact that international organizations actively encourage and willingly accept private funds is a sign of the scarcity of their resources. Such reliance of public organizations on private funds may create dependencies and problems. For instance, it could give private companies undue influence over the decisions and activities of international organizations or result in multilateral institutions becoming less transparent and accountable.

Second, states and other donors increasingly earmark their financial contributions to international organizations as a way of asserting control. Different from an unmarked contribution to the core budget of an organization, a contribution is earmarked when member states or private donors direct it to a specific purpose. Donors can specify how and where an earmarked contribution may be used, for instance, privileging a particular sector or country. Similarly, they can define the activities for which these resources *cannot* be used. For example, the US Congress has occasionally prohibited the UN from using funds to

Figure 2.7 Budget and Staff of International Organizations, 1980–2015



Source: Based on data from Sommerer et al. 2022b.

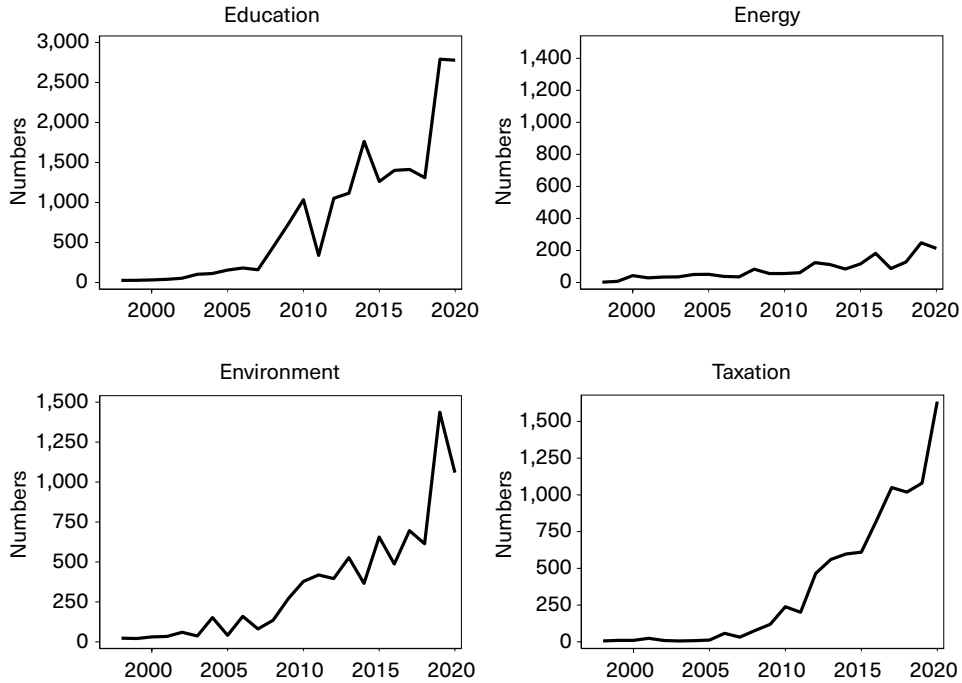
support family planning programs (Bayram and Graham 2017: 426). Earmarked funding provides member states and private donors with greater influence and more oversight over multilateral spending than unmarked funding. Thus, earmarking undermines the financial autonomy and flexibility of international organizations. In 2020, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) received US\$ 9.9 million from Sweden in earmarked contributions, compared to US\$ 4.8 million in core funding (UNEP 2021; Browne et al. 2017). In many multilateral institutions, the proportion of earmarked funding is around 75 percent. Next to the UNEP, examples include the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UNDP, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the WHO. The scope of earmarked funding has expanded dramatically over time (Eichenauer and Reinsberg 2017). In the funding-intense area of international development, the number of organizations that received earmarked contributions began to rise during the 1990s and then sharply increased following the turn of the millennium. While 80 multilateral aid organizations received earmarked funding in 2002, this figure had already doubled to 160 organizations by 2009.

In all, international organizations have limited material power, both in view of the tasks these institutions are expected to carry out and compared to the resources of domestic authorities. Growing reliance on private funding and on earmarked contributions further constrain the financial autonomy of multilateral institutions. This is likely to have negative implications for the effectiveness of international organizations. According to Secretary General António Guterres, the UN is “forced to operate not on the basis of strategic direction, but rather on the availability of cash, which undermines mandate implementation” (UN 2020). Research suggests that there are several reasons why member states are hesitant to provide international organizations with greater resources: a fear that powerful supranational bodies will be difficult to control; cases of mismanagement and corruption; rising public criticism of multilateral institutions; and a diffusion of neoliberal ideas prescribing greater reliance on private sector solutions.

Ideational Power

A fourth dimension of the power of international organizations concerns their ideational resources. Even when the institutional power and material capacity of international organizations is limited, their ideational capabilities—their means to shape thinking and consciousness—can be considerable. Moreover, in contrast to the other facets of power, ideational power often lies within the scope of multilateral institutions themselves to develop. This section examines five forms of ideational power—research and information, exchange and learning, performance indicators, norms, and narratives—and how they have developed in international organizations over time.

Regarding the first of these forms, *research and information*, many international organizations generate, store, and disseminate important policy-relevant information. While multilateral institutions rarely have a formal mandate from member states to undertake research and produce data (Zürn et al. 2021), they have become increasingly active in this area in recent decades. International organizations nowadays issue thousands of reports per year, including some publications with large audiences and wide usages. For instance, while the OECD has limited institutional power, its various divisions prepare reams of influential data and analyses that cover a broad spectrum of policy fields. Figure 2.8 shows how OECD publications in four issue areas—education, energy, environment, and taxation—have proliferated over recent decades to hundreds and even thousands per year. Likewise, the IMF, the World Bank, and regional development banks all have substantial research departments that produce statistics and evaluations regarding economic conditions, which are widely circulated. Since 1991, the UNDP has issued an influential annual Human Development Report. Similarly, since 1997, the UNEP has published a Global Environmental Outlook, and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has substantially shaped debates around transnational corporations with its annual World Investment Report, produced since 1991. Other examples include the World Drug Report from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the periodic environmental assessments from the IPCC. While such reports do not include binding recommendations for member states, they can deeply mold policy discussions and public awareness.

Figure 2.8 Number of OECD Reports on Selected Themes, 1998–2020

Source: Based on data from the OECD Library.

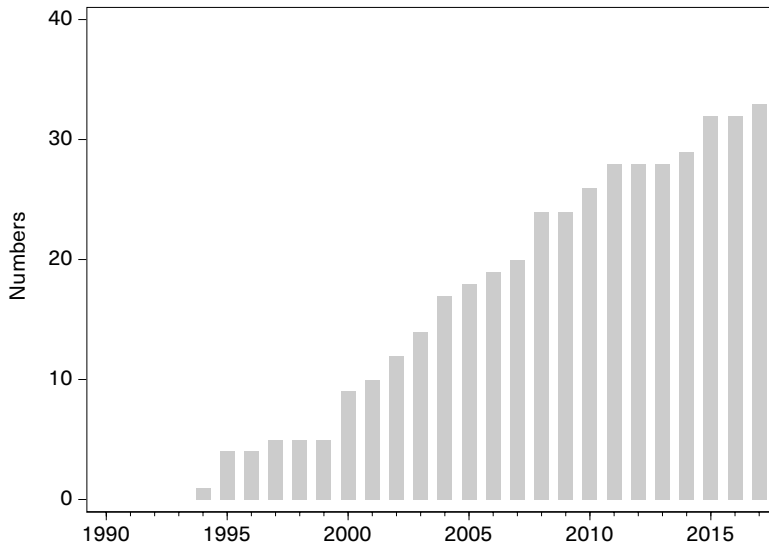
With respect to the second aspect of ideational power, *exchange and learning*, international organizations often serve as venues in which state and nonstate actors convene to share experiences, learn from each other, and in that light perhaps adjust and align their political outlooks. Scholarship on the global diffusion of policies and ideas has long highlighted the important role of multilateral institutions in processes of transnational communication, for instance, with respect to cultural, economic, and environmental policies (Simmons and Elkins

2004; Holzinger et al. 2008). For example, the EU, the IMF, and the G20 have been pivotal forums for the exchange and coordination of economic and financial policies in times of crises (Viola 2015). In the light of extensive policy transfer, the World Bank has been described as a Knowledge Bank (Stone 2003).

In terms of the third aspect of ideational power, *performance indicators*, international organizations draw on expert knowledge to produce a host of global evaluation frameworks (Kelley and Simmons 2020). As seen in Figure 2.9, this activity has increased steadily over the past three decades. Prominent examples of these indices, ratings, and rankings include the UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI) and Gender and Development Index (GDI), the UN's Women's Gender Equality Index, and the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index. The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) rankings has dramatically expanded the role and influence of this organization in global education governance (Sellar and Lingard 2014). To be sure, states and private actors issue even more of these performance indicators. Still, global assessment frameworks like the HDI and GDI have become highly influential in policy circles and public debates. Such evaluations often increase the authority of the multilateral institutions that issue them and set incentives for the assessed states and nonstate actors—who worry about the reputational effects of these ratings—to adjust their policies.

Research and information, exchange and learning, and performance indicators feed into the larger processes of the construction, spread, and maintenance of norms in the world politics—the fourth aspect of the ideational power of international organizations. Indeed, as leading custodians of cornerstone principles for purported correct behavior and good living conditions, multilateral institutions have considerable moral authority in contemporary society. Prominent examples of the norms promoted by international organizations include basic needs, cultural heritage, democracy, economic growth, gender equality, human rights, human security, market economy, peace, rule of law, state sovereignty, and sustainable development (Tallberg et al. 2020). As chronicled by the United Nations Intellectual History Project, the UN system has made some of its greatest impact through pivotal ideas (Emmerij et al. 2001). Scholars have also singled out the EU for its normative power, especially in the promotion of liberal

Figure 2.9 Global Performance Indicators Issued by International Organizations, 1990–2017



Source: Based on data from Kelley and Simmons 2019.

values (Manners 2002). UNESCO, an organization with very limited institutional power, has an influential role in the diffusion of national science organizations (Finnemore 1993), and many other prominent cases of multilateral institutions as norm teachers and moral authorities have been observed in the field of human rights and women's rights. They successfully promoted norms by setting the agenda and framing issues, for instance, through global conferences, designated "years" and "decades," benchmarks, and best practices (Krook and True 2012; Joachim 2007). In these ways and more, international organizations contribute to socialization into predominant global norms (Haas 1992).

Finally, in terms of narratives, international organizations often

weave information, indicators, and norms together in a general worldview that substantially frames the political consciousness of their member states and other actors. Both the League of Nations apparatus and the UN system have been major purveyors of the liberal international order as an umbrella script for modern world politics. Central pillars of this worldview include open world markets, the peaceful settlement of disputes, national self-determination, universal human rights, and the rule of international law. The accompanying narrative of “development” has anticipated that, over time, a liberal international order will bring “progress” toward global prosperity, democracy, peace, and justice. The late twentieth century saw multilateral economic institutions promote a so-called neoliberal variation of this knowledge frame, with particular emphasis on privatization, deregulation, and liberalization. At the same time, international organizations have often been significant sites of opposition to competing narratives of authoritarianism, mercantilism, nationalism, and populism. The prospect of global geopolitical shifts may well bring more contention of worldviews to multilateral cooperation.

Taking the above five forms of ideational power in sum, we can conclude that international organizations have considerable capabilities in this area. Indeed, even multilateral bodies that score low on other types of power, such as the OECD, can still exert considerable power by providing expert-based and scientific information and raising the attention of the broader public. That said, ideational and material power can be complementary, inasmuch as the international organizations with some of the most pronounced knowledge capacities—such as the EU, the IMF, and the UN—tend to have large staffs and budgets.

Different from the other three dimensions of power, the ideational power of international organizations appears to have continued to grow over time. Multilateral institutions currently show little sign of losing their epistemic significance in contemporary politics. If anything, expanding research outputs, growing knowledge exchanges, and proliferating rating schemes sooner point toward increasing ideational power for international organizations. Part of the explanation may be that constraints on the legal, institutional, and material capacities of multilateral institutions push these bodies toward means of influence that they themselves can control and develop.

Whether international organizations can exert influence through

their ideational resources going forward will be shaped by the acceptance of their knowledge, information, and data by state and non-state actors. Anti-globalist populism, fact-resistance in society, and the general push-back against existing multilateral institutions suggest that such acceptance may be an increasingly challenging condition for ideational power.

Conclusion

Do international organizations have sufficient power to deal with global problems? In terms of legal power, they generally look fit for purpose—although there may be some gaps in governance. The number of multilateral agencies has grown over time, and so has the scope of their mandates and the size of their memberships. Thus, on the whole, international organizations have the legal basis to pursue solutions to global problems.

However, international organizations generally fall short on the other three dimensions of power. The institutional power of multilateral institutions is often limited, and although it grew during the 1990s and 2000s, the trend has been flat since 2010. The material power of international organizations is strongly influenced by a growing dependence on private donors and increasing constraints from public donors. The ideational power of international organizations has grown over time and can partially compensate for the shortfalls in other types of authority. Nevertheless, ideational power hits limits when powerful state and nonstate actors obstruct it, and it heavily depends on material power, since strong bureaucracies are needed for international organizations to generate knowledge and spread information.

Although thus far the combined power of international organizations does not appear to have decreased, the period of growth appears to be over, at least for now. Whether this development represents a temporary interlude in multilateral empowerment, the beginning of a longer period of stasis, or a turning point on the path toward decline is too early to say.

The limited power of international organizations has direct implications for their capacity to contribute to the solutions of global problems. Research has shown that the different facets of legal, institutional, material, and ideational power are among the most influential

determinants of the effectiveness of international organizations. Without comprehensive mandates, strong secretariats and courts, efficient decision-making, substantive resources, ideational power, and moral authority, it is difficult for these organizations to set the agenda of global politics, to agree on policies, and to monitor and enforce the implementation of these decisions on the ground. The next chapter will analyze how effective international organizations are in addressing global problems based on the resources at their disposal.

3. Effectiveness

Having discussed the power of international organizations, we now examine how these bodies use their mandates and resources to affect transboundary problems. It is not enough for multilateral institutions to have relevant legal authority and adequate financial and other means at their disposal. These bodies also need to contribute to effective problem solving. International organizations must be able to develop policies, achieve compliance with their rules, and contribute to solving global challenges.

Many observers assume that international organizations are ineffective. For example, commentators often point to the recent wars in Afghanistan, Syria, and Ukraine, noting little meaningful intervention from the UN. Likewise, people often perceive that international organizations make little impact on transboundary problems around cybersecurity, the environment, financial markets, human rights, migration, pandemics, trade conflicts, and more. In this light, many observers believe that current global governance is not up to the job. Yet what does academic research show? Is the situation around the effectiveness of multilateralism really as bleak as the skeptics suggest?

This chapter reviews the available knowledge on the effectiveness of international organizations under three headings: We start with *policy development*, that is, the degree to which international organizations are able to take decisions on crucial global problems. We then examine *rule compliance*, that is, the extent to which state and nonstate actors follow the policy measures that international organizations generate. A third section assesses *problem solving*, that is, how far international organizations help to resolve transboundary challenges. The chapter

also identifies some key determinants of the effectiveness of international organizations, that is, major factors that enable (or prevent) multilateral institutions from achieving impact.

Note that these three points relate to *policy* effectiveness: how far international organizations affect the world around them. Thus, our discussion does not primarily concern the *operational* effectiveness of international organizations, such as whether they spend their funds efficiently, pursue transparent and accountable operations, have visionary and inspiring leadership, and so on. Of course, the internal organizational effectiveness of secretariats and other international bureaucracies may promote external policy effectiveness. Hence, the chapter notes how various internal institutional circumstances of international organizations can affect their contributions to policy development, rule compliance, and problem solving.

To assess the effectiveness of international organizations, we draw on various sources of evidence. Regarding policy development, substantial quantitative data are available on the number of decisions that international organizations produce, and we can systematically compare these output levels between institutions and between issue areas, as well as over time. Compliance with multilateral rules has also attracted considerable research, although these investigations tend to examine a single agreement, organization or policy field. In addition, many case studies have examined problem solving by international organizations.

Of course, it is hard to reach specific conclusions about the effectiveness of international organizations, given that each policy scenario involves so many other actors and factors. For one thing, it is usually the case that several international organizations address the same global issue, and it can be hard to disentangle the effects of one multilateral institution from those of another. Moreover, the effectiveness of international organizations cannot be assessed independently of its member states, whose role is central to enhancing and/or obstructing the impact of multilateral institutions. In addition, business enterprises, civil society associations, media platforms, and research institutes at global, regional, national and local levels are involved in a global policy process. Then there are systemic influences related to prevailing norms (e.g., human rights principles), economic conditions of the time (e.g., levels of poverty and inequality), and the general political

climate (e.g., extents of populism). The dynamics of effectiveness in global governance are complex.

Nevertheless, the available evidence allows us to identify several points on the positive side. International organizations are generally quite apt at developing new policies in response to changing problems, amidst large and rapid transformations in the world around them. To this extent, multilateral institutions are not so gridlocked and crisis-ridden as pessimistic accounts would have us believe (Hale et al. 2013). In addition, international organizations frequently achieve substantial compliance with their rules and norms. It is an exaggeration to suggest that states blithely disregard any international agreement and policy that does not suit them. Furthermore, international organizations often make a notable impact on global problems. If we particularly think counterfactually and imagine how a policy scenario would have unfolded if international organizations had not been involved, then we appreciate how multilateral bodies contribute to problem solving. To this extent, claims of “irrelevant” international organizations are not sustainable.

Still, the balance sheet also has negative points. For example, the evidence shows that, in various instances, international organizations have deficits in policy development, rule compliance, and problem solving. To this extent, the effectiveness of multilateral institutions is considerably lower than advocates of international cooperation would wish. Where the record on effectiveness is disappointing, it is especially important to identify factors that hinder impact. Diagnosing the difficulties is an important first step toward devising measures to improve the effectiveness of international organizations.

As a final preliminary point, we must underline that assessments of effectiveness have important normative and political aspects. It is always important to ask effective *for whom* and *for what purpose*? Which interests are (and are not) served when an international organization achieves a high level of policy development, rule compliance, and problem solving? For example, effectiveness in promoting democracy need not always advance peace, and effectiveness in increasing economic growth need not always improve environmental conditions. Thus, effectiveness is not a good thing in itself: it depends on the interests and values against which effectiveness is assessed.

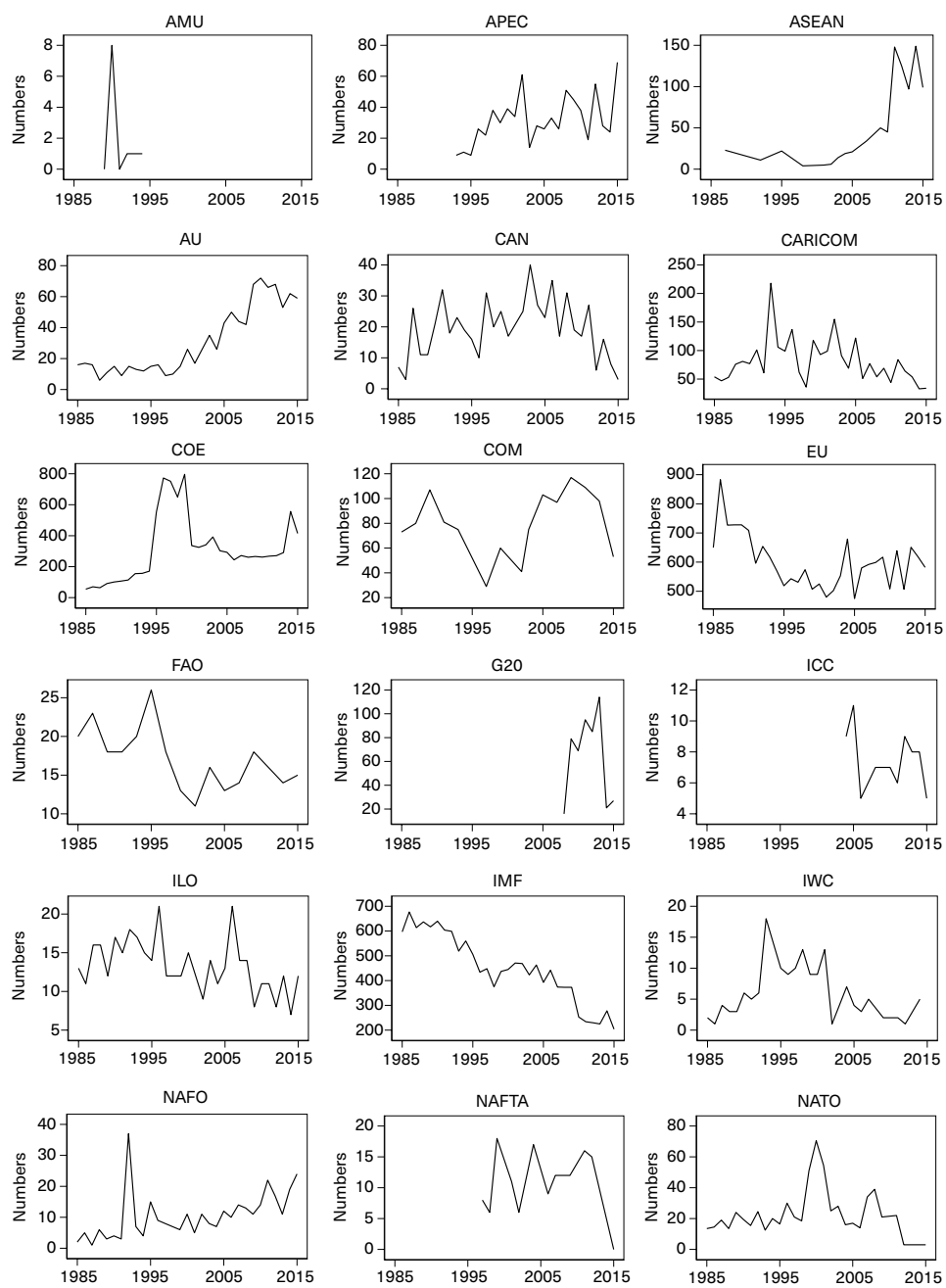
Policy Development

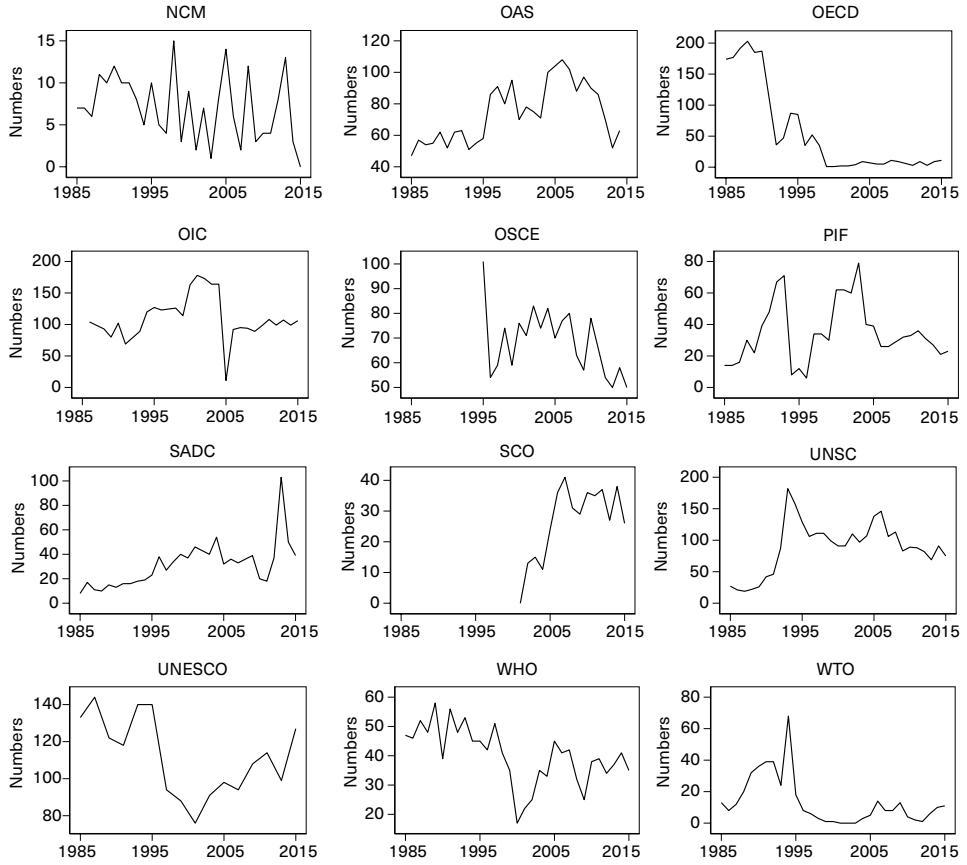
We begin by examining the first step in the effectiveness chain, namely, the degree to which multilateral institutions develop policies. The academic literature often speaks in this regard of *outputs*. In order to have any chance of solving global problems, international organizations need to “do something” in terms of generating visions, resolutions, decisions, projects, and programs. Thus, it is important to examine levels of outputs from international organizations, as well as to identify the circumstances that facilitate or hamper policy production. Popular expectations regarding the productivity of multilateral institutions vary drastically, from claims of over-regulation from Brussels to fears of the persistent deadlock of important bodies such as the UN Security Council.

The largest available study on policy outputs from international organizations covers thirty multilateral institutions between 1985 and 2015 (Sommerer et al. 2022b). Evidence from this study, presented in Figure 3.1, shows considerable variation between international organizations in terms of the absolute numbers of decisions that they produce. For example, the IWC usually adopts only a handful of decisions per year, while the EU produces several hundred. Looking at trends over time, many of the thirty bodies show large fluctuations in the numbers of decisions from one year to the next. For instance, NATO had a striking peak in decisions at the turn of the millennium. Certain international organizations such as the AU and ASEAN showed a long-term upward trend in levels of outputs from 1985–2015. In contrast, the IMF, the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA), and the OECD showed a long-term downward trend. Taken collectively, the thirty international organizations have produced a fairly even number of decisions across the decades in question. This pattern of general stability defies widespread fears that geopolitical power shifts and growing anti-globalist populism would lead to greater deadlock in global governance.

Several more detailed studies of the outputs from international organizations have specifically examined the UN Security Council (UNSC) (Holloway and Tomlinson 1995; Allen and Yuen 2014; Vreeland and Dreher, 2014). This body plays a key role as the principal global institution responsible for maintaining international peace and security. However, policy development in the UNSC is highly dependent on

Figure 3.1 Decision-Making Output by International Organizations, 1985–2015





Source: Based on data from Sommerer et al. 2022b.

the five permanent members (P5: China, France, Russia, UK, USA) not wielding their vetoes to stop joint resolutions. As depicted in Figure 3.1, research shows that the decision-making productivity of the UNSC rose sharply with the end of the Cold War and the decline in tensions among the P5. During the 1980s, the UNSC adopted an average of around 20 resolutions per year, but after 1990 this rapidly increased to 60 to 90 resolutions per year. Similarly, the number of vetoes by the P5 declined from as many as eight per year in the 1980s to just 1–3 per year during the 1990s and 2000s. That said, the frequency of vetoes in the UNSC has increased somewhat since 2014, with renewed growth in divergence among the P5. Still, the veto level has thus far remained below that of the Cold War era.

Further detailed studies have examined policy outputs from the EU (Thomson et al. 2006; Naurin and Wallace 2008; Hagemann et al. 2017). This international organization stands out as having the highest level of decision-making output, which can be attributed to its broad policy portfolio and deep level of integration. A key question has been whether the EU can continue to develop policy efficiently when undergoing successive enlargements, increasing the number of member states that must agree on new legislation. Figure 3.1 indicates that the adoption of new directives and regulations by the EU Council rose steeply from the 1970s to the mid-1990s. Decision output from the Council remained relatively stable from 2005 to 2015, thus belying fears that an expansion of EU membership from 15 to 27 states would increase the deadlock. A key factor contributing to the EU's sustained level of policy development has been a shift from unanimity to qualified majority voting as the main decision-making principle, which has made it easier to reach agreement in the Council in a situation involving more member states around the table.

Moreover, research suggests that international organizations are quite responsive to the particular policy problems that motivated their establishment and empowerment. In other words, the new policies that multilateral institutions develop are not produced at random or because of some organizational interest to appear productive; instead, they tend to respond quite closely to developments in the policy problems that the institutions have been mandated to address.

Several studies have examined the responsiveness of the UNSC and found that policy adoption in this body is primarily driven by the

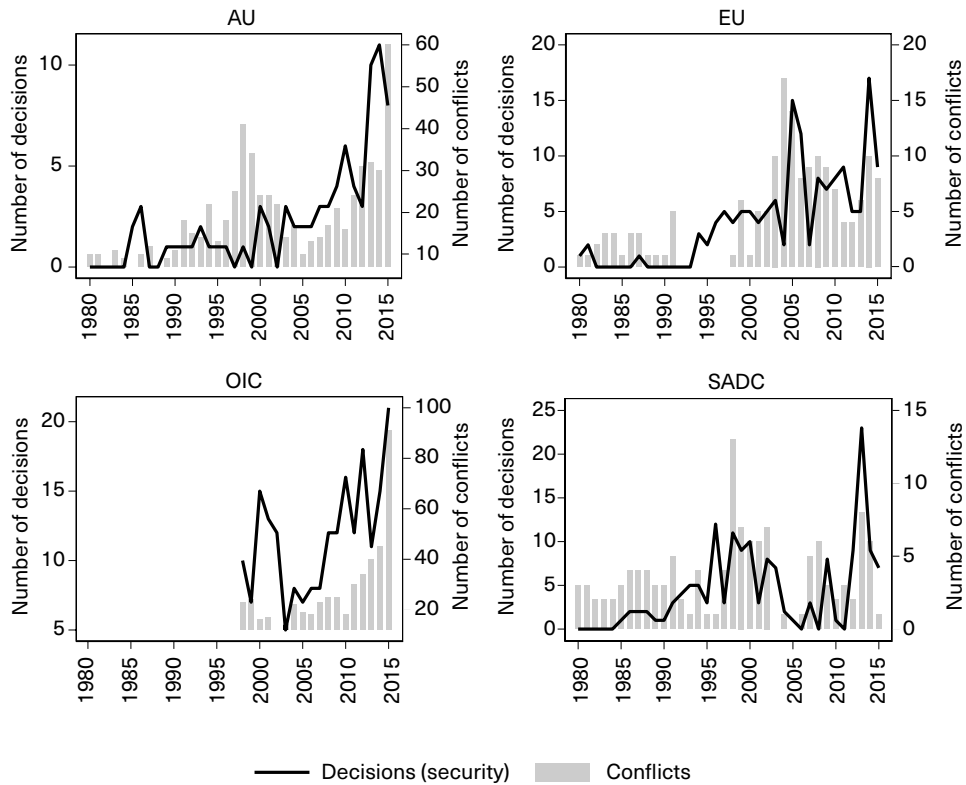
severity of conflicts (Beardsley and Schmidt 2012; Binder and Golub 2020). While constrained by the interests of the P5, overall, the UNSC is governed by its organizational mission, such that its policymaking intensifies when conflicts worsen. Other studies have arrived at similar conclusions when examining policymaking within a broader range of international organizations in the security domain. For instance, a recent study finds that multilateral security institutions mainly respond to the overall severity of problems in their membership, rather than to the specific security problems of their most powerful member states or most important trading partners (Lundgren et al. 2022a). Yet other studies explore the reactions of international organizations to crises, and usually find that multilateral institutions are quite responsive to security crises, food crises, and economic crises, albeit at varying speeds (Hardt 2014; Agné 2016; McDowell 2017).

Figure 3.2 presents new data on the responsiveness of regional international organizations to armed conflicts. It shows how security policy decisions (solid black lines) in four regional institutions—the AU, the EU, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC)—between 1980 and 2015 have closely corresponded with the number of armed conflicts involving their membership (grey bars).

Similarly, Figure 3.3 shows new data on the responsiveness of the UN and three regional international organizations—ASEAN, the AU, and the EU—to energy problems. It indicates that the adoption of new decisions on energy (black lines) in these institutions has corresponded quite closely to moments in time when dramatic changes in the price of oil have exacerbated energy problems (grey bars). While there is a close match in the case of ASEAN and the AU, the link between problem and decision output is somewhat weaker in the case of the EU and, especially, the UN.

So far, we have examined policy development at the level of individual international organizations. However, it is rarely the case that a multilateral institution is the only international actor to develop policy in a specific issue area in a certain region of the world. Recent research has established that there are significant overlaps in the mandates of international organizations. An overlap exists when more than one organization has a similar mandate, sometimes even in the same geographical region. Prominent examples include the European security

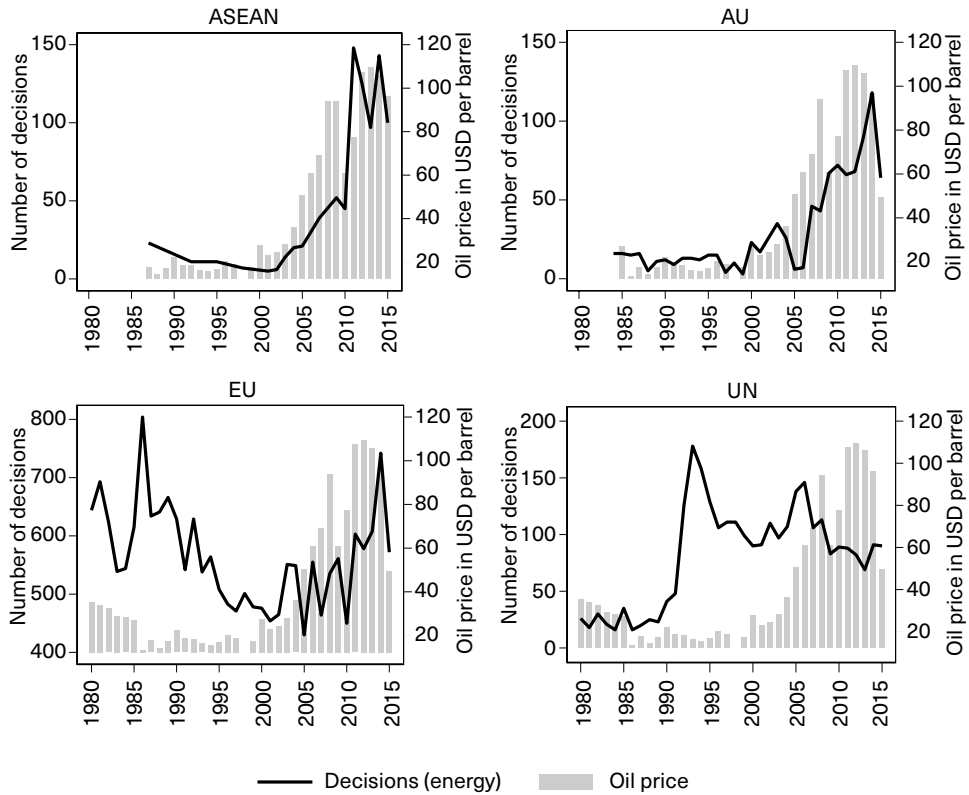
Figure 3.2 Responsiveness of International Organizations on Security Policy, 1980–2015



Sources: Based on data from Lundgren et al. 2022a and Davies et al. 2022.

regime, with the EU, NATO, and the OSCE as key organizations, and the Asian development regime, with the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) as important institutions. These types of overlaps between international organizations have been on the rise since the late 1990s (Haftel and Lenz 2022). While overlapping mandates can prevent

Figure 3.3 Responsiveness of International Organizations on Energy Policy, 1980–2015



Sources: Based on data from Lundgren et al. 2022a and the average annual OPEC crude oil price from 1960 to 2022 (US\$ per barrel; www.statista.com).

gaps in governance and have the potential to spark positive competition between organizations, there are also downsides. When multiple organizations address the same issue, this increases the likelihood of conflicting policies, interorganizational disputes, and resource inefficiencies that may negatively impact effective problem solving. Extensive overlaps can also blur the lines of responsibility and accountability.

Of course, the *quantity* of outputs does not necessarily say anything about the *quality* of decisions. Indeed, a high number of poor policies from international organizations could actually make situations worse rather than better, international organizations might produce many decisions on less important issues and fail to act on more significant matters, or international organizations might take many decisions, but very slowly. A small number of timely and significant policies might serve problem solving better than a large number of tardy and aspirational resolutions. Hence, the scale of output only tells part of the story.

Unfortunately, systematic large-scale and comparative analyses of the quality of the outputs of international organizations are not available. True, certain research has examined the quality of policy development processes (e.g., their timeliness, efficiency, professionalism, etc.) in one or other multilateral institution examined in isolation, such as the IMF or the UN (e.g., Copelovitch 2010; Binder and Golub 2020). However, these studies use diverse criteria and indicators to determine the quality of decisions, and they come to divergent conclusions, ranging from highly positive to highly negative. Hence, we cannot confidently draw overarching conclusions from existing research about the quality of the policies of international organizations: it depends on the particular context.

Returning to issues of quantity, a number of circumstances can affect the scale of policy development by international organizations. For example, multilateral institutions with a broader mandate are more likely to generate decisions than those with a narrow remit. Moreover, international organizations with larger budgets and staff can generally produce more outputs than multilateral bodies with more limited resources. In terms of organizational procedure, multilateral institutions that govern by majority vote (such as the EU Council) can more readily take decisions than international organizations that operate with a veto (such as the UNSC). As for organizational culture, multilateral institutions with a more informal decision-making culture often respond more quickly to crises (Hardt 2014). Regarding membership, international organizations whose state members have more similar policy preferences are more likely to produce outputs than bodies whose state members have more divergent perspectives (Lundgren et al. 2018).

In sum, the available data indicate that many international organizations are quite productive in terms of the numbers of policy outputs

they generate. In general, multilateral institutions appear quite capable of making policies, and the evidence indicates that there has been no overall upward or downward shift in recent decades in the ability of international organizations to issue decisions. Research also shows that these policies by multilateral institutions are broadly responsive to the severity of the problems these organizations have been asked to address, meaning they perform largely in line with their missions. All things considered, then, as regards policy development, the record of international organizations is better than skeptics would have us believe, with no systemic gridlock in global governance. Nevertheless, there is considerable scope for improvement, so that policies of international organizations would still better meet the urgency of various global challenges.

Rule Compliance

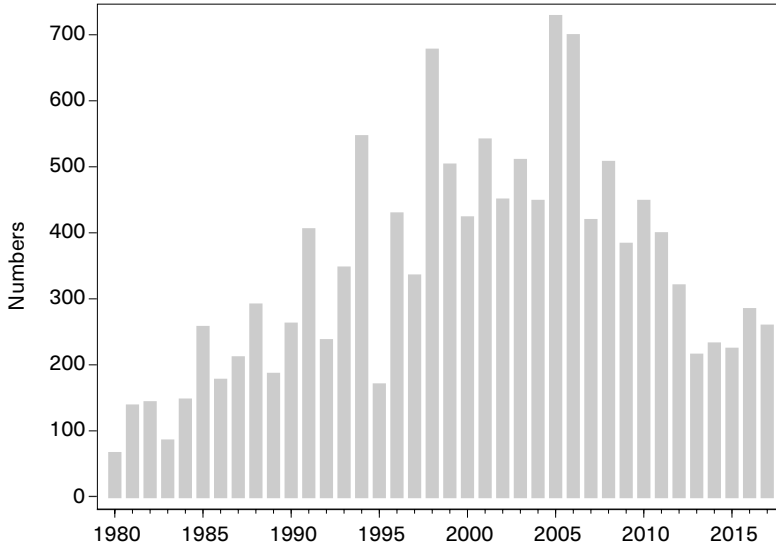
Whether levels of policy output are low or high, it is also vital for the effectiveness of international organizations that their decisions are implemented by state and nonstate actors. Thus, the second step in the effectiveness chain is to move beyond policy development to rule compliance: that is, to go from outputs to *outcomes*. If state and nonstate actors follow the rules emanating from international organizations, then—assuming that these rules are suitable—it is generally easier for these institutions to reach their goals and help solve problems. Conversely, noncompliance makes it considerably more difficult for international organizations to be effective. This section therefore examines levels of compliance with the decisions of international organizations and identifies a number of conditions that facilitate or obstruct policy implementation.

The issue of compliance with the rules of international organizations attracts both optimists and pessimists. Illustrating compliance optimism, the renowned theorist of international law, Louis Henkin, declared that “almost all nations observe almost all principles of international law and almost all of their obligations almost all of the time” (Henkin 1979: 47). In contrast, compliance skepticism argues that dependent and toothless multilateral institutions invariably struggle to obtain obedience from states (e.g., Downs et al. 1996; Carnegie and Carson 2019). Yet what does the actual evidence show on this matter?

In the following, we explore patterns of compliance in four key international organizations: the EU, the IMF, the WTO, and the ILO. Each of these four organizations is the main governing institution in one key issue area (European integration, financial stability, international trade, and labor rights). Also, all of them offer high-quality data on compliance and noncompliance with IO policies. While a focus on four specific organizations means that we cannot claim to represent general patterns in international cooperation, this selection of institutions still offers insight into compliance dynamics in important and diverse parts of global policymaking.

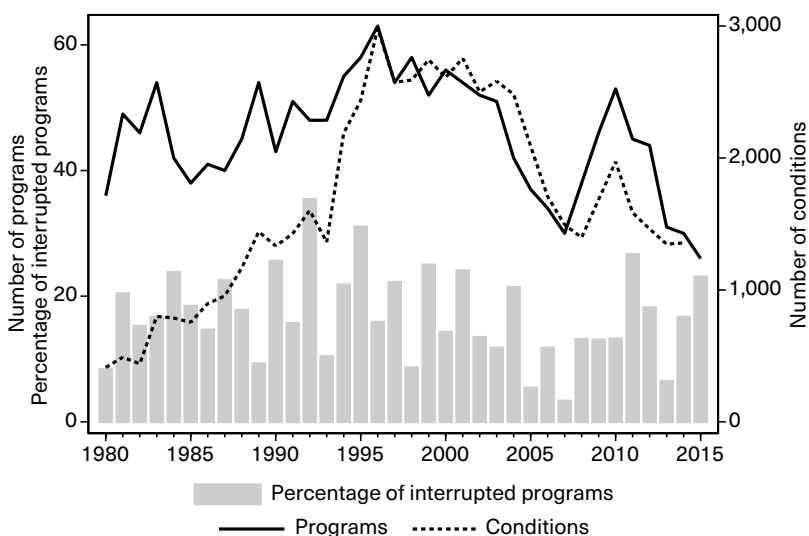
Extensive research has examined compliance with EU rules. As noted in the previous section, the EU is the international organization with the largest legally binding output. For several decades the EU's record on compliance looked rather mixed: it was stronger in some policy fields and with some states and weaker in other issue areas and with other member states (Tallberg 2002). However, recent evidence from the Berlin Infringement Database, covering all infringement cases in the EU from 1978 to 2019, suggests growing member state compliance with EU regulations over time (Börzel 2021). In particular, Figure 3.4 shows a substantial decline since 2005 in the annual number of noncompliance proceedings ("reasoned opinions") undertaken by the European Commission, particularly given the growing body of regulations and the rising number of member states. This evidence goes against assumptions that noncompliance would increase in the EU with greater depth of integration and expanding membership. That said, the record on compliance varies between EU member states, with some member states such as Italy and Greece being subject to far more infringement proceedings per year than Denmark and Lithuania.

Next to the EU, several studies have examined compliance in respect of IMF policies, in particular, the degree to which member states honor the conditions that the Fund attaches to its loans. When the IMF judges that its conditionality is not being met, it can suspend a lending program, either temporarily or permanently. Data show that the IMF concluded 763 loan agreements with member states between 1980 and 2015, of which 512 (67 percent) faced compliance issues that were deemed sufficiently significant to suspend the program (Reinsberg et al. 2021). Of this number, 291 programs did not subsequently resume, such that 38 percent of IMF programs over these 35 years came to be

Figure 3.4 Noncompliance with EU Law, Number of Reasoned Opinions, 1980–2017

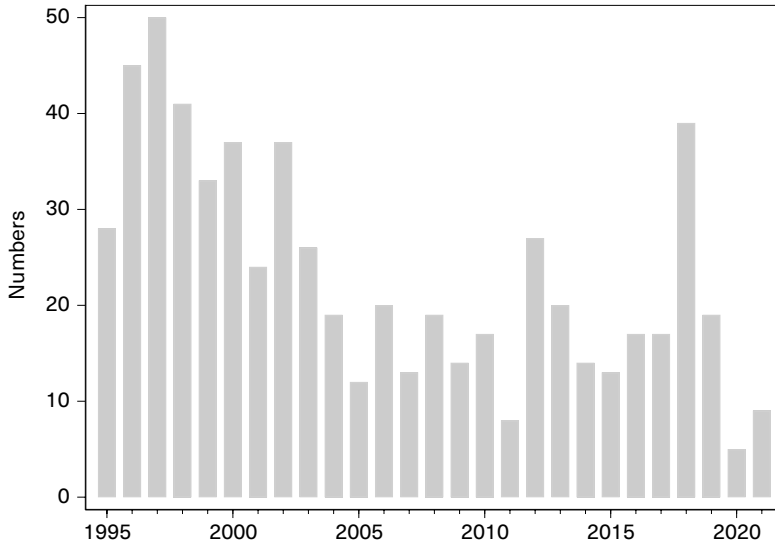
Source: Based on data from the Berlin Infringement Database (Börzel 2021).

fully abandoned. Figure 3.5 plots when these permanent suspensions occurred, showing that, on average, around one in five IMF programs were permanently dropped per year from 1980 to 2015. This average rose somewhat from 1990 to 1995, a time of stringent conditionality on “highly indebted poor countries” (HIPC). Permanent suspensions declined somewhat in the 2000s, when the IMF was generally less active with bailouts. Interestingly, trends in the proportion of non-compliance (bars in Figure 3.5) do not particularly follow the trends in the numbers of conditions attached to IMF programs (broken line in Figure 3.5). We might have expected that increased conditions would bring increased noncompliance, but such a relationship did not transpire. Most noncompliance with IMF conditionality has occurred in low-income countries, such as Côte d’Ivoire, Kenya, and Pakistan.

Figure 3.5 Noncompliance in the IMF, Interrupted Programs, 1980–2015

Source: Based on data from Reinsberg et al. 2021.

Further evidence on compliance relates to the WTO, established in 1995 with a formal mechanism to decide on trade disputes. The number of cases referred to this dispute settlement process indicates the levels of alleged noncompliance with WTO rules. As seen in Figure 3.6, the WTO adjudicated on a total of 632 disputes during its first two and a half decades of operation (Leitner and Lester 2017). The number of cases tends to be higher in the early years of the WTO, when states brought accumulated grievances to the new mechanism. With a few exceptions (2012 and 2018), the average number of rulings decreased during the second decade, a period when the WTO's overall level of activity also declined with the deadlock around the Doha Development Round of trade negotiations. During the first year of the pandemic in 2020, a historical low was reached with only five complaints. Out of all dispute settlement judgements, around one-quarter found some form

Figure 3.6 WTO Dispute Settlement, Number of Complaints, 1995–2021

Source: WTO 2023.

of violation (Reich 2017). Considering the large WTO membership (currently 164 states) and the plethora of WTO rules (some 60 agreements and decisions totaling 550 pages), an average of seven violation findings per year suggests high levels of compliance. Moreover, most of the 141 “guilty verdicts” led to agreements, with only 38 requests for suspension filed. Most of the refusals to implement WTO dispute settlement rulings have lain with the US (Reich 2017).

Finally, we look at the evidence on compliance with ILO rules concerning the rights of workers. Research on reports issued by the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) found that between 1989 and 2011 around one-half of the 187 ILO member states attracted so-called observations, namely, questions regarding their (non-)application of an ILO convention. Such issues around noncompliance grew between 1989

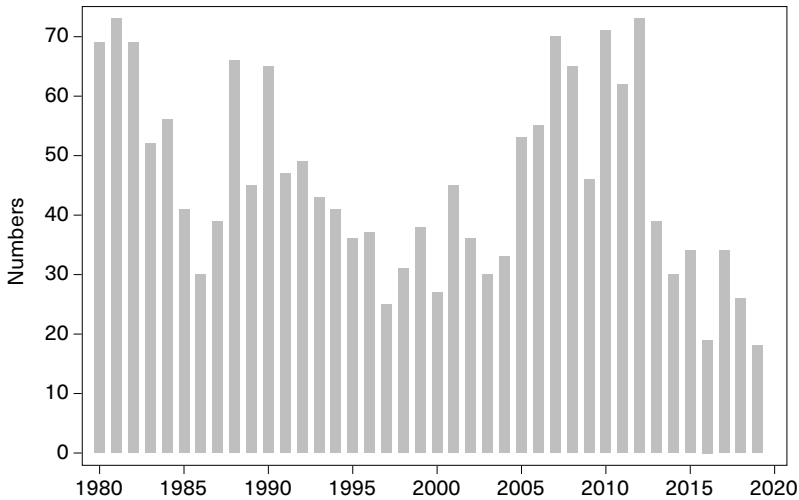
and 1996 and 1997 and 2004 and then remained at a similar level from 2005 to 2011 (Koliev et al. 2021).

When the CEACR finds that member states acted on its concerns about noncompliance, it issues so-called satisfaction notes. Figure 3.7 shows quite high levels of such satisfaction notes, especially in the 1980s and from 2005 to 2012. However, since these notes are only issued if member states have initially failed to comply with ILO conventions, it is not a given that a higher number of satisfaction notes necessarily indicates better compliance. A general conclusion from studies of compliance with ILO conventions is that rule observance appears to be better than what many observers expect, in view of the ILO's limited capacity to sanction violators (Koliev et al. 2021).

Taking the four cases of the EU, the IMF, the WTO, and the ILO together, the record on compliance with the decisions of international organizations looks somewhat mixed. On the one hand, noncompliance with the rules and norms of multilateral institutions appears to be more prevalent than optimists suggest. For instance, compliance with IMF conditionality is rather shaky on the whole, and many states have attracted questions about their (non-)fulfillment of ILO conventions. On the other hand, compliance with the decisions of international organizations seems far better than skeptics argue. For instance, procedures against infringements of EU rules have fallen to low levels, and the WTO dispute settlement mechanism finds relatively few violations of international trade law. Three of the four cases (with the exception of the ILO) show reduced problems with noncompliance in recent years. To this extent, the situation around compliance with the rules of international organizations does not look as somber as skeptics might have us believe.

Yet four caveats remain. First, the above evidence on compliance with the rules of international organizations covers only a handful of cases, which may not necessarily reflect the overall population of multilateral institutions. There is a lack of broader studies that systematically compare levels of compliance across international organizations and across issue areas. Second, we often depend on states and other actors to self-report their compliance with the measures of international organizations, which can lead to the underestimation of transgressions. Skeptics argue that we only see the tip of the iceberg of noncompliance. Third, we observe substantial differences in compliance rates

Figure 3.7 Compliance with ILO Conventions, Number of CEACR Satisfaction Notes, 1980–2019



Source: Based on data from ILO 2019.

across states. As seen above, some members implement EU rules more than others, and the US is particularly recalcitrant toward the WTO. Fourth, levels of compliance may be higher when obligations are less demanding, so that compliance needs to be related to its difficulty. One reason why compliance appears to be reasonably good could be that states mainly enter into agreements that require minimal adjustments.

This last point identifies one of various factors that could affect rates of compliance with the policies of international organizations, namely, the stringency of the rules. After all, it is easier to implement less demanding requirements. With respect to our four cases, this is a less prominent concern, since the rules of these organizations are usually seen as requiring deep adjustments. In addition, levels of compliance can vary depending on the extent to which a multilateral institution has resources and mechanisms to monitor compliance, as well as sanc-

tioning power to enforce it. Among our cases, for example, the EU and the IMF have elaborate review processes and can impose financial penalties, and the WTO can allow offended states to suspend trade concessions. In contrast, the ILO can do little more than name and shame.

Problem Solving

Thus far we have considered the effectiveness of international organizations in terms of their capacities to take decisions and the degree to which their rules are implemented. Yet achieving fuller impact also requires multilateral institutions to advance problem solving. High levels of output and compliance can certainly help an international organization achieve its goals and improve a situation. However, formulating and implementing policies is not necessarily enough in itself to make a difference in global politics. Even the most vigorous activity by international organizations may not translate into problem-solving impact unless their ambitions are sufficiently high and their policies sufficiently well targeted. Indeed, the full implementation of inconsequential decisions might not achieve any change at all, and misguided decisions could even make a problem worse.

What does the available evidence show regarding problem solving by international organizations? Most research on this subject examines particular institutions, particular issue areas or particular scenarios in isolation, without a more encompassing analysis. The lack of a wider comparative analysis is understandable to the extent that the problems that need solving are so different. Progress in peacebuilding can hardly be measured on a common scale with progress in poverty eradication or ecological repair. Moreover, establishing the contribution of an individual international organization to problem solving is tricky, because there is a long causal chain between the policies of a multilateral institution and indicators such as battle deaths, CO₂ emissions, and life expectancy, and because such outcomes could also be affected by the activities of other governance institutions at local, national, regional, and global levels.

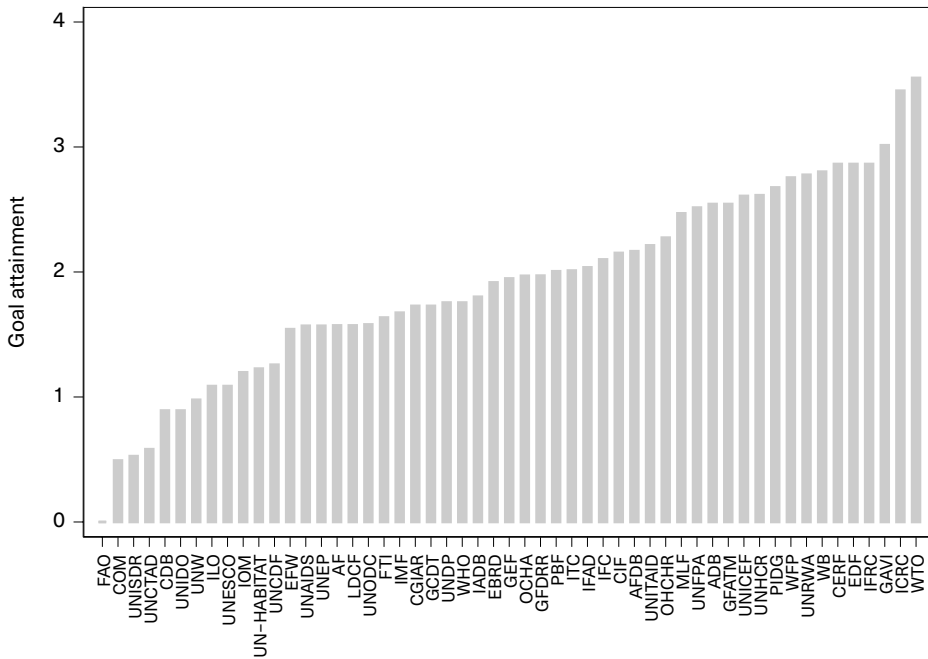
These limitations noted, since 2003, the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN)—a network of like-minded donor governments—has issued 71 evaluations of organiza-

tional management and results covering 35 global governance institutions. MOPAN largely relies on staff and stakeholder perceptions of goal attainment rather than objective measures. Yet the scope of the data is comprehensive. For example, data on 50 indicators for a single report on UNCTAD in 2019 were sourced from 66 interviews at headquarter and country level and from the analysis of hundreds of documents and 65 country surveys.

The MOPAN reports reach varying conclusions about the performance of different international organizations. Although it is part of MOPAN's mission statement to abstain from rankings and not to compare results across organizations, it is possible to deduce some general observations. As could perhaps be expected because of its focus on key stakeholder perceptions, the general assessment is rather positive, particularly regarding the strategic and operational management of multilateral institutions, in which MOPAN rarely notes unsatisfactory performance. An example of an international organization with an excellent rating in these fields is the ADB. The results are less positive for indicators that are meant to capture the achievement of sustainable development. In these cases, the reports regularly identify areas of unsatisfactory or even highly unsatisfactory results. Examples include the Global Environment Facility (GEF) (2017), UN Women (2017), and UNICEF (2020). In contrast, the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol received excellent ratings on results-related performance (2019).

On the academic side, one study (Lall 2017) provides a broad comparison of goal attainment in global governance, covering 46 international organizations and seven other international actors. This study builds on a variety of performance assessments of these institutions undertaken by official agencies in Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK. As with MOPAN, these data mainly rely on stakeholder perceptions in high-income countries. In addition, the analysis only examines the situation in the mid-2010s and not trends over time. Still, within these limitations, the study permits a comparison of goal attainment across multiple international organizations and diverse issue areas, as depicted in Figure 3.8. We see that in relation to the evidence used, the WTO, the World Bank, the WFP, and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) score highest among the international organizations considered, while UNCTAD,

Figure 3.8 Stakeholder Assessments of Goal Attainment by International Organizations



Source: Based on data from Lall 2017.

the Commonwealth Secretariat (COM), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), and the FAO score lowest for goal attainment. Interestingly, several instances of nonstate global governance rank well in this study, including the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance.

As with policy development and rule compliance, many factors can affect problem solving by international organizations. In terms of institutional circumstances, for example, an international organization is generally better at achieving its objectives if it has a secure mandate, a

conducive organizational structure, robust policy procedures, and ample resources. Existing scholarship particularly emphasizes the positive role of enforcement mechanisms that allow international organizations to monitor and sanction non-complying member states (Hoffman et al. 2022). However, knowledge generation, socialization, involvement of nonstate actors, and perceptions of fair and legitimate legal requirements are also known to contribute to better problem solving by multilateral institutions (Young 2011; Neumeyer 2005; Hoffman et al. 2022). In contrast, rules being legally binding and cooperation being supported by a hegemonic state do not necessarily contribute to the positive impact of international organizations (Young 2011).

Conditions in the external environment also matter, of course. For example, the domestic regime type in member states is decisive for the problem-solving capacity in the field of human rights (Neumeyer 2005; Simmons 2009), whereas long-term problems that are embedded in complex systems with time lags between measures and effects are “malign” and more difficult to solve (Underdal 2010). Even the most optimally operating international organization can struggle to attain its goals if the surrounding context is inauspicious.

Also, the ambitiousness of the goals matters. After all, it is easier for an international organization to accomplish modest objectives. Indeed, an international organization that succeeds in achieving limited aims may contribute less to problem solving than one that only partially realizes more demanding goals. To this extent it is important to distinguish between an international organization’s goal attainment and its contribution to global problem solving.

As previously stressed, it is difficult to establish the precise impact of international organizations on global problems, given that so many interconnected factors are at play. Nevertheless, various studies of particular scenarios give good grounds for concluding that international organizations can and do make a difference—and potentially a very positive difference. The following paragraphs review research on the consequences of international organizations in the fields of peace, trade, environment, basic human needs, and human rights.

Many studies have examined the impact of international organizations on war and peace. To be sure, much public attention is drawn to the failures of the UN and other multilateral institutions to act in various armed conflicts. Consider the recent war scenarios in Afghanistan,

Syria, Ukraine, and Yemen. On other occasions, interventions by international organizations have manifestly failed to end military strife, for example, in Bosnia, Mali, Somalia, and South Sudan. Yet, considering armed conflicts in general, academic studies offer quite positive assessments of the efforts of international organizations toward achieving peace. UN interventions in particular have been successful in this respect. A recent overview of research on this subject finds considerable consensus among scholars that “[UN] peacekeeping has a large, positive and statistically significant effect on reducing violence of all sorts ... [and] is remarkably effective at bringing peace” (Walter et al. 2021: 1705). This is arguably all the more impressive since the UN Security Council often sends peacekeeping forces to highly challenging areas.

With regard to the impact of international organizations on trade and finance, a recent meta-study on the effect of treaties found international agreements in this policy domain to be consistently effective (Hoffman et al. 2022). Consistent with this finding, research finds that multilateral agreements to liberalize cross-border trade and investment indeed increase those flows (Baccini 2019). Studies have also found that free trade agreements (FTAs) can double bilateral trade within ten years (Baier and Bergstrand 2007). Yet the removal of certain trade restrictions (such as tariffs) can stimulate the introduction of other barriers (such as product quality regulations). Moreover, some trade agreements (e.g., in the context of European integration) have had more impact than failed cases such as the Central American Common Market (CACM) (Baier and Bergstrand 2007). One study found that NAFTA not only increased trade, but also had positive effects on GDP in Mexico and the US (Caliendo and Parro 2015). More broadly, experts from trade bodies and economic thinktanks in Europe and Latin America give variable evaluations of the impact of seventeen different FTAs (Gray and Slapin 2012). By far the most positive assessment relates to the EU, another five FTAs attract modestly positive evaluations, and the other eleven receive negative appraisals. The large variation in impact between arrangements is also a theme in research on the vitality of regional economic organizations. While many regional economic institutions have beneficial effects on trade volumes, others do not and are therefore best described as “zombies” that continue to operate but contribute little to problem solving (Gray 2018). Examples include the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the Latin American

Integration Association (LAIA), and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

Considerable research has also studied the impact of international cooperation on solving environmental problems (e.g., Miles et al. 2001; Breitmeier et al. 2011; Young 2011). Impact assessments in this issue area are particularly difficult, given the long time it takes for policy to generate behavioral change which, in turn, yields environmental change. Still, research has examined the impact of a number of international environmental agreements. The ozone regime is frequently cited as a success. The Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer (1985) and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (1987) brought fast and substantial reduction in the production and consumption of pollutants, which has enabled a gradual recovery of the ozone layer. Other success can be attributed to the London Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (1972), which reduced the amount of dumping of radioactive waste in oceans. In addition, several regional and global initiatives to limit lead in fuels (e.g., the Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles under the UNEP) have succeeded, inasmuch as leaded petrol no longer exists. In contrast, the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (1982) and the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (1995) have not realized their goals. Meanwhile, the IWC and CITES have attracted mixed assessments of their impact (Sand 2001). In general, researchers agree that few international institutions have fully and permanently resolved environmental problems.

Turning to another policy field, numerous instances demonstrate the positive impact of international organizations in the provision of basic human needs. For example, the WFP has delivered life-saving food aid to almost 100 million people in more than seventy countries every year for the past decade and, between 2011 and 2016, the World Bank provided half a billion people with access to health services and 64 million people with access to improved water sources (Lall 2017). That said, critics have argued that the conscientious application of a succession of IMF policy reform programs has in some instances deepened rather than alleviated poverty (Przeworski and Vreeland 2000). In the related area of human rights, research indicates that treaties and

conventions rarely have unconditionally positive effects (Hoffman et al. 2022). Such international policies are most likely to have a positive impact in democratic countries (as opposed to autocratic) and when accompanied by civil-society pressure from below (Neumeyer 2005; Simmons 2009; de Búrca 2021).

Very little research has assessed the problem solving of multilateral institutions *across* policy domains. However, one recent meta-analysis attempts to evaluate the impact of international treaties based on 224 existing studies (Hoffman et al. 2022). Examining 300 international treaties, conventions, and protocols, it concludes that clear and intended effects cannot be established, with the exception of the domain of trade and finance. For all other policy domains, the evidence is mixed. Successful examples include CITES and the Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, while failed cases include the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, where some countries even scored lower on human rights after they had joined the convention.

In all, we find many instances in which international organizations have had notable problem-solving impact. True, it is generally difficult to disentangle the many factors that are involved in a given policy scenario in order to establish precisely the type and amount of effects that flow from international organizations, and many multilateral institutions fail to reach their goals. However, that impact has occurred seems irrefutable. In particular, counterfactual thinking, reflecting on how a situation might have been without the involvement of international organizations, strongly suggests that these institutions have made a difference. In other words, armed conflicts would usually have been worse without UN peacekeeping, ecological damage would have generally been worse without international environmental agreements, and so on.

Conclusion

The overall message of this chapter's assessment of the policy effectiveness of international organizations is that it is not as bad as many people think. On the contrary, multilateral institutions often have a fairly impressive record of policy development, rule compliance, and problem solving. There is also no convincing evidence to suggest that the

effectiveness of multilateral institutions has deteriorated drastically between 2010 and 2020, as some studies claim (e.g., International Peace Institute 2022). Against the widespread narrative of gridlock in global governance, the available evidence shows that many international organizations produce many decisions—and generally do so in a manner that responds to the situation at hand. Against the common narrative that states pervasively obstruct global cooperation, the available evidence indicates substantial levels of compliance with the measures of multilateral institutions. Against the prevalent narrative of impotent multilateralism, the available evidence suggests that international organizations have had considerable impact in various policy fields. In short, international organizations are often quite effective, particularly considering their limited capabilities, as described in Chapter 2.

Still, this positive overall conclusion comes with four important qualifications: First, as noted recurrently in this chapter, levels of effectiveness vary between international organizations. While the performance of international organizations as a whole may be better than skeptics presume, some cases do show striking shortfalls. For example, we have noted that some international organizations, such as the IWC, undertake little or no policy development. Widespread noncompliance prevails in IMF programs. The UNFCCC is far from solving the problem of climate change. So the effectiveness of international organizations is far from uniform.

Second, although our conclusions about the policy effectiveness of international organizations may be more positive than much of the prevailing skepticism about multilateralism, there is no room for complacency. The major global challenges that international organizations are meant to address demand far more outputs, outcomes, and impacts from these institutions than they have produced to date. To realize this greater effectiveness requires, on the one hand, international organizations to achieve more using their currently available resources, and, on the other hand, that they obtain more legal, institutional, material, and ideational power. There is only so much that multilateral institutions can achieve with their current capabilities.

Third, the levels of effectiveness of international organizations are in no small measure dependent on the member states of those institutions. It is all too often the case that it is the member states that obstruct decision-making in international organizations which fail to

comply with the rules of international organizations, and that hinder the problem-solving efforts of international organizations. It is also the member states of international organizations that set the framework conditions for effectiveness, by equipping multilateral institutions with legal, institutional, material, and normative capacities, as discussed in Chapter 2. To this extent, the improved future performance of international organizations will largely depend on constructive attitudes and behaviors on the part of member states.

Finally, as underlined at the outset of this chapter, effectiveness is not an end in itself. We must remember that not everyone accepts the existing goals of international organizations and the prevailing definitions of global problems and their solutions. For example, even if the UN system became fully effective in halting global armed conflicts, some parties would still contest the liberal international order that broadly underpins the UN's work. Similarly, even if international economic institutions became fully effective in maximizing economic growth, many ecological critics would say that meeting this objective creates deeper problems than it solves. Thus, we must always continue to ask: for whom are international organizations effective, and for what purpose?

4. Legitimacy

Alongside power and effectiveness, a third key condition for international organizations to contribute to global problem solving is legitimacy. Not only do multilateral institutions need to have sufficient mandates and resources, and to apply those capabilities effectively in policy development, rule compliance, and goal attainment; international organizations must also have legitimacy, in order to be regarded as having a right to rule and exercising that right appropriately. When people consider an international organization legitimate, they have an underlying belief, confidence, faith, and trust in that institution.

Legitimacy is thus a sort of overarching resource for international organizations. Such foundational approval gives multilateral institutions a strong moral standing, both individually and collectively. Legitimacy can also have beneficial consequences for power and effectiveness. If people believe that international organizations have a right to rule and that they govern properly, then stakeholders are more likely to support expanded authority and increased resources for these institutions. Likewise, when actors perceive an international organization to be legitimate, they are more likely to participate in its policy development and to comply with its policies, thereby helping the institution to address global problems. In turn, greater power and effectiveness can enhance the legitimacy of international organizations, bringing this positive feedback loop full circle.

The benefits of legitimacy for international organizations are widely evident. For example, extensive approval of the UN has helped this multilateral institution to pursue peacekeeping operations and to construct an extensive global human rights regime. Similarly, the overall

solid levels of legitimacy for the WHO have given this international body considerable authority in spite of its limited resources and lack of coercive capacity. Generally strong legitimacy perceptions from policymakers toward the OECD have helped this institution to make influential recommendations across many policy fields. Conversely, deficits in legitimacy carry substantial risks of weak global governance to meet today's global challenges. Weak legitimacy for international organizations can restrict their scope, limit their resources, reduce participation in their activities, lower compliance with their rules, and at an extreme even block multilateral cooperation altogether.

In short, levels of legitimacy can have far-reaching consequences for global governance, positive as well as negative, and therefore merit careful attention. Note that our discussion here concerns *sociological* legitimacy rather than *normative* legitimacy. In other words, this chapter empirically examines the degree to which citizens and elites who are subject to and affected by international organizations perceive these institutions as having a right to govern and to govern properly. Thus, this chapter does not assess philosophically whether international organizations meet certain theoretical standards of good governance and therefore deserve to be regarded as morally legitimate. Of course, normative judgements about global justice have a vital place in political analysis and policy action, but such issues lie beyond the scope of this chapter.

Prevailing narratives often declare that today's international organizations are suffering from a crisis of legitimacy (Ikenberry 2010; Held and Young 2013; Broome et al. 2015; Hooghe et al. 2019a). This widely held impression maintains that elites (i.e., people who hold leading positions in key organizations in society that strive to be politically influential) as well as the general public have lost faith in multilateralism. As evidence of this presumed legitimacy crisis, commentators point to Brexit and broader skepticism toward the EU, the failure of the WTO's Doha Round, critiques of the ICC, fundamental attacks on multilateralism by anti-globalist politicians, and the widespread rise of nationalist populism (Rodrik 2018; Norris and Inglehart 2019). Seen collectively, these developments can indeed paint a gloomy picture of international organizations. Yet what is the actual situation in terms of legitimacy?

This chapter reviews the available evidence on the legitimacy of in-

ternational organizations under three headings. We begin by exploring whether multilateral institutions suffer from a legitimacy crisis. To this end, we examine historical patterns and contemporary evidence for several key international organizations. We then provide a comparative assessment of legitimacy in global governance across three dimensions—organizations, countries, and social groups. We end by discussing the various factors that shape legitimacy beliefs among elites and citizens toward international organizations which, in turn, suggests the conditions that should be targeted in strategies to raise approval of multilateral cooperation.

To evaluate the legitimacy of international organizations, we draw on a variety of sources. Many of these data stem from the recently concluded Legitimacy in Global Governance (LegGov) research program at the universities of Stockholm, Lund, and Gothenburg (Bexell et al. 2022; Dellmuth et al. 2022a; Sommerer et al. 2022a). Other data come from international multi-country surveys, such as the Eurobarometer and the World Values Survey (WVS).

Our main conclusions are three-fold. First, notions of an overall legitimacy crisis for international organizations are substantially exaggerated. The situation is not as dire as the pessimists would suggest. On the contrary, levels of legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations are often quite robust. Second, a fine-grained look at the available evidence shows considerable variation in levels of legitimacy beliefs between different international organizations, different countries, and different social groups. In particular, we find a consistent and significant gap between, on the one hand, relatively higher legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations among elites and, on the other hand, relatively lower levels among the general public. Third, legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations are shaped by a complementary set of factors, including the institutional features of these organizations, people's individual characteristics, and the larger societal structures within which the institutions and individuals are embedded. In addition, political communication about multilateral institutions has been shown to affect how citizens perceive the legitimacy of these bodies.

A Legitimacy Crisis for Multilateral Cooperation?

Are international organizations currently suffering from declining approval ratings and a general legitimacy crisis? Although many voices have been ringing alarm bells about multilateralism being in trouble, available evidence covering some thirty prominent international organizations points to fairly solid levels of public confidence. This section substantiates this relatively optimistic assessment with reference to (a) recent survey results on public legitimacy beliefs toward six key international organizations; (b) trends over time in public legitimacy beliefs toward the UN and the EU; and (c) statistics on public challenges to 32 international organizations since 1985. Taken together, these data do not support a crisis narrative.

Regarding recent survey evidence, the latest edition of the WVS, undertaken from 2017 to 2019, measured public confidence in six prominent global organizations (ICC, IMF, UN, World Bank, WHO, WTO) in 45 countries spread across all main world regions. Samples in each country covered a representative distribution of citizens in terms of age, gender, geography, and level of education. The respondents indicated their level of confidence in the international organizations on a scale of 0 (“none at all”), 1 (“not very much”), 2 (“quite a lot”), and 3 (“a great deal”).

While this sample is limited to six international organizations, the evidence suggests some interesting patterns. The aggregate average level of current public confidence in the six international organizations taken jointly comes out at 1.43, i.e., more or less at the middle of the 0–3 scale (Dellmuth et al. 2022a: 56). Although this level is not high, and indeed suggests moderate skepticism, the score is also far from a level that would suggest a legitimacy crisis. Instead, WVS evidence suggests that international organizations today attract overall medium legitimacy among citizens across the world. Thus, although multilateral institutions may have vociferous critics in some quarters, these anti-globalists do not reflect average worldwide public opinion of international organizations.

Interestingly, these average levels of public confidence in international organizations are broadly similar to the average levels of citizens’ confidence in national government across 44 countries. (The WVS did not ask the question concerning the national government in Egypt.)

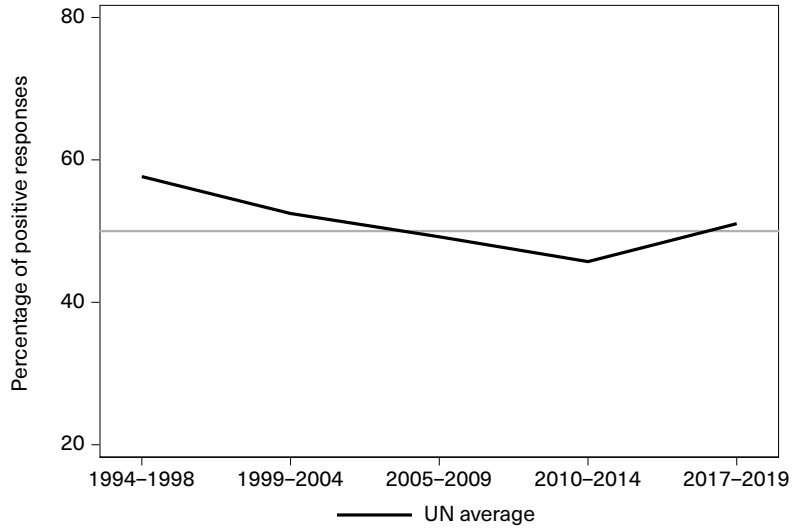
In fact, at 1.35, the aggregate approval rating for national governments is actually somewhat lower than that for international organizations. This finding shows that citizens are not particularly “anti-globalist” in the sense of rejecting international organizations and instead embracing the nation-state. Rather, contemporary publics on average hold medium levels of legitimacy beliefs toward both international and national governance.

What does this middle-range result suggest about the status of international organizations? On the one hand, the average level of legitimacy is not high, as might support a significant increase in mandates, resources, decisions, and compliance for international organizations. On the other hand, the average level of legitimacy is also not low, as might promote a contraction of multilateral cooperation. Rather, an average medium level of public legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations would tend to encourage an overall stable situation, where the power and effectiveness of these institutions remain little changed, neither rising nor declining significantly. Thus, international organizations appear to have sufficient legitimacy to continue their existing functions, but current levels of public approval also do not provide a sufficient political foundation to build stronger global institutions with greater capacity to tackle planetary-scale challenges.

The absence of a general legitimacy crisis for international organizations is also evident when we examine over-time data. Existing longitudinal studies of public opinion toward international organizations do not show a consistent major decline in the level of approval (Tallberg 2021; Walter 2021; Dellmuth and Tallberg 2023). The widespread narrative that citizens at large are currently rejecting multilateral institutions appears to overstate the case. While a minority of citizens are vocally critical of international organizations, they should not be mistaken for public opinion as a whole.

To consider over-time trends in more detail, we examine data on public confidence vis-à-vis the UN and the EU. Arguably, these two bodies are the most prominent international organizations at global and regional levels, respectively. Data on the UN come from the WVS and the European Values Survey (EVS), while data on the EU come from Eurobarometer. These three sources offer some of the most rigorous cross-national public opinion data available.

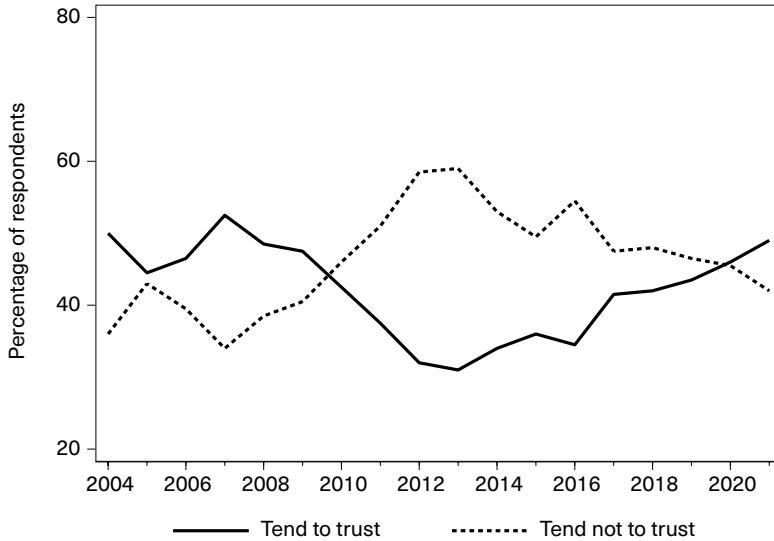
Regarding the UN, we see in Figure 4.1 that the perceived average

Figure 4.1 Citizen Confidence in the UN, 1994–2019

Sources: Based on data from EVS 2021; Haerpfer et al. 2021.

Note: Positive responses refer to the percentage of respondents with “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in the UN.

public legitimacy of this international organization across all countries surveyed worldwide underwent a gradual decline from 1994 to 2014 and then saw a modest upward turn again in the late 2010s. The proportion of citizens who hold “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in the UN dropped from 58 percent in 1994 to 46 percent in 2014, before rising to 51 percent in 2019. While a 10-point decline is not insubstantial, positive ratings among half the population certainly do not suggest a collapse of legitimacy either. Overall, these figures point to fairly steady medium levels of citizen legitimacy for the UN. Moreover, the upturn in public confidence toward the UN in the late 2010s runs counter to the supposed rise of populist anti-globalism at that time.

Figure 4.2 Citizen Trust in the EU, 2004–2021

Source: Eurobarometer 2021.

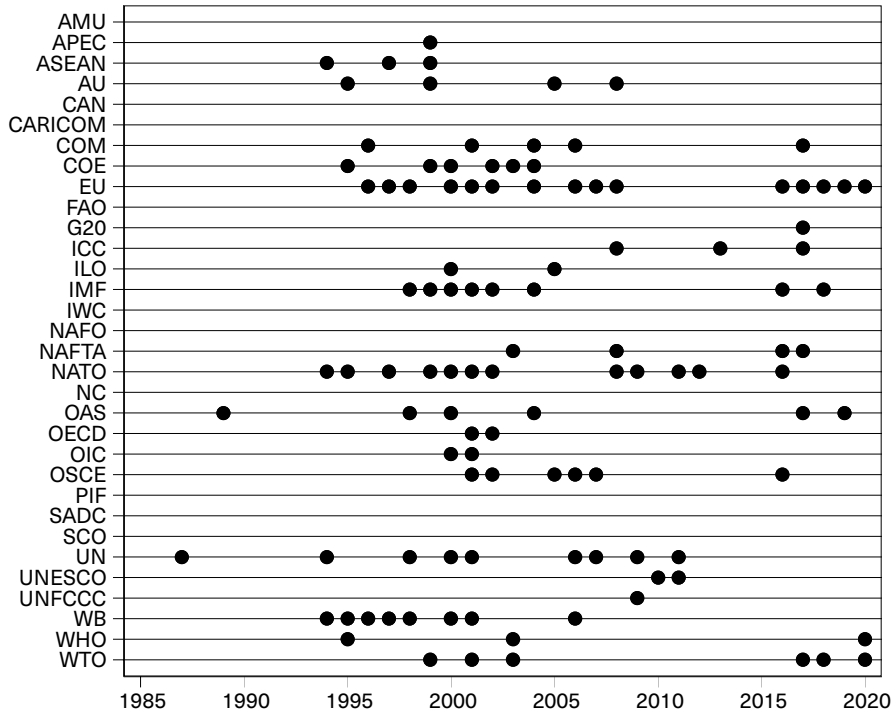
As for the EU, we see in Figure 4.2 that average public trust in this international organization across its member countries has fluctuated considerably from 2004 to 2021. In 2007, a peak of 53 percent of citizens tended to trust the EU. Thereafter, levels move downwards to a floor of 31 percent in 2013, in the midst of the Eurocrisis, before rising again to 49 percent in 2020. Hence, after significant fluctuations, trust in the EU at the end of the observation period is back to where it started. Overall, trust in the EU remains well within the medium range and clearly above crisis level. If we look specifically at the most recent years, Brexit does not appear to have reflected a general legitimacy crisis; if anything, it seems to have solidified trust in the EU among the remaining member states. Moreover, the EU is not unique in a comparative

regional perspective. Research indicates that public confidence in the AU has remained fairly steady over the past two decades, and that average citizen approval of MERCOSUR has in fact risen significantly (Dellmuth and Tallberg 2023: 32–36).

A third way to interrogate the narrative of legitimacy crisis around international organizations is to examine levels of public contestation of these institutions. To measure this factor, we assemble data on levels of mass protest and public critique toward 32 prominent international organizations from 1985 to 2020 (Sommerer et al. 2022a). We measure these indicators of opposition with reference to press coverage of the 32 international organizations by large global news agencies. Peaks in media attention of public contestation of multilateral institutions reflect moments when these organizations are under more severe legitimacy pressure.

Figure 4.3 suggests that we cannot speak of a single comprehensive legitimacy crisis for international organizations at any time over the past 35 years. To be sure, certain moments have witnessed intense contestation of multiple institutions: up to nine in 2000 and seven in 1999 and 2017, respectively. However, the norm has been closer to three to four international organizations facing intensive public opposition in any given year. Indeed, much of the period (especially before 1994 and in most of the 2010s) saw little or no noteworthy public contestation of international organizations. The overall scale of public demonstrations against multilateral bodies rose briefly in 2016–2017, but then fell again to the more usual level of sporadic protest against two to three international organizations per year. So, the Brexit-Trump effect, if it existed at all, was short-lived. On this evidence, the closest thing to a more systemic legitimacy crisis for international organizations occurred in 1999–2000, a moment of intense mobilization of civil society, especially against multilateral economic institutions. Yet even this moment was fleeting and affected only a minority of the 32 institutions.

That said, around two thirds of the international organizations examined in this study have experienced at least one moment of substantial public challenge during the past 35 years. Moreover, the 10 institutions that have escaped significant public protest—such as the NC and the PIF—tend to have more limited power. Thus, more prominent international organizations would seem to come individually under substantial public pressure from time to time. Several institutions,

Figure 4.3 Public Contestation of International Organizations, 1985–2020

Source: Based on data from Sommerer et al. 2022a.

including the EU, the IMF, the UN, and the World Bank, have faced intense public protest in 8 to 15 of the 35 years under study. Yet, even for these more contested international organizations, the years of calm far outnumber the years of resistance. Indeed, over half of the studied institutions have faced no significant public opposition since 2010.

Moreover, public discontent has usually been directed at a particular international organization in a particular context, rather than reflecting general disapproval of multilateral institutions as such. For instance, ASEAN and the IMF faced the greatest contestation in the

late 1990s, while the OSCE experienced larger critique in the early 2000s. The EU has alternated between periods of public calm (1985 to 1995 and 2009 to 2015) and notable opposition (1996 to 2008 and 2016 to 2020). The G20 experienced major street protests in connection with its Hamburg Summit in 2017, while the WHO faced heightened public disquiet in 2020 with its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, but otherwise these two institutions have operated without significant public pressure.

In sum, the empirical evidence largely counters the widely circulating narrative that international organizations are currently facing a legitimacy crisis. The latest public opinion data from the WVS reveal overall medium levels of confidence in international institutions. Over-time studies of public faith in the UN and the EU show largely persistent medium levels of approval. Data on public opposition to international organizations indicate no general legitimacy crisis over the past 35 years and, if anything, reductions in discontent over recent years. To be sure, none of these indicators suggest that public legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations could not be higher – and indeed would need to be substantially higher in order to encourage stronger multilateral cooperation in the face of urgent global challenges.

Uneven Legitimacy

While the narrative of an overall legitimacy crisis for global governance may be misplaced, confidence in international organizations is certainly not evenly distributed. The preceding section has already indicated some variation in levels of public approval, for example, over time and across multilateral institutions. The following section expands on this examination of variation in legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations.

We elaborate on this variability from four angles: First, we look at the variation in legitimacy beliefs between different international organizations. Second, we explore variation by country in legitimacy perceptions toward international organizations. Third, we consider variation between social categories (i.e., different age groups, socioeconomic classes, and genders). Fourth, regarding socioeconomic classes, we pay particular attention to gaps in legitimacy beliefs toward interna-

tional organizations between political and societal elites on the one hand, and the general public on the other. From these institutional, country, and social breakdowns, it becomes clear that the legitimacy of international organizations is more robust in some quarters and more fragile in others.

The evidence for these comparisons comes from two sources, which together provide data on public and elite confidence in international organizations in five countries: Brazil, Germany, the Philippines, Russia, and the US. Data on public opinion come from the most recent survey of the WVS, undertaken from 2017 to 2019, while data on elite opinion come from the LegGov Elite Survey (Verhaegen et al. 2019), conducted during the same period. As both the WVS and the LegGov Elite Survey posed the same questions, it is possible to directly compare citizen and elite views on international organizations (Dellmuth et al. 2022a, 2022b).

The evidence presented in this section relates to international organizations rather than the wider range of global governance institutions. This narrower focus is mainly due to the general lack of awareness among the public at large of transgovernmental networks, transnational hybrid institutions, transnational private initiatives, and translocal cooperation arrangements. After all, it is not possible for people to form legitimacy beliefs about things of which they are not aware. That said, the LegGov program has examined elite assessments of newer forms of global governance and finds that political and societal leaders regard bodies such as ICANN and the G20 with somewhat (though not radically) lower average legitimacy than classic international organizations (Scholte et al. 2021).

VARIATION ACROSS INSTITUTIONS

In order to examine variation in legitimacy beliefs across international organizations, we compare confidence levels for the six multilateral institutions covered by the WVS: the ICC, IMF, UN, World Bank, WHO, and WTO (Dellmuth et al. 2022a). All of them are key governing agencies within their respective policy domains. They are also relatively well known, which is a prerequisite if people are to form legitimacy beliefs toward an institution. At the same time, these six international organizations differ from each other, addressing diverse issue areas and possessing different capabilities. In particular, this selection

makes it possible to consider whether legitimacy beliefs vary between multilateral institutions in economic governance (IMF, World Bank, WTO) and human security governance (ICC, UN, WHO).

Combining data from the five focal countries, Figure 4.4 shows the average citizen levels of legitimacy for the six international organizations and national governments in these countries (dark grey bars). In the top rank, average citizen confidence in the WHO stands well above the aggregate score of 1.43 for all six international organizations combined. Toward the bottom ranks are the average citizen confidence levels for the IMF and the World Bank. Ratings for the UN, the ICC, and the WTO fall in between. Hence, when assessing legitimacy perceptions toward international organizations, it is important to distinguish between different multilateral institutions. Certain international organizations attract quite substantial public approval, while others draw considerably more skepticism.

Different levels of legitimacy also arise between issue areas. The three international organizations that deal with economic matters (IMF, World Bank, WTO) together have an average public confidence of 1.31, while the three international organizations that work in the area of human security (ICC, UN, WHO) have a joint average score of 1.51. Indeed, as seen earlier in Figure 4.3, the three global economic institutions have faced intense critique over the years, particularly in relation to the promotion of “neoliberal” policies. In contrast, human security issues such as prosecuting war crimes, peacebuilding, and promoting health raise less controversy with the general public.

VARIATION ACROSS COUNTRIES

In order to explore variation in legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations across countries, we focus on citizen attitudes in Brazil, Germany, the Philippines, Russia, and the US (Dellmuth et al. 2022a). These five countries have been members of all six focal international organizations, although the Philippines withdrew from the ICC in 2019. The countries also have widely differing regional settings, economic situations, geopolitical circumstances, types of political regime, and historical experiences of multilateralism. It could be expected that these contrasts prompt different public perspectives of international organizations.

This expectation is indeed borne out, as seen in the grey bars in Fig-

ure 4.5. Among the five countries, the Philippines stands out as having (at 1.89) by far the highest average public confidence in the six focal international organizations taken together. At the low end, average citizen confidence in Russia for the same multilateral institutions is a strikingly low 1.05. In between are the average public confidence levels in Germany (1.42), the US (1.30), and Brazil (1.27). Thus, people in some countries tend to regard international organizations more positively than people in other countries. Moreover, the results for these five countries show no obvious and consistent connection between differences in legitimacy scores and differences in geopolitical power, average income, extent of democracy, or level of populism.

Interestingly, although these data are not included in Figure 4.4, the relationship between confidence in multilateral institutions and confidence in national government also varies from one country to another. In Germany, the average confidence in national government is quite close to the country's score for international organizations. Yet in the Philippines, the average confidence in national government is moderately higher than for international organizations. Conversely, in the US, the average for national government is moderately lower than for multilateral institutions. Meanwhile, citizens in Brazil on average have much more confidence in international organizations than in national government, whereas the opposite case prevails in Russia, with a far higher average for national government than for international organizations. Hence, the general equivalence noted earlier between legitimacy for national and international institutions breaks down in regard to individual countries. To be sure, these variations may reflect short-term circumstances in the respective countries: for instance, the considerable domestic political unrest in Brazil and the US at the time of the survey.

VARIATION ACROSS SOCIAL GROUPS

Still further variations in levels of legitimacy for international organizations may surface in respect of social categories (Dellmuth et al. 2022a). With regard to age, for example, younger generations might on average assess international organizations differently than older persons. On gender lines, men and women might on average hold different views about multilateral institutions. As for class, people who identify with “higher” classes might on average have different evalu-

ations of international organizations than people who identify with “lower” classes.

The WVS results, pooled across the five focal countries, confirm some but not all of these social variations (Dellmuth et al. 2022a: 68–75). Regarding age, young people aged 15 to 29 years exhibit somewhat higher average confidence in international organizations than people aged 30 to 49 years and people over 50. Regarding gender, survey data from the five countries show effectively no difference between average legitimacy beliefs toward multilateral institutions among female respondents and male respondents. Regarding class, people who self-identify as “upper class” hold substantially higher average confidence in international organizations than people who self-identify as “working class”. On this WVS data, then, legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations generally vary less by social category (especially age and gender) than by institution and country.

THE ELITE-CITIZEN GAP

That said, the substantial class differential in the WVS results warrants further examination, particularly since many commentators have speculated about a gap in the views of global governance between elites on the one hand and the general public on the other. As previously mentioned, in order to explore this proposition more carefully, it is possible to compare data from the WVS on citizens at large with data from the LegGov Elite Survey (Dellmuth et al. 2022a, 2022b). Our concept of elites covers people who hold leading positions in key organizations in society that strive to be politically influential. The interviewed elites are drawn from six sub-groups: bureaucratic, political party, business, civil society, media, and academic.

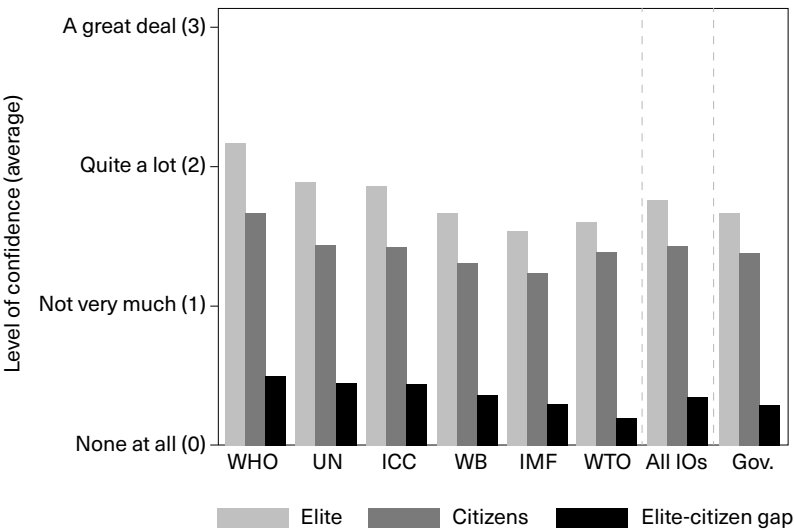
A comparison of the results from these two surveys indeed reveals a notable elite-citizen gap in legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations. Figures 4.4–4.6 show a consistent difference (black bars) between the views of elites (light grey bars) and the views of citizens overall (dark grey bars). Combining views from all five countries regarding all six institutions, the average confidence in international organizations among elites (1.78) is substantially higher than among the public as a whole (1.43). The gap of 0.35 on a 3-point scale is striking. While elites on average hold close to “quite a lot of confidence” in international organizations, the average citizen assessment leans

somewhat more toward “not very much confidence.” A similar gap appears in Figure 4.4 regarding national government, where the average elite confidence score is 1.67 and the average score for citizens is 1.38, yielding a difference of 0.29 on the 3-point scale.

This elite-citizen legitimacy gap is pervasive, also appearing across individual international organizations, individual countries, and individual elite sectors. The gap is observed in relation to all six multilateral institutions (Figure 4.4) and is largest in respect of the UN and smallest in respect of the WTO. Greater elite confidence compared to citizens at large also prevails in four of the five countries (Figure 4.5) and is largest in Brazil and smallest in the US. The intriguing exception to the general pattern is the Philippines, where the general public actually has somewhat higher confidence in international organizations than the elites. In terms of elite sectors (Figure 4.6), the gap with citizen views is largest for government bureaucracy and smallest (though still statistically significant) for civil society elites.

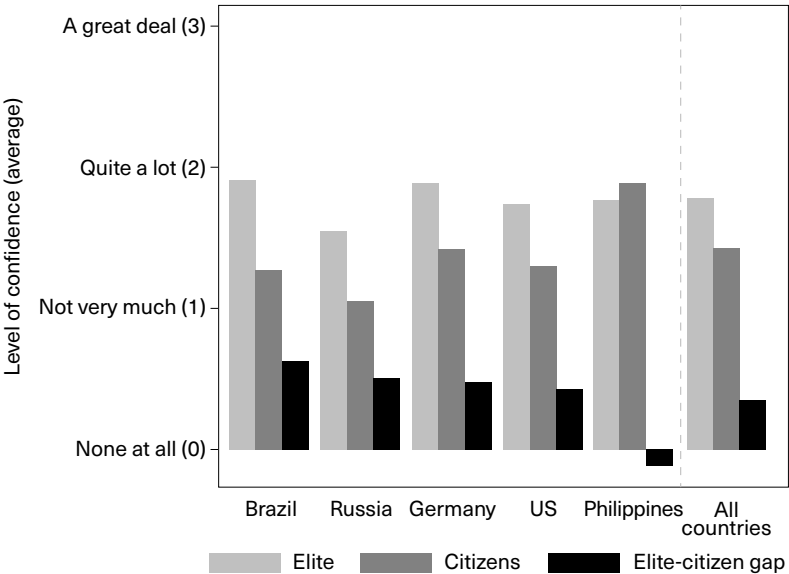
Thus, elites tend to regard international organizations as more legitimate than the general public. The above evidence lends credence to notions that political and societal leaders are “out of touch” with general public opinion about international organizations. The gap can have substantial political consequences. For one thing, elites may struggle to gain citizen support when they pursue multilateral cooperation. Indeed, the gap helps us to understand why populist politicians can find fertile ground for their anti-globalist rhetoric. Moreover, the elite-citizen gap raises questions about political representation, particularly if elites do not adjust their approach to international organizations in the direction of divergent citizen perspectives. Relatedly, the elite-citizen gap may generate democratic deficits in global governance, especially when global policymakers are weakly accountable to the general population. After all, leaders of international organizations are not elected (and removed from office) through a popular vote. This shortfall in democracy can fuel public frustrations with, and eventual resistance to, international organizations.

Figure 4.4 Legitimacy Beliefs toward International Organizations, by Institution

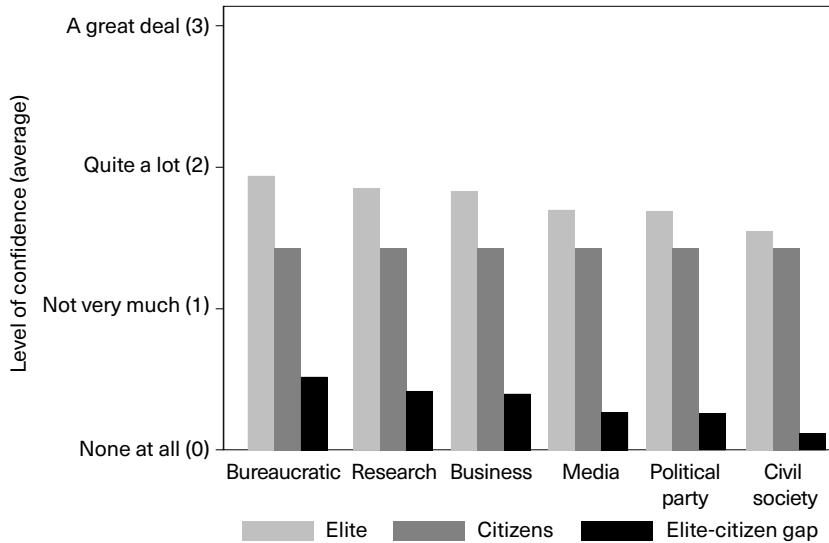


Source: Based on data from Dellmuth et al. 2022a.

Figure 4.5 Legitimacy Beliefs toward International Organizations, by Country



Source: Based on data from Dellmuth et al. 2022a.

Figure 4.6 Legitimacy Beliefs toward International Organizations, by Elite Sector

Source: Based on data from Dellmuth et al. 2022a.

Dynamics of Legitimacy and Legitimation

Thus far, this chapter has established that overall legitimacy toward international organizations is not in deep crisis, but is also not sufficiently high to encourage the kind of growth in power and effectiveness that is necessary to handle today's major global problems. Indeed, average public legitimacy perceptions are quite low toward certain international organizations (e.g., the IMF), as well as in certain countries (e.g., Russia), and certain social groups (e.g., working class). Moreover, citizen legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations are on the whole substantially lower than those of the elites who spearhead global governance.

This situation poses important challenges about how to increase legitimacy beliefs in order to bolster a more powerful and effective global

governance. What can advocates of global governance do to increase levels of confidence in international organizations? To answer this crucial question, it is necessary to identify the sources of legitimacy beliefs, that is, to establish what conditions generate people's confidence in international organizations. It will then be clear what circumstances need to be nurtured in order to promote greater legitimacy perceptions toward governance beyond the state.

It is important to stress that advocacy for global governance can make a difference. Research demonstrates that positive promotion (“legitimation”) of international organizations can enhance public confidence in these bodies, while negative opposition (“delegitimation”) can lower public approval levels (Dingwerth et al. 2019; Bexell et al. 2022). Not surprisingly, then, in recent decades supportive governments, politicians, and civil society actors, as well as international organizations themselves, have given concerted defenses of multilateral cooperation (Ecker-Ehrhardt 2018; Stephen and Zürn 2019; Kruck and Zangl 2020; De Vries et al. 2021). Conversely, critics in certain governments, populist politicians on the left and the right, and many NGOs have actively contested global governance (Della Porta and Tarrow 2005; Stephen and Zürn 2019; Tallberg and Verhaegen 2020; Adler and Drieschova 2021).

As for the sources of legitimacy beliefs that political strategies can activate, academic research commonly distinguishes between three types of drivers: institutional, individual, and societal (Tallberg et al. 2018). Many empirical studies (cited below) have demonstrated that various qualities on these three dimensions relate to legitimacy perceptions. The following subsections examine institutional, individual, and societal drivers in turn, in each case also considering how political strategies can tap into these different sources and thereby raise legitimacy beliefs for global governance.

INSTITUTIONAL SOURCES OF LEGITIMACY BELIEFS

Institutional drivers of legitimacy relate to the features of international organizations themselves. The premise is that the qualities of an organization that undertakes global governance matter for the levels of legitimacy that this body obtains (Scholte and Tallberg 2018; Dellmuth et al. 2019; Bernauer et al. 2020). Indeed, most empirical research on explaining legitimacy beliefs toward global governance has examined

(possible) institutional drivers.

Institutional sources of legitimacy can relate to the purpose, procedure, and performance of an international organization. The expectation is that positive assessments of an international organization's mandate, *modus operandi*, and results generate higher legitimacy beliefs toward that body. Conversely, negative evaluations of institutional purpose, procedure, and performance would produce lower legitimacy perceptions toward an international organization. Similarly, positively regarded reforms to an international organization's institutional workings would increase its legitimacy, while negatively received adjustments to its institutional features would reduce its legitimacy.

Institutional purpose matters for legitimacy when people's confidence in an international organization relates to the issues it addresses and the goals it pursues (Lenz and Viola 2017; Dellmuth and Tallberg 2023, Ch. 7). For example, people might accord legitimacy to the WHO because they endorse its objective of promoting global health. Likewise, the UNEP might attract legitimacy because people prioritize concerns about ecological damage. Note that in such cases the institutional purpose itself is the source of legitimacy, irrespective of whether the international organization actually achieves the declared objective. Thus, people might approve of the UN on account of its peace and security mandate, even when UN efforts to this end are not successful. To the extent that institutional purpose matters for legitimacy, proponents of international organizations do well to emphasize that these agencies address crucial problems with noble aims. Strategists might also consider altering an international organization's agenda (e.g., to address concerns about gender equality, human rights or poverty) if such adaptations could result in increased public approval.

Institutional procedure (sometimes also called input legitimacy) matters when people's confidence in an international organization is associated with the ways that the agency formulates and implements decisions (Scharpf 1999; Schmidt 2010; Dellmuth et al. 2019; Bernauer et al. 2020). For instance, people might oppose the IMF for its voting arrangements or endorse the World Bank for its consultations of civil society. People might endorse the WTO if they perceive it to have sound expertise or criticize the ICC if they perceive it to treat countries unfairly with double standards. When institutional procedure affects legitimacy beliefs, champions of international organizations can be

advised to highlight the positively assessed aspects of policy processes and to reform the negatively regarded aspects. For instance, many supporters of the UN have long argued for changes in the composition and rules of the Security Council in order to increase its legitimacy. Enhanced transparency and accountability measures may have allayed some opposition to the World Bank.

Institutional performance (sometimes also called output legitimacy) matters when people's confidence in an international organization corresponds with their perceptions of its results (Scharpf 1999; Steffek 2015; Dellmuth et al. 2019; Bernauer et al. 2020). For example, people might endorse the EU if they think that it promotes democracy in its member countries and the wider world. Alternatively, people might lose faith in the WHO if they assess that it fails to stop pandemics. Or confidence in the OECD might fall if its policies are seen to worsen economic inequalities. In situations where institutional performance shapes legitimacy beliefs, proponents of international organizations can be advised to highlight successful impacts and to correct for disappointing results. For instance, in recent years, the IMF has adjusted its policies to address concerns about inequality.

As the preceding research review shows, a variety of institutional factors can shape legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations. In particular, the issue is not whether institutional purpose *or* procedure *or* performance are (most) important. Rather, strategies to increase the legitimacy of global governance should consider how adjustments to institutional goals *and* processes *and* outcomes could help.

INDIVIDUAL SOURCES OF LEGITIMACY BELIEFS

Whereas institutional arguments locate the sources of legitimacy beliefs in the features of an international organization, individual approaches find the drivers in features of the person who holds such beliefs (Dellmuth 2018; Dellmuth et al. 2022a, 2022b). Institutional explanations focus on what is perceived (the object), while individual explanations focus on the perceiver (the subject). The premise is that, since legitimacy is a belief in the minds of individuals, the circumstances of individuals-as-individuals can shape views of governance arrangements, even irrespective of the purpose, procedure, and performance of the institutions involved. For example, someone who as a personality has low social trust can be predisposed to mistrust all authority, including

international organizations, no matter how well the institutions might operate. Indeed, since most people have limited knowledge of the institutional workings of international organizations, they may well fall back on their personal attributes to determine their legitimacy beliefs.

Individual sources of legitimacy beliefs can relate *inter alia* to socioeconomic position, political values, geographical identification, and trust dispositions. The ways in which individuals differ from each other on such parameters affect legitimacy beliefs. Thus, factors such as level of education, ideological orientation, national and international attachments, and faith in others influence legitimacy perceptions toward international organizations, both positively and negatively. Hence, advocates of global governance would do well to remember that institutional reforms by themselves may not be sufficient, and perhaps even ineffectual, for raising legitimacy beliefs. In addition, due attention may be required to individual-level issues such as utilitarian calculations, ideological outlooks, identity politics, and general social trust.

Regarding socioeconomic position, substantial research has found that an individual's material conditions can have implications for their approval or rejection of international organizations (Bearce and Jolliff Scott 2019; Verhaegen et al. 2021; Dellmuth et al. 2022a). These factors can be objective (e.g., a person's occupational skills or income level) as well as subjective (e.g., a person's perception of their financial security). For example, one study has found a positive association between people's level of education and their support for international organizations. Many other studies have examined the relationship between cost-benefit calculations and confidence in global governance. This research frequently (though not in all cases) discovers that an individual's support for an international organization corresponds to their perceptions of their own gains and losses in respect of that institution. Hence, the more an individual thinks that they personally (or their country) will profit from, say, the EU or the WTO, the greater their legitimacy beliefs toward that international organization. Based on this logic, advocates of multilateral cooperation would do well to emphasize the benefits that it can bring to the individual, both for them personally and for their country.

Regarding political values, various studies have indicated that approval or disapproval of international organizations can relate to an individual's general ideological orientation (de Vreese and Boomgaarden

2005; Hooghe and Marks 2018; Dellmuth et al. 2022a). The most familiar ideological distinction is between “left” and “right” political values. This divide has figured prominently in public debates about the EU and international economic institutions. Other research has explored the potential relevance of the so-called GAL–TAN spectrum, which sets “green, alternative, and liberal” values against “traditional, authoritarian, and nationalist” values. Several studies have shown that GAL–TAN orientations shape confidence in the EU and certain global organizations in certain contexts. Yet, as the qualification “certain” implies, political values do not link with legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations in all situations—nor always in the same direction. For example, the left in the US tends to be more approving of multilateral cooperation, while the left in the Global South tends to be more critical of international economic organizations. Thus, blanket appeals to one or the other set of political values will probably have varying impacts on legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations, and actors who seek to bolster multilateral cooperation would better cater ideological messages to the specific context at hand.

Regarding geographical identification, research indicates that legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations can relate to a person’s attachments to one or the other geographical domain (Hobolt and De Vries 2016; Verhaegen et al. 2018; Dellmuth et al. 2022a). Studies in this vein typically distinguish between feeling close to a country (national identification) and feeling close to the world (cosmopolitan identification). The usual expectation is that more nationally attached individuals will sooner criticize global governance, while more cosmopolitan individuals will sooner embrace rule beyond the state. Indeed, multiple studies find that persons with a greater European identification tend to give the EU more support than persons with a greater national identification. Evidence is more mixed regarding global organizations; for instance, attachments to country and the world relate less consistently with legitimacy beliefs toward UN institutions. Perhaps cosmopolitan-inclined individuals who support global governance are in principle sometimes unhappy with its current operations in practice. Hence, proponents who seek to raise support for multilateral cooperation may do well in general to promote cosmopolitan over national identification, but should not expect such efforts to always translate into higher legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations.

Regarding trust dispositions, substantial research shows that a person's confidence in international organizations can relate to their broader confidence in governance and society. In this dynamic, individuals project their (dis)trust in other institutions, and people generally, onto international organizations (Harteveld et al. 2013; De Vries 2018; Dellmuth et al. 2022a). Multiple studies have shown that someone who has greater (or lesser) faith in their national government and/or their domestic political system also tends to have greater (or lesser) faith in multilateral institutions. Conversely, a few investigations have suggested an opposite relationship, in which people may compensate for lower confidence in national politics with higher confidence in international organizations—and vice versa. Other research points to the importance of overall social trust as a source of confidence in governance institutions, both domestic and international. In terms of trust dispositions, then, advocates who seek to raise legitimacy beliefs toward global governance would usually do well to emphasize faith in other institutions and people when these levels are high, but de-emphasize these perceptions when the levels are low. Yet, in some situations, it might also play out well to try to translate discontent with domestic politics into higher satisfaction with international organizations.

While individual sources matter for legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations in the abovementioned ways, it is also important to note some individual-level circumstances that do *not* matter. In particular, research shows that there is no significant relationship between knowledge of international organizations and confidence in these bodies. Thus, being better informed about global governance sometimes raises an individual's approval of institutions (by knowing what they do and why their tasks are important) and sometimes decreases confidence (by having more grounds for criticism of what they do and how).

In sum, ample research shows that features of the individual matter alongside features of the institution in shaping legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations. Moreover, the available evidence suggests that the various types of individual sources do not fall in a fixed rank order of importance. All four aspects (socioeconomic, ideology, identity, and trust) can matter, so the question is not to determine which one counts, but how the several factors combine. That said,

the relative significance of different individual-level factors can vary depending on the context at hand, including between one international organization and another, as well as between one country and another, suggesting that how individual features matter is conditioned by institutional and societal factors (Dellmuth et al. 2022a). Given this variation, policymakers should not expect a strategy that enhances legitimacy beliefs in one context to also succeed in another.

SOCIETAL SOURCES OF LEGITIMACY BELIEFS

In addition to institutional and individual drivers, a third level of sources of legitimacy in global governance relates to wider society. The premise here holds that legitimacy beliefs are substantially a product of the socio-historical situations in which the international organizations and their audiences reside. Societal-level explanations locate the sources of legitimacy beliefs in characteristics of the wider social order, such as cultural conventions, economic systems, and political regimes (Bernstein 2011; Gill and Cutler 2014; Scholte 2018).

Societal sources of legitimacy beliefs interrelate with institutional and individual sources. In other words, features of society at large shape the kinds of institutional purposes, procedures, and performances that attract approval for international organizations in a given place and time. For example, the institutional feature of democratic procedure is more important for legitimacy beliefs under some social and historical circumstances than others (e.g., contemporary Sweden as compared with Tsarist Russia). Likewise, societal conditions influence the kinds of utilitarian calculations, political values, geographical identifications, and trust levels that individuals hold in a given place and time. For instance, the elements that count in an individual's cost-benefit analysis might differ between one societal context and another (e.g., modern urban dwellers and indigenous rural peoples). Similarly, political values evolve over time in relation to wider structural changes in society, such that, for example, the GAL–TAN ideological spectrum did not figure importantly in legitimacy beliefs a century ago.

Detailed empirical research on societal sources of legitimacy in global governance is relatively limited. Several studies examine how certain principles (such as democracy, gender equality, human rights, humanitarian assistance, state sovereignty, and sustainable development) evolve into global societal norms against which people may

assess the legitimacy of international organizations (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Bernstein 2001; Barnett 2013). More specifically, certain work relates the prevailing norms of world order to the dominant state in the international order of the day: e.g., *Pax Britannica* in the latter part of the nineteenth century, *Pax Americana* in the second half of the twentieth century, and possibly *Pax Sinica* in the future (Gilpin 1987; Robinson 2011). Other scholarship suggests that the dominant legitimacy-generating norms for international organizations align with an overarching system structure of global capitalism (Slaughter 2015). Interestingly, one detailed empirical case study shows that, contrary to expectations, unhappiness with social inequalities (e.g., of age, gender, language, and race) generally does not undermine legitimacy in global governance, at least among participants in ICANN (Jongen and Scholte 2022).

Whereas the research just mentioned examines *global* societal conditions, other analyses underscore the importance of *national* societal circumstances in shaping legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations. Indeed, the previously noted variations by country in levels of legitimacy suggest that differences in national societies could be relevant. For example, people living under authoritarian states might tend to judge the legitimacy of multilateral institutions on different grounds than those who live under liberal states. In addition, national economic conditions (such as degree of industrialization and average income level) might also affect citizens' expectations of international organizations and consequent assessments of their legitimacy (Hooghe and Marks 2005; Edwards 2009).

Societal-level conditions may also contribute to the previously highlighted elite-citizen gap in legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations. For example, in the social structure, elites tend to have more capital and associated opportunities to gain from a globalized economy than the general public, which may help to explain the higher average legitimacy beliefs for existing global governance arrangements among elites relative to citizens at large. With structurally greater chances to gain global exposure (through education, travel, etc.), elites are also more likely than citizens to form cosmopolitan outlooks that favor international organizations. In addition, a structurally advantaged position in society—and associated greater opportunities to influence governing institutions—can make elites more approving of

international organizations than the general citizenry.

Turning to implications for policy action, advocates who seek to bolster legitimacy for global governance should consider the complex politics around world order norms. On the one hand, promoting international organizations as flagbearers of values such as democracy, gender equality, and sustainable development could help to rally support, especially in liberal quarters. On the other hand, such messages could be less effective in other circles at a time when *Pax Americana* and the associated liberal international order may be in decline (Stephen and Zürn 2019; Tallberg and Verhaegen 2020; Kentikelenis and Voeten 2021). Alternatively, promoting international organizations as pillars of a progressive global capitalist market could help to draw approval from many people across the world. Yet critics of the current world order rather want international organizations to spearhead reforms of global capitalism, or even its transcendence.

Those actors who seek to enhance legitimacy in global governance also do well to remember that different populations have different structural placements vis-à-vis international organizations. Thus, messages and reforms that might resonate strongly in high-income countries might have little or negative impact in low-income countries. Proposals about future global governance that fall on welcome ears among elites may trigger negative reactions among the general public. In short, strategies to raise legitimacy for global governance will likely fail if they impose a single blueprint on all audiences.

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

As the preceding remarks indicate, political strategists need to think very carefully about how to shape public opinion on global governance. Multiple institutional, individual, and societal circumstances can affect legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations, and the relevant factors can operate quite differently in different contexts. Hence, initiatives to increase public approval for multilateral cooperation need to be well designed and executed in order to have the desired impact.

Crucial to the effective promotion of international organizations is political communication, especially from elites to the public at large. Research shows that the messages spread by elites about multilateral institutions influence citizens' assessments of the legitimacy of these

bodies (Dellmuth and Tallberg 2023; Ghassim 2022). Elite communication about international organizations has particularly significant effects on legitimacy beliefs when the general public has limited knowledge of governance beyond the state. In short, when elites speak, citizens listen—and adjust their views.

Research indicates that a host of elites communicate with fair frequency about international organizations (Uhlin and Verhaegen 2022). In the international sphere, these elite circles include member governments, civil society associations, and the international organizations themselves. In the domestic sphere, these elite commentators include political parties, business leaders, civil society groups, and media channels, particularly in times of elections and referenda that address global governance (Walter 2020).

Elite communications on international organizations can work in both directions: to legitimate as well as to delegitimize (Bexell et al. 2022). When elite communication endorses international organizations, the effect is generally to raise public legitimacy beliefs toward these institutions. Conversely, when elite communication criticizes these bodies, such negative messages generally have a delegitimizing impact on public opinion.

On the whole, elite communications about international organizations convey more approval than disapproval of these bodies (Uhlin and Verhaegen 2022). Notwithstanding vocal critiques in some quarters, leaders in government, political parties, business, civil society, media, and academia more often undertake activities that support multilateral institutions than oppose them. In addition, international organizations have built up substantial public communications departments that issue a constant flow of positive messages through events, publications, press statements, websites, and social media.

Yet, while elites more regularly endorse than criticize international organizations, the negative messages tend to be more intense and to exert more impact on the public's legitimacy beliefs toward these institutions. In particular, some politicians have proved highly skilled in directing public disquiet with globalization against international organizations (De Vries et al. 2021; Walter 2021). At an extreme, this delegitimation can prompt withdrawals from a multilateral institution, even if Brexit-like scenarios are rare (von Borzyskowski and Vabulas 2019a). More generally, research shows that citizens respond more to

negative messages about international organizations than to positive information (Dellmuth and Tallberg 2023). To this extent, the supporters of international organizations face larger challenges than the detractors.

In general, the self-legitimation efforts of international organizations have less impact on citizen legitimacy perceptions toward global governance than messages from wider elite quarters. Not surprisingly, citizens are more impressed by endorsements that come from outside parties than the self-promotional activities of multilateral institutions. That said, research also demonstrates that self-legitimation by international organizations can effectively counter delegitimation activities (Ghassim 2022). Thus, while the public relations campaigns of multilateral institutions may not raise citizen confidence in these bodies, such efforts can help to cancel out negative communications coming from other elite quarters.

Still, the facility with which critical elites can delegitimize international organizations should be a warning to supporters of multilateral cooperation. Advocates of global governance remain silent at their peril. The backing of international organizations needs to be at least as forceful as the attacks. Indeed, the advocacy needs to be continuous and proactive, rather than only reactive to opposition. Moreover, the reliance by multilateral institutions on public communications departments is inadequate and needs reinforcement with positive advocacy from other elite quarters.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined legitimacy (the belief in rightful rule) as a third pivotal issue shaping the future of global governance, alongside and interrelated with power (the capacity to act) and effectiveness (the ability to impact). The above discussion has highlighted three main points: First, international organizations are not facing a crisis of legitimacy, although there is certainly much scope to raise public confidence in multilateral institutions. Second, legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations are quite uneven, varying between one institution and another, between one country and another, and across the elite-citizen divide. Third, numerous conditions at institutional, individual, and societal levels shape legitimacy beliefs toward global

governance, making for quite complex dynamics of legitimation and delegitimation.

The implications of these research findings for policy are also complex. Efforts to raise legitimacy beliefs toward global governance need to consider multiple aspects: some connected with the workings of the institutions; some connected with the conditions of the individuals who assess the institutions; and some connected with the circumstances of the wider society in which the institutions operate. Moreover, the institutional, individual, and societal sources of legitimacy tend to play out differently depending on the international organization, the person, and the country at hand—and the dynamics for each context may well also change with time.

These complexities indicate that strategies to bolster legitimacy in global governance must pay careful attention on multiple fronts. It will not be enough, for example, to simply alter the composition of the UN Security Council or to underline the national advantages of participating in multilateral cooperation. Such steps can certainly bring incremental improvements, but to achieve a larger rise in public legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations requires a more comprehensive and sustained program of actions, in which the specific measures are also adjusted depending on the particular target audience. It is a daunting task, but a necessary endeavor in order to achieve the amounts and types of global governance that contemporary society needs.

5. Case Study: Global Climate Governance

The preceding chapters have evaluated the fitness of contemporary international organizations in general terms around the three themes of power, effectiveness, and legitimacy. While Chapters 2 to 4 have included many empirical examples from global governance, those illustrations have been brief. To fully show how power, effectiveness, and legitimacy shape global governance in a particular issue area requires a full case study.

With this objective in mind, the present chapter provides a detailed examination of global climate governance. The discussion pays particular attention to the UNFCCC at the global level and the EU at the regional level, as two key international organizations within the so-called regime complex of climate change. The UN and EU are the most significant international organizations for tackling climate change, as illustrated by the UNFCCC's Paris Agreement of 2015 and the EU's Climate Law to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. The larger regime complex for climate change also includes other international organizations, public-private partnerships, corporate actors, transgovernmental institutions, and networks.

Climate change is a critical area of contemporary global governance. Cooperation in this area responds to one of the gravest challenges facing humanity. While the parties to the Paris Agreement agreed to limit temperature increase to 2 degrees Celsius and are aspiring for 1.5 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels, the recent synthesis report of the IPCC (2023) predicts a rise of close to 3 degrees Celsius based on current state pledges. The implications would be catastrophic. Why has international cooperation to address climate change been

so difficult to achieve? What are the deficits in power, effectiveness, and legitimacy that constrain the efforts of the UNFCCC and the EU to combat climate change?

The first section of this chapter introduces the issue of global climate change, including four particular features of this problem that confront international organizations in their efforts to strengthen their power, improve their effectiveness, and maintain their legitimacy. The second section outlines the regime complex for climate change, covering a diverse collection of governance arrangements. The third section assesses the power of the UNFCCC and the EU with respect to legal, institutional, material, and ideational dimensions. The fourth section analyzes the effectiveness of global and regional governance to achieve the internationally agreed goal of net zero emissions by 2050, looking at issues around policy development, rule compliance, and problem solving at the UNFCCC and the EU. The fifth section examines legitimacy beliefs toward the UNFCCC and the EU, including the role of contestation in global climate governance.

Climate Change: A Super-Wicked Problem

Climate change presents one of the largest and most pressing challenges for global governance today. The past hundred—and especially last fifty—years have seen the global mean temperature rising by nearly 1 degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels. In the absence of countermeasures to limit global warming, the average rise could reach 2 degrees Celsius by 2060 and as much as 6 degrees Celsius by 2100 in a worst-case scenario (IPCC 2022). A recent report from the UNEP, released ahead of the climate conference in Egypt in November 2022, forecasts that, without more ambitious measures, the world is heading to an average increase of 3 degrees Celsius, rather than the target of 1.5 degrees Celsius set in the Paris Agreement (UNEP 2022). According to the IPCC's synthesis report (2023), there is a narrowing window for action to meet the 1.5 degrees target. Local, national, regional, and global policies for climate action need to be accelerated over the next 10 years.

Global warming exposes large swathes of humanity and other species to immense risks. Many of these risks relate to changes in weather patterns, including altered levels of temperature and precipitation, as

well as increased incidence of extreme weather events (with associated fires, floods, etc.). Such changes in weather can in turn have negative effects on water supplies and food security. The potential consequences of climate change for human health include increased malnutrition, the redistribution of diseases, and more deaths from heat waves. Global warming also causes ice sheets to melt and consequently rises in sea level, which in turn endanger many coastal areas and could force the migration of millions of so-called climate refugees. Ocean warming also causes coral bleaching and other biochemical changes to the seas.

Contemporary climate change is anthropogenic, that is, generated through human behavior. Most of these human activities are associated with modern industrialism and increase emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs) such as carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and fluorinated gases. These GHGs emanate especially from the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, raising livestock, and the use of nitrogen fertilizers. Thus, policies to limit climate change mainly aim to reduce the emissions of GHGs. Other measures seek to mitigate the impacts, adapt to the consequences, and ensure a just transition for vulnerable communities.

To date, however, global governance efforts to address climate change have been generally inadequate. What generates this protracted multilateral gridlock? Four features of the climate change problem are especially troublesome: collective action; burden sharing; enforcement; and complexity (Levin et al. 2012).

Regarding the first challenge, *collective action*, climate change as a global problem stems from its nature as a “public bad,” in which states will be impacted depending on their national capacity, vulnerability, geographical location, and levels of economic development. Climate change is a global collective action problem, since greenhouse gases (GHGs) accumulate in the atmosphere globally, while the primary costs of policies to reduce emissions are borne by national jurisdictions (Victor 2011). Thus, while the benefits of reducing GHG emissions are shared globally (although there could be additional benefits enjoyed locally, for example, reduced air pollution), the costs are borne by those states that are reducing emissions and de-carbonizing. Thus, climate change constitutes a global collective action dilemma and the stabilization of the climate can be viewed as a global public good. However, each country has an incentive to free-ride on the climate abatement efforts

of other countries rather than engage in cooperation (Barrett 2003).

Regarding the second challenge, *burden sharing*, what constitutes a fair distribution of the cost of climate damage and the benefits of climate regulation is a contentious question. Global climate diplomacy has struggled with this issue for more than three decades. The negotiating parties hold different perspectives on fairness and different criteria for determining equity. Particularly problematic from a justice perspective is the fact that the detrimental impacts of climate change disproportionately affect small emitters such as the least developed countries (LDCs), as well as vulnerable and marginalized groups such as indigenous people, small farmers, and women. In addition, future generations and non-human species which (will) suffer from climate change have no say in current negotiations.

Regarding the third challenge, *enforcement*, the decentralized nature of world politics makes it very difficult to force states to comply with a global climate agreement. The international political system is made up of almost 200 states that differ widely in terms of population, economic development, political system, GHG emissions profiles, vulnerability to climate change, dependence on fossil fuels, public support for national climate action and multilateral cooperation. As there is no supreme global authority that can impose regulations, states must negotiate multilaterally under consensus rule in order to find common ground (Underdal 2017). In the case of a public good such as a stabilized global climate, countries have an incentive to free-ride on the efforts of other countries to reduce GHG emissions and thereby to escape costly domestic policy change (Keohane and Victor 2011). Self-enforcement will therefore need to rely on reciprocity between states, a soft sanctioning mechanism such as “naming and shaming” by civil society, and mobilization of domestic interest groups and democratic publics in different countries (Keohane and Oppenheimer 2016). However, in the EU, the problem of free-riding and lack of enforcement can be partially avoided as the Union has supranational rule, top-down regulation, and sanctioning mechanisms to increase compliance and implementation.

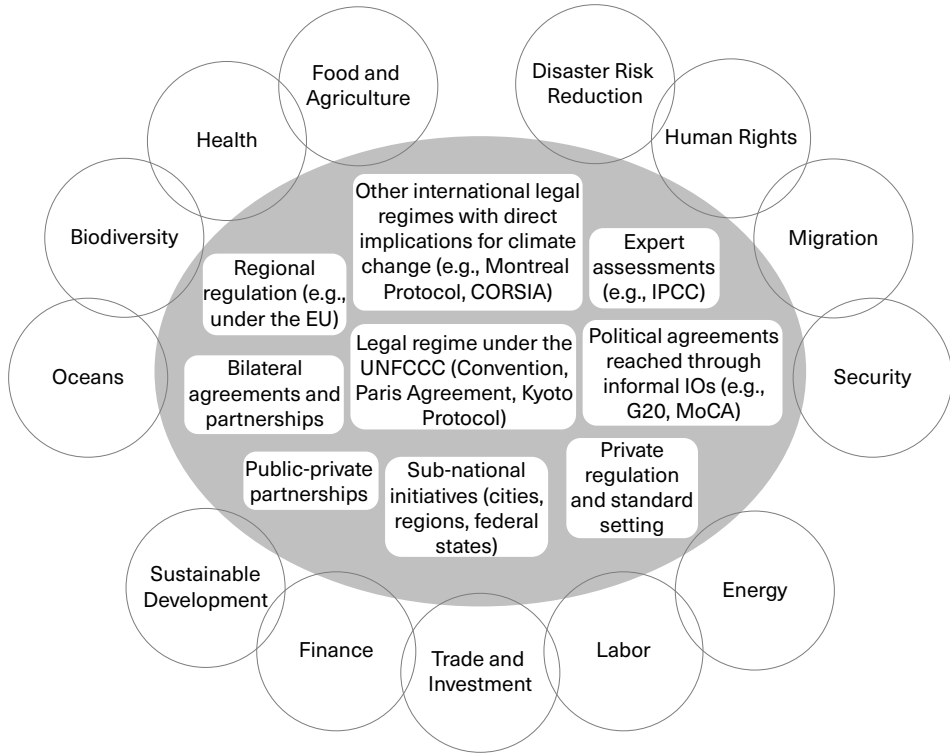
Regarding the fourth challenge, *complexity*, the problem structure of climate change is exceptionally complex with no quick-fix solutions to decarbonize the world’s economy, and industrial and transport systems. Cooperation therefore needs to take place on multiple political

and geographic levels and across multiple sectors (Victor 2009). The magnitude of the global climate threat is amplified by the fact that the major drivers of climate change involve virtually all human activity, from fossil fuel combustion to agriculture and land-use change. Climate change thus fundamentally challenges “carbon-lock in”—the development path of fossil-fuel dependency that the world has undertaken since the Industrial Revolution. Climate policies therefore need to address a range of challenges such as decarbonizing energy, food and transport systems, reducing deforestation and emissions from industrial and waste processes (Falkner 2016).

The Global Climate Change Regime Complex

Contemporary global climate governance is a multi-actor, multi-level, and multi-sectoral policy domain (Green 2022). Multilateral diplomacy through the UNFCCC regime serves as the coordinating focal point at the global level, but further cooperation occurs through trans-governmental networks among major emitter states, private-sector schemes (e.g., the International Emissions Trading Association), public-private partnerships (e.g., the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership), multi-stakeholder initiatives (e.g., the FSC), and city networks (e.g., the Covenant of Mayors). Figure 5.1 depicts the broad range of agreements, organizations, and partnerships across sectors associated with global climate governance. The outer oval circles refer to the multiple sectors impacted by climate change, among them, energy, finance, and migration. The inner circle depicts the multitude of multilateral agreements, bilateral agreements, voluntary cooperation initiatives, and public-private partnerships at regional, national, and subnational levels.

Thus, climate change governance does not center on a single institution, but is rather spread across a “regime complex” of multiple regulatory mechanisms operating across different levels, sectors, and policy areas (Keohane and Victor 2011). During the 2000s, the landscape of global climate governance transformed from intergovernmental climate diplomacy into a “hybrid multilateralism” that also includes nonstate and sub-state actors (Bäckstrand et al. 2017). Climate policy now entails “polycentric” governance that spans many institutions (Jordan et al. 2018).

Figure 5.1 The Global Climate Change Regime Complex

Source: Coen et al. 2020, building on Keohane and Victor 2011.

Critics maintain that the climate change regime complex around the UNFCCC is ineffective due to multiple overlapping and sometimes also competing institutions and agreements (Rosen 2015). However, some scholars applaud polycentrism for its bottom-up logic that spurs innovation (Keohane and Victor 2011). Other scholars argue that international city networks, private regulation, and “climate clubs” have outperformed the UNFCCC in curbing GHG emissions (Rosen 2015). Critics of the UNFCCC Kyoto Protocol argue that a single agreement cannot resolve a super-wicked problem like climate change.

While recognizing that global climate governance, like the governance of other global challenges, involves a regime complex of many actors, it is not possible within the scope of this report to assess the whole plethora of actors involved. Instead, the following sections focus on questions of power, effectiveness, and legitimacy as they relate to the UNFCCC and the EU, as they are the most prominent institutions in the polycentric system.

Power in Global Climate Governance

To what extent do the UNFCCC and the EU possess legal, institutional, material, and ideational power to shape an effective collective response to global warming? In general, we observe that the EU, with its unique mix of intergovernmental and supranational features, possesses considerable power in all dimensions to regulate climate change among its member states, who between them account for nine percent of global GHG emissions. In contrast, the UNFCCC, the main international organization to regulate GHG emissions among almost 200 states, has limited legal, institutional, and material power, although it has notable ideational power.

Legal power is the extent to which international organizations have the legal mandate and authority to govern a particular policy area. In June 1992, 196 states signed the UNFCCC at the UN Conference for Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. The UNFCCC is the foundational treaty of the Kyoto Protocol of 1997 (with commitments ending in 2020) and the Paris Agreement of 2015 (covering the period from 2020 onwards). Overall, the UNFCCC has limited legal power and is dominated by the member states (Busch 2009). While the Paris Agreement is legally binding, it is not a conventional top-down treaty. Rather, it is prescriptive and facilitative with aspirational goals reflecting the preferences of the US, China, and India who oppose mandatory emission targets (Dimitrov et al. 2019). In particular, the Paris Agreement satisfied the preferences of the Obama Administration and the US Congress. The choice lay between a weak agreement without binding targets that included US participation and a legally binding agreement that lacked US participation.

In terms of *institutional power*, the Conference of the Parties (COP) is the supreme decision-making body of the UNFCCC. It meets an-

nually and includes all states that have ratified the convention. The UNFCCC has a treaty secretariat, operating in Bonn since 1996. As an implementing organization with limited power and autonomy, the Secretariat services the COPs, as well as several subsidiary and technical bodies. It annually organizes hundreds of sessions of the permanent and temporary bodies of the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement, as well as expert workshops. The Secretariat is also a monitoring agency that collects self-reported data from parties to support the implementation of national climate policies and to track GHG emission inventories.

Yet the Secretariat lacks regulatory competencies and enforcement powers. While it is a semi-autonomous intergovernmental organization independent of national governments, it is subject to the collective will of the COP (Depledge 2007). Its purpose is to represent the different views of the national governments and maintain neutrality and impartiality. That said, the power of the UNFCCC has increased since 2010, particularly through the provision of information and the facilitation of nonstate action (Hickmann et al. 2021). The UNFCCC has seen few instances of power delegation from states. One exception relates to flexible mechanisms under the Kyoto Protocol, among them, the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), in which governance functions such as overseeing projects were delegated to private actors.

In the absence of strong institutional power, the UNFCCC relies on orchestration to mobilize transnational climate action (Abbott et al. 2015; Bäckstrand and Kuyper 2017). Specifically, the organization seeks to align intergovernmental climate action with private or corporate climate action to achieve large-scale decarbonization and climate resilience. The orchestrating ambitions of the UNFCCC Secretariat have increased over time and particularly after the adoption of the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC 2015b). It catalyzes, mobilizes, and coordinates societal stakeholders—investors, business, trade unions, civil society, cities, regions—to adopt stringent climate commitments.

The limited legal and institutional power of the UNFCCC is a result of decisions by the major states, as well as significant geopolitical shifts since 1992, such as the rising power (and GHG emissions) of China and India (Green 2022). China, as the top emitter, currently accounts for 29 percent of global carbon emissions, followed by the US (15 percent), India (9 percent) and the EU (9 percent). Together, the top

seven emitters account for 55 percent of global GHG emissions, while the G20 countries collectively cover around 75 percent (UNEP 2022). The geopolitical power shift from the US toward the BASIC countries (Brazil, South Africa, India, and China) have fundamentally changed the conditions for both the UNFCCC and EU climate policy.

Turning to *material power*, the UNFCCC has limited resources. The Secretariat employs almost 500 people from 100 countries, which is a relatively small number compared to other intergovernmental organizations such as the UNEP with over 7,000 civil servants. The Secretariat is headed by an Executive Secretary, who is usually a prominent and high-ranking minister or diplomat. The Secretariat facilitates, supports, and coordinates the negotiations that gather a large number of parties and observers, compared to multilateral negotiations in other fields. Regarding finances, the total budget for 2022 to 2023 for the UNFCCC is €178 million (UNFCCC 2021b), which is a small proportion of the overall UN program budget of €3.2 billion for 2023 to 2024. Furthermore, UNFCCC funding decreased as the Trump Administration cut US financial support for global climate cooperation. Moreover, the UNFCCC cannot itself employ financial resources for program implementation, as this funding comes from the GEF, a separate organization that operates outside the UNFCCC (Coen et al. 2020).

The UNFCCC is stronger on *ideational* power than the other three dimensions. The UNFCCC Secretariat is a technocratic bureaucracy with limited legal, institutional, and material power, heavily constrained by the highly politicized context of intergovernmental climate diplomacy (Busch 2009). Yet it has greater ideational power, primarily through its provision of information, expertise, and monitoring. The Secretariat is an information hub for international climate negotiations, compiling and making available online decisions, negotiation drafts, press releases, publications, and reports. In this information function, the Secretariat is supported by the IPCC, an intergovernmental expert body that provides authoritative five-yearly reports on the extent and consequences of climate change.

The UNFCCC also has ideational power in the form of moral authority with its far-reaching access to and inclusion of nonstate, sub-state, and regional initiatives, and an “all-hands-on-deck” approach to combating climate change (Hale 2016). Global climate governance

has seen much increased participation by nonstate actors and civil society over the past three decades in different roles such as agenda setting, policy formulation, implementation, monitoring, lobbying, protesting, and taking on voluntary reduction targets. The number of accredited nonstate actors organized under the UNFCCC “constituencies”—environmental NGOs, business and industry groups, trade unions, local authorities, women’s groups, indigenous peoples’ organizations, farmers’ organizations, research organizations, and youth groups—has grown from 163 registered observers in 1995 to 2,200 in 2020 (Bäckstrand et al. 2021). The global climate movement enjoys a high level of public support, whether in the form of technocratically-oriented NGOs (such as the World Wildlife Fund, WWF), youth movement (such as Fridays for Future), or the climate justice movement (such as Climate Justice Now!).

In contrast to the UNFCCC, the EU has elements of supranational *legal power*, as climate change constitutes a policy area with shared competences between member states and the EU institutions. The European Climate Law enshrines a commitment to achieve carbon neutrality for Europe by 2050 (EU 2021), while the Fit for 55 Package aims to reduce emissions by 55 percent by 2030. The EU’s climate legislation has developed over the past 40 years in tandem with other environmental and sustainability policies (Jordan et al. 2010).

The EU was an early mover on climate change, already committing to GHG emission reductions in the 1990s and pushing for higher climate ambitions at the UNFCCC. The EU acted as the guardian of the Kyoto Protocol when the US withdrew from this agreement in 2001. After the financial crisis in 2008 and during COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009, the EU pushed for a new universal globally binding climate agreement modeled on the Kyoto Protocol (Bäckstrand and Elgström 2013). In 2017, when the Trump Administration announced its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, the EU reaffirmed its commitment to its goals.

In the EU, *institutional power* in the policy field of climate change is dispersed among different sites. Institutional power over the EU’s climate policy is partially determined by the dynamics between the member states (Jordan et al. 2010; Jänicke and Wurzel 2019). Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, and subsequently Germany and the UK, have advocated for more ambitious EU-wide climate and energy

legislation. When the EU expanded in 2004 with new members from fossil fuel-dependent states in Central and Eastern Europe, opposition to ambitious EU targets and measures increased (Dupont and Oberthür 2014). Other forms of institutional power reside with the EU's supranational institutions, notably the European Commission and the European Parliament. These bodies have historically pushed for stronger climate legislation, while the intergovernmental institutions (the European Council and the Council of the EU, often referred to as the Council) have tended to oppose higher ambition to reduce emissions (Rosamond and Dupont 2021).

The Council's constellation of meetings between the environmental ministers of all member states—the Environmental Council—meets around four times per year. Together with the European Parliament, the Council is responsible for the adoption of climate policy, as well as for preparing common EU positions for the UNFCCC climate negotiations. The European Parliament's institutional power has increased, and in 2019 it declared a “climate emergency” in line with many national parliaments. The European Commission is the only institution that can propose EU legislation. The Directorate-General for Climate Action (DG CLIMA) holds primary responsibility for climate change, while other DGs play a secondary role. The European Commission has provided significant entrepreneurship on climate change, although resistance from coal- and oil-dependent member states in Central Europe has undermined its leadership.

Deepening divisions between “climate leaders” and “climate laggards,” which was reinforced by the post-2008 recession, have slowed the EU's capacity to enact strong climate legislation. Brexit has also negatively affected the EU's overall climate ambition and undermined its coherent position in the UNFCCC. However, the new Commission in 2019 with Ursula von der Leyen as the President of the European Commission and Frans Timmerman as the Vice President and Commissioner for Climate Action has demonstrated its commitment to the European Green Deal. As a result, the European Climate Law and the 2030 Climate and Energy Framework were adopted in 2021.

Despite being a regional organization, the EU's *material power* in terms of staff and budget is greater than that of the UNFCCC. Next to DG CLIMA, DG Energy and DG Environment are also involved in the development and monitoring of climate policy. Taken together, these

three DGs employ a staff of close to 1,300 civil servants (European Commission 2022). The proportion of resources devoted to climate action in the EU's budget is significantly larger than the budget of the UNFCCC. About 30 percent of the EU's long-term budget for 2021 to 2027 is allocated to climate action and clean energy (European Commission 2022). In absolute figures, this 30 percent amounts to around €600 billion. Compared to the previous long-term budget for 2014 to 2020, it constitutes a tripling of the budgetary resources for climate action.

The EU's *ideational power* in global climate governance is strong (Parker and Karlsson 2010; Wurzel et al. 2017). During 30 years of global climate diplomacy, the EU has been widely perceived as a global leader in climate governance with a long-term vision to achieve a carbon-neutral economy and society. Similar to the global level with the IPCC as a scientific assessment body, the EU has strong institutions for scientific advice and knowledge dissemination, such as the European Environment Agency (EEA). In 2021, the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change was established to monitor the progress of the climate targets in order to achieve the goals of the European Climate Law.

As this comparison of the UNFCCC and the EU indicates, the two organizations vary on a number of dimensions that affect their capacity to govern climate change. Table 5.1 puts the models of the UNFCCC and the EU in a comparative perspective. It shows how the bottom-up Paris Agreement entailed a significant change compared to the top-down Kyoto Protocol, and how EU climate governance compares to UNFCCC models (Allan et al. 2021). The Kyoto Protocol and the European Climate Law contain top-down legally binding emission targets, while the Copenhagen Accord and the Paris Agreement rest on bottom-up voluntary pledges by states. The latter agreements have global participation and voluntary commitments, while the European Climate Law and the Kyoto Protocol limit commitments to EU member states and industrialized countries, respectively. Both the Paris Agreement and the European Climate Law have built-in processes for gradually raising a state's mitigation ambitions, referred to as ratchet-up mechanisms.

Table 5.1 Framework Agreements in Global Climate Governance

Model	Shared goals	Participation	Commitments	Legal form	Ratchet-up mechanism
Paris Agreement	Yes	Universal	Nationally determined, regularly updated	Hybrid	Yes
Kyoto Protocol	Defers to the Convention	Narrow	Written into the treaty, updated every five years	Legally binding	No
Copenhagen Accord	Yes	Wide	Nationally determined	Non-binding	No
European Climate Law	Yes	Narrow	Written into the agreement	Legally binding	Yes

Source: Adapted from Allan et al. 2021.

Effectiveness of Global Climate Governance

To what extent are the UNFCCC and the EU effective in halting global warming? As elaborated in Chapter 3, the effectiveness of regional and global climate agreements is measured using three indicators: policy development (*output*), rule compliance (*outcome*), and problem solving (*impact*). “Solving the problem” in this case would mean stabilizing the global climate, with qualitative improvements to ecosystem preservation and human health. Since the observable climate impacts of contemporary measures to reduce GHGs will not be seen for some time, this section focuses on the output and outcome aspects of effectiveness.

For a global climate treaty to be effective, it must induce states to do three things: participate and agree on policy (output); increase the depth of commitments; and comply with those commitments (outcome) (Barrett 2008: 244). This combination represents a “governance trilemma,” as there is a tradeoff between widened participation,

deepened commitments to reduce GHGs, and a high level of compliance. The level of ambition will ultimately affect goal attainment, problem solving, and improved impact on the ground.

Many factors shape whether such effectiveness will be achieved. As the US, China, and the EU together generate around one-half of global GHG emissions, while another 100 countries account for 3 to 4 percent, climate policy and regulation raise fundamental questions about distribution, burden-sharing, and fairness. The implementation of any climate agreement—regional or global—depends less on the text and legal provisions and more on domestic policy and national climate mitigation targets. Hence, national public support for stringent climate legislation and high ambition of nationally determined contributions (NDCs) are essential to the effectiveness of any climate agreements under the UNFCCC and the EU. Furthermore, commitment from corporate and subnational actors, such as cities in the wider regime complex for climate change, is critical for halting climate change. For instance, cities are responsible for around 75 percent of global emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂), with the transport and construction sectors being the largest contributors (UNEP 2021).

How do the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement fare in terms of effectiveness with regard to (balancing) broad participation, depth of commitments, and compliance with obligations? While the jury is still out on the problem-solving effectiveness of the Paris Agreement in terms of achieving deep decarbonization by 2050, the Kyoto Protocol clearly failed to stabilize GHG emissions during its two commitment periods up to 2020. Nevertheless, after the Kyoto Protocol entered into force in 2005, there was an exponential growth in policy outputs—national and EU climate policy, laws, and regulations—which is a precondition for goal attainment (i.e., the 1.5-degree Celsius temperature rise) and problem solving (minimizing the disastrous impact of climate change).

Policy development (or output) in this case refers to the regulation, policy, and legislation adopted by the EU and the UNFCCC. Rule compliance (or outcome) refers to *domestic-level* behavioral changes. These indicators can be measured by (a) adopted national climate policies or climate acts; (b) NDCs and long-term plans for net-zero emissions; and (c) national and global aggregate GHG emission reductions. Decreased national and global emissions will lead to less GHGs, which

in turn enables the achievement of the Paris Agreement's temperature goals. There is a time lag between emission reductions, decreased atmospheric concentrations of GHGs, and observable ecosystem and health impacts, such as the restoration of coral reefs, enhanced biodiversity, improved quality of freshwater, reduction of climate-related infectious diseases, and a halt to climate-induced migration. Compliance with the Kyoto Protocol can be assessed in terms of the reductions in GHG emissions between 1990 and 2020. In contrast, compliance with the Paris Agreement can only be assessed in terms of the potential or projected emission reductions toward 2030 and 2050.

This section discusses the *policy development* in terms of international regulation through the UNFCCC and the EU. As shown in Table 5.1, the forms of policy development for climate action have varied in terms of the nature of commitments, the scope of participation, the mechanisms for enhancing a state's mitigation ambitions, and other aspects of institutional design. While the Kyoto Protocol represented a full-fledged treaty with binding targets and timetables, the Copenhagen Accord was a political declaration establishing voluntary pledges and a review by states. The Paris Agreement solidified this bottom-up approach with NDCs as a cornerstone. In contrast, the EU has adopted more of a top-down regulatory approach with successive climate and energy packages since 2008.

What have been the key policy developments of the UNFCCC and the EU over the past 30 years? The 1992 Convention required Annex I Parties (40 industrialized countries including post-communist countries) to stabilize their GHG emissions at 1990 levels by 2000. However, developing countries—Non-Annex I Parties—were exempt from legally binding targets. In 1995, the UNFCCC decided to adopt a legally binding instrument, and two years later the Kyoto Protocol was signed. The aim of the UNFCCC was to stabilize GHG emissions at a level that would prevent “dangerous anthropogenic interference.” The Kyoto Protocol set timebound quantitative emission reduction targets and timetables for all developed countries for two commitment periods, 2008 to 2012 and 2012 to 2020. The differentiation in commitments between industrialized and developing countries was based on the principle of “common but differentiated obligations.” The Kyoto Protocol took eight years to enter into force, as the US withdrew on the grounds that the agreement exempted developing countries

such as China and India from mandatory emission reductions.

The Paris Agreement was signed by over 190 states of the UNFCCC at COP21 in 2015 and entered into force one year later. Article 2 affirms the overall purpose of (a) holding the increase of the global average temperature to “well below 2° C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5° C above pre-industrial levels;” (b) facilitating adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change to ensure climate-resilience; and (c) “making finance flows consistent with a pathway toward low GHG emissions and climate resilient development” (UNFCCC 2015a). The Paris Agreement further specifies that global net GHG emissions should be phased out “in the second half of this century” in order to achieve the 2° C or 1.5° C temperature goal (UNFCCC 2015a, Article 4.1).

The goals of the Paris Agreement should be realized through NDCs; yet the details are subject to political contestation and negotiation among states. Instead of legally binding targets and timetables, the Paris Agreement has a hybrid design, combining bottom-up pledge-making by states with a top-down transparency and review framework to enhance compliance (Bäckstrand et al. 2017). Hence, the transparency framework in the Paris Agreement reviews the submitted NDCs in order to increase a state’s ambition over time—the ratchet-up mechanism referred to in Table 5.1 (Cléménçon 2016). The framework consists of a transparency framework (Article 13), a global stocktake (Article 14), and a review and compliance mechanism (Article 15). Transparency is a precondition for accountability—international comparisons of NDCs and domestic mitigation policies are central to tracking and monitoring progress through “naming and shaming” by civil society and peer review instruments such as the Climate Action Tracker. The annual UNEP Emissions Gap Reports (UNEP 2021; 2022) assess the extent to which NDCs are on track to achieve the 2030 targets, as well as the long-term target of net-zero emissions by 2050.

The EU adopted three packages for climate and energy policy between 2008 and 2021 (Bäckstrand 2022). In the early 2000s, the EU adopted its first climate policies with directives on energy efficiency and renewable energy. One important milestone is the EU ETS—the world’s first carbon emission trading system established in 2005—which has been reformed, expanded, and strengthened in several rounds. The EU ETS aims to reduce GHG emissions from energy-

intensive industries and power plants and covers around 40 percent of the EU's total GHG emissions and around 11,000 power plants and manufacturing plants. The new European Commission in 2019 with Ursula von der Leyen as President launched the ambitious program for the European Green Deal during her first 100 days in office with visions of green industrialization, systemic cross-sectoral and integrative transformation toward climate neutrality, digitalization, and a just climate transition (European Commission 2019; Rosamond and Dupont 2021). The European Green Deal is an integral part of the EU's strategy to implement the Paris Agreement while also achieving a societal transformation to sustainability in line with the UN Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. The Council and the Parliament agreed on the European climate law in 2021, codifying net-zero GHG emissions by 2050. This requires current GHG emission levels to drop substantially in the coming decades. As a mid-term step toward climate neutrality, the EU has raised its 2030 climate ambition with the aim of cutting emissions by at least 55 percent by 2030. The EU is working on the revision of its climate, energy and transport-related legislation under the Fit for 55 Package, which was proposed by the European Commission in July 2021, in order to align current laws with the 2030 and 2050 ambitions. The package contains a series of legislative proposals to realize the mid-term and long-term climate targets, such as a reformed EU ETS, a carbon border adjustment mechanism, and directives on energy efficiency (Gheuens and Oberthür 2021).

How have the UNFCCC and the EU fared as regards *rule compliance*? The Kyoto Protocol aimed to decrease global GHG emissions by 5.2 percent during the first commitment period (2008–2012) and 18 percent during the second commitment period (2012–2020). In reality, however, global emissions increased by 14 percent between 1990 and 2013 (EEA 2021).

A key challenge to compliance for the Kyoto Protocol was that it took eight years before it entered into force. The US withdrew from the Kyoto Protocol in 2001 and other major emitters such as China, India, Brazil, Russia, and South Africa did not comply. The number of participating states shrank still further during the second commitment period until the remainder (the EU plus some industrialized countries) contributed to just 20 percent of global GHG emissions.

Breaking from the Kyoto Protocol's more top-down compliance

mechanisms, the Paris Agreement lacks hard enforcement power. Instead, it relies on interstate cooperation in which implementation is supposed to function in a “transparent, non-adversarial and non-punitive manner” (UNFCCC 2015a). Only the transparency framework, which evaluates the progress of the NDCs, is binding.

The Paris Agreement has an overall goal to limit the increase in average global temperature to 2/1.5 degrees Celsius. To this end, it aims for a global peak in emissions and net-zero emissions in the second half of the century. The strength of the Paris Agreement is that it has universal participation and symmetrical obligations on the part of all states. The agreement has secured commitments from major emitter states across developed and developing countries with the same requirement to submit NDCs. Furthermore, the Paris Agreement has a built-in design that enables the gradual progression of NDCs through a review process with a regular global stocktake every fifth year and an obligation for the states to report the progress of their NDCs every second year. This can incentivize the adoption of domestic climate policy. However, the Achilles heel of the agreement is the ambition level of the stringency of the NDCs. The content and ambition of the NDCs, which are supposed to be updated, is left to the discretion of the individual state. In order to achieve broad participation and universal agreement with the binding mitigation targets for countries—developing and developed alike—the treaty is the victim of the lowest common denominator. As discussed in Chapter 2, enhanced compliance in this way is associated with lower ambition and less bindingness.

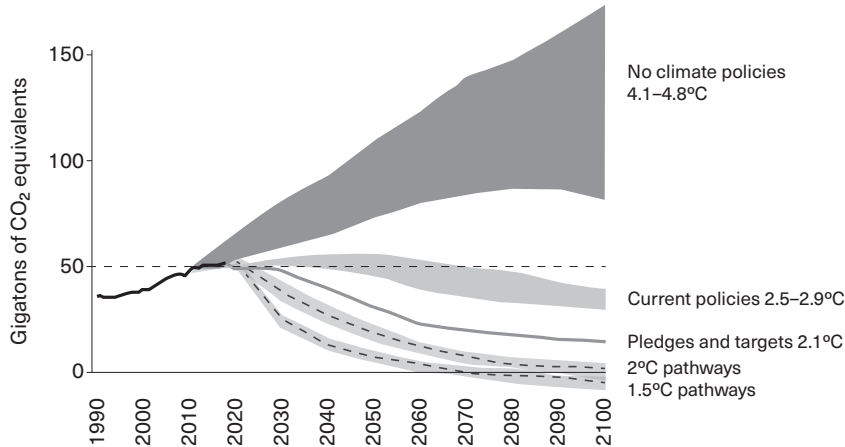
Due to the non-binding nature of NDCs under the Paris Agreement, compliance by states depends on national processes. National parliaments play a key role in adopting climate change acts and establishing independent national climate policy councils. According to the Climate Law database, almost 3,000 climate laws have been passed in the world as of December 2022 (LSE 2022). The increased growth of national climate legislation and climate acts after the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol and in the post-Paris period is likely to increase domestic compliance with the global climate targets. The adoption of binding national climate laws in many regions of the world (including the 2021 European Climate Law) is clearly reducing carbon emissions. Moreover, greater use of climate litigation against states and companies that fail to comply with the Paris Agreement will likely increase

the implementation of climate targets. As of December 2022, more than 2,100 climate litigation cases against states and companies were ongoing (LSE 2022).

Another indicator of compliance with the Paris Agreement is the ambition level of the submitted NDCs. Key to compliance are the updated NDCs ahead of the global stocktake at COP28 in November and December 2023. Only around one-half of the updated or new NDCs submitted in 2022 (74 out of 139) would result in lower emissions by 2030, while 23 would result in unchanged or higher emissions.

Yet governmental action at national, regional, and global levels will not be sufficient (IPCC 2023). Action by nonstate actors is also necessary across sectors and policy fields. After all, carbon emissions from nonstate actors (e.g., the fossil fuel industry) in some cases exceed emissions from many states. The COP decision accompanying the Paris Agreement called on investors, regions, and cities to “scale up their climate actions” and to register these actions as voluntary commitments (UNFCCC 2015b). At COP22 at Marrakech in 2016, states decided to appoint two High-Level Climate Champions tasked with mobilizing and catalyzing voluntary nonstate and substate climate action. Efforts by the UNFCCC to target nonstate actors are key for accelerating decarbonization and the transformation to fossil-free energy systems around the world (Chan et al. 2018). The UNFCCC’s Global Climate Action Portal currently contains commitments by more than 30,700 companies, investors, cooperative initiatives (coalitions of actors), cities, regions, and civil society (UNFCCC 2022). Nonstate actors also serve as watchdogs to track, compare, and rank NDCs, particularly to increase transparency and hold states accountable for their weak level of ambition.

As argued in Chapter 3, it is very hard to assess the problem-solving capacity and impact of international organizations. In the case of the UNFCCC and climate change, no simple causal chain links policy development, compliance, and goal attainment with impact in terms of a stabilized global climate. This is amplified with a time-lag of decades before the impacts of emission reductions can be observed in terms of lower atmospheric concentrations of GHG and temperature. Many factors besides the UNFCCC process affect the levels of GHG emissions, including financial crises, the COVID-19 pandemic, a shrinking economy, recession, and increased fuel prices driven by

Figure 5.2 Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Warming Scenarios

Source: Climate Action Tracker, via Our World in Data 2022.

Note: Warming refers to the expected global temperature rise by 2100, relative to pre-industrial temperatures.

the Russia-Ukraine war. Indeed, in 2020, global carbon emissions decreased by more than five percent during the COVID-19 pandemic (UNEP 2021). In any case, it will take decades before emission reductions can result in lower atmospheric concentrations of GHGs and, in the end, lower temperatures.

As shown in Figure 5.2, it is clear that the current climate policies of states are insufficient to reach the Paris Agreement's goals of 2/1.5 degrees Celsius. If ambitions are not increased in NDCs, domestic policies, and national mitigation actions, then the world is heading for a temperature rise of between 2.5 and 2.9 degrees Celsius (UNEP 2021; UNFCCC 2021a). As underlined in the recent UNEP Emissions Gap Report (UNEP 2022), unless ambition and compliance are ramped up there will be an emission gap of 12 to 15 gigatons of carbon dioxide equivalents (GtCO₂) to achieve the 2-degree target and 20 to 23 GtCO₂ to achieve the 1.5-degree target. Thus, the enhanced ambition

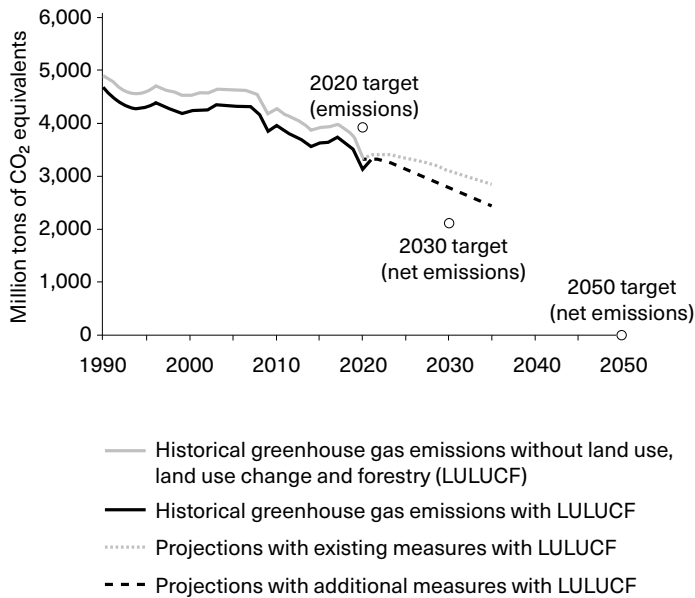
levels in NDCs ahead of the first global stocktake of the Paris Agreement in November and December 2023 at COP28 will be a critical test of the effectiveness of the UNFCCC.

The EU is one of the few actors or regions in the world on track to achieve reductions in GHG emissions. It achieved its 2020 target under the Kyoto Protocol and is moving toward its 2030 target under the Paris Agreement (UNEP 2021). The EU's updated 2030 Climate and Energy Framework and the climate legislation package Fit for 55 are important in this regard (Skjaerseth 2021; Dupont et al. 2020; Kulovesi and Oberthür 2020). The EU now accounts for nine percent of global GHG emissions, as compared to 15 percent in the 1990s.

In its foreign policy, the EU has taken the lead in the global transition to an economy aiming to achieve net-zero emissions of GHG by 2050 (Parker et al. 2017). When President Donald Trump announced in 2016 that the US would withdraw from the Paris Agreement, the EU mobilized, together with other countries and actors (including various cities, regions, and companies in the US), to commit to its goals. The EU continues to pursue an ambitious climate policy internationally, through active foreign climate diplomacy and bilateral cooperation agreements for clean technology and climate finance with India and China.

As seen in Figure 5.3, the EU significantly reduced its emissions between 1990 and 2021, which meant that it actually exceeded its target for 2020. By reducing emissions by 32 percent, the EU thereby over-complied with its own short-term goal. That said, the decline in emissions in 2020 was largely attributable to COVID-19. The EU's GHG emissions are expected to continue to decrease by 2030. However, the predicted emission reductions by 2030 is 41 percent, i.e., well below the 55 percent reduction target (EEA 2022). Moreover, the Russia-Ukraine War and rising energy prices, coupled with inflation and recession, risk a rollback of EU measures to meet the 2030 and 2050 targets (EEA 2021).

Hence, while the EU achieved its 2020 emission reduction target, it remains to be seen if current climate and energy policies will be sufficient to achieve the 2030 and 2050 targets. The EU needs to tighten up its climate and energy goals for 2030, reform and strengthen EU ETS, and enact more stringent measures to transform the economy, industry, and energy systems (IPCC 2022). Over the past 15 years, EU

Figure 5.3 EU Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Targets

Source: EEA 2022.

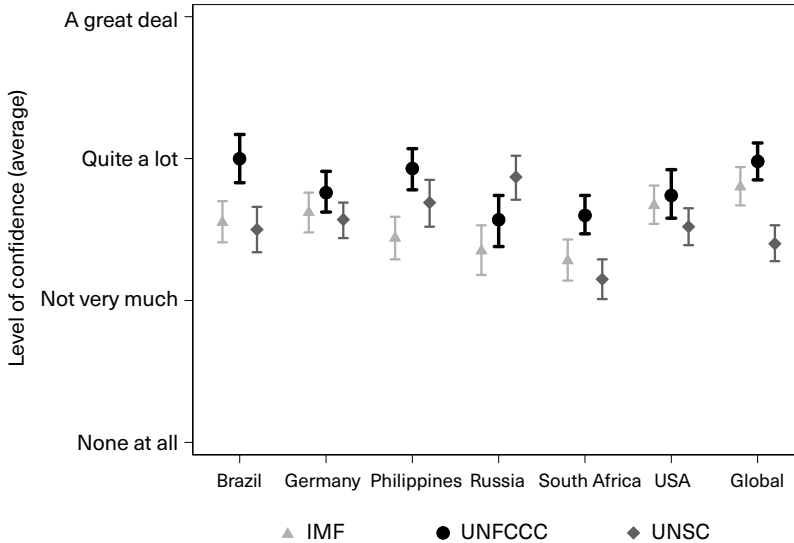
climate legislation has gradually moved from being myopic and incremental to long term and transformative (Gheuens and Oberthür 2021; Skjaereth 2021). The European Green Deal, the Climate Law, and the Fit for 55 Package together provide a long-term, systemic, cross-sectoral approach to reaching the net-zero target by 2050. However, the IPCC warns that the EU policy measures that are in place may not be sufficient (IPCC 2022).

Legitimacy in Global Climate Governance

Turning to our third main theme of legitimacy, global climate governance through the UNFCCC and the EU has generally attracted considerable elite and general public confidence. That said, the UNFCCC has experienced several moments of legitimacy crisis, particularly when the US withdrew from its key agreements. The evidence of empirical legitimacy vis-à-vis UNFCCC and EU climate efforts is available from several recent surveys and survey experiments. However, there is a lack of longitudinal research that tracks how levels of legitimacy beliefs toward global climate governance have evolved over time.

Regarding surveys, some recent research has compared the legitimacy perceptions of stakeholders toward the UNFCCC and other international organizations with climate and energy as their core mandate. This research shows that the UNFCCC ranks higher on democratic norms such as participation, accountability, transparency, and inclusion than, for instance, the International Energy Agency (IEA) and the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) (Nasir-tousi and Verhaegen 2020; Bäckstrand et al. 2021). In addition, the LegGov Elite Survey (discussed in Chapter 4) shows that, as per Figure 5.4, political and societal leaders in six countries, plus a sample of global elites, on average accord the UNFCCC “quite a lot” of confidence. Moreover, these elites give the UNFCCC higher mean approval rating than the IMF and the UN Security Council (Verhaegen et al. 2021). The UNFCCC enjoys higher average elite confidence than the IMF in all seven samples, except the US, and higher average elite confidence than the UNSC in all samples, except Russia.

In addition to these surveys, three recent survey experiments have examined general public support for multilateral climate agreements. The first study, involving citizens in the US and India, reveals that public support for multilateral approaches (such as the UNFCCC) is stronger than for minilateral clubs of major emitter states. However, the survey experiment shows that public support for minilateralism increases if major emitters in the club commit to stringent GHG emission reductions (Gampfer 2016). A second survey experiment, involving citizens in the US and China, points to robust public support for the Paris Agreement, even if other states fail to deliver emission reductions (Beiser-McGrath and Bernauer 2019). A third survey experiment, with

Figure 5.4 Elite Confidence in IMF, UNFCCC, and UNSC

Sources: LegGov Elite Survey; Verhaegen et al. 2021.

Note: Dots, triangles, and diamonds indicate mean levels of confidence in the UNFCCC, the IMF, and the UNSC, while the length of the whiskers shows the 95 per cent confidence intervals around the means.

US citizens, shows that the naming and shaming of non-compliant countries or laggards in international climate agreements increase public support for the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UNFCCC (Tingley and Tomz 2022).

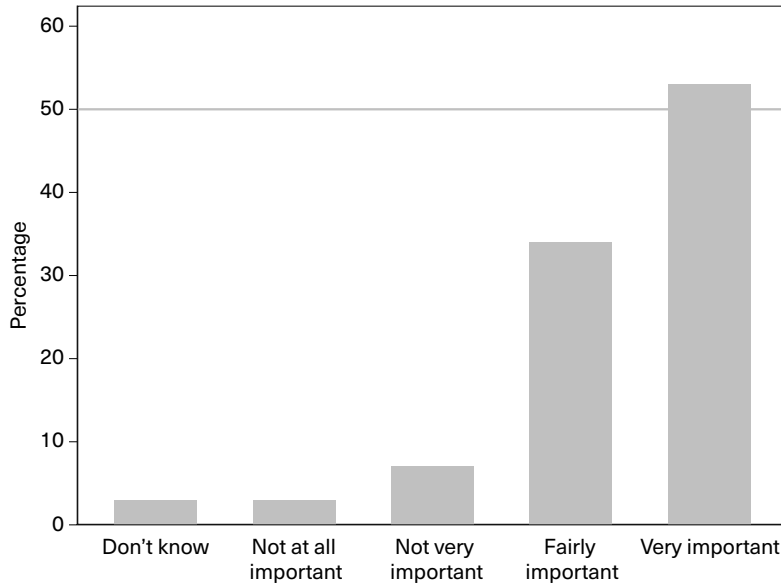
While the above survey evidence indicates relatively strong citizen and elite support for the UNFCCC, this organization has suffered from several legitimacy crises. Two of these crises involved the withdrawal of the US from negotiated agreements, while the third crisis mainly related to disagreement with the procedure. Each of the three crises triggered politics of legitimation and delegitimation, as discussed in Chapter 4 (Tallberg and Zürn 2019; Bexell et al. 2022).

The first major legitimacy crisis for the UNFCCC occurred when

the US withdrew from the Kyoto Protocol in 2001. The US stance toward the UNFCCC was inextricably bound to domestic politics, involving congressional wrangling, business interests, and civil society advocacy. Ultimately, there was bipartisan support in Congress to reject a climate treaty that did not impose targets on China and other major emitters in the Global South. In response to the US withdrawal, the EU went on a global tour to secure ratifications so that the Kyoto Protocol could enter into force. In 2004, Russia ratified the agreement in exchange for EU backing of Russian membership of the WTO.

A second legitimacy crisis developed at the Copenhagen COP in 2009 (Bäckstrand et al. 2017). Many actors perceived that the UNFCCC had failed to broker a new legally binding treaty to replace the Kyoto Protocol. In addition, critics, especially from the Global South, claimed that the negotiations suffered from unjust procedures in which a small group of 28 states (deemed “Friends of the Chair”) crafted the Copenhagen Accord in closed settings (Allan 2020). The EU was also sidestepped when China and the US hammered out a deal on their own. Civil society activists further criticized a chaotic accreditation process that severely limited nonstate participation in the Copenhagen process. De-legitimation of the UNFCCC continued after the Copenhagen Summit as major emitter states established alternative and competing minilateralist clubs (Morse and Keohane 2014; Hovi et al. 2019). Eventually, the turn to the “bottom-up” approach of NDCs in the Paris Agreement restored the legitimacy of the UNFCCC and returned it to the center of global climate governance.

A third legitimacy crisis for the UNFCCC occurred with another US withdrawal, this time by the Trump Administration from the Paris Agreement. In June 2017, President Trump announced the start of an exit process that culminated in the formal US departure in November 2020, which caused an immediate global concern. The UNFCCC Secretariat responded by defending the central role of the organization in global climate governance. Domestically, the US withdrawal created a powerful resistance movement including bipartisan coalitions of governors (the US Climate Alliance) and mayors (Climate Mayors), as well as broader alliances involving businesses, faith groups, indigenous peoples, and university leaders (Bexell and Bäckstrand 2022). Internationally, movements of youth and schoolchildren—such as Fridays for Future, led by the Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg—com-

Figure 5.5 Citizen Support for the EU Setting Ambitious Climate Targets

Source: Eurobarometer 2021.

bined a systemic critique with an appeal to the scientific authority of the IPCC. Following the electoral defeat of Trump, the US, under the Biden Administration, re-entered the Paris Agreement in 2021.

Turning to public opinion in the EU, a special Eurobarometer survey in 2021 of more than 26,000 citizens across 27 member states found that 93 percent of respondents considered climate change to be a serious problem, 78 percent regarded it as a very serious problem, and 25 percent ranked it the most serious issue facing the world (Eurobarometer 2021). Moreover, as shown in Figure 5.5, nearly 90 percent of citizens believed it is important that the EU sets ambitious climate and renewable energy targets. A follow-up Eurobarometer survey in 2022 on the green transition indicated overwhelming citi-

zen support for the European Green Deal and the European Climate Law. Almost three quarters of the respondents were frightened by climate change (Eurobarometer 2022). That said, approval levels vary across EU countries (Tosun et al. 2019). Eurobarometer data show that stringent EU climate policies attract the strongest citizen support in Sweden and the Netherlands (over 60 percent). In contrast, citizens in countries dependent on fossil fuels, such as Latvia and Hungary, express much lower levels of support for the EU's climate ambitions (around 20 percent). When researchers surveyed negotiators, experts, and civil society representatives from various countries, the results indicate that the EU enjoys a high level of legitimacy as a leader in the UNFCCC process compared to China and the US (Parker et al. 2017).

Conclusion

Global climate change is a formidable global problem with potentially disastrous impact on humans, society, and the natural ecosystem. It is also a super-wicked and complex cross-sectoral global threat linked to other pressing problems, such as energy security, poverty, and biodiversity loss. As UN Secretary General António Guterres put it in 2022, humanity has a choice between collective action or collective suicide in responding to climate change and breaking free from fossil fuel addiction (Harvey 2022). This existential choice was underlined by the recent synthesis report of the IPCC (2023), which predicts catastrophic climate effects if GHG emissions are not cut by half until 2030.

This chapter has examined whether the leading global and regional organizations in climate governance—the UNFCCC and the EU—are fit for purpose. Can they provide the much-needed global collective action to curb global warming? Do these international organizations have the power, effectiveness, and legitimacy to tackle climate change as one of the largest existential threats to humanity, society, and ecosystems?

The short answer is no. The UNFCCC, as an intergovernmental organization without majority decisions, does not have the legal, institutional, and material power to force states to take transformative measures for deep decarbonization and substantial emission cuts. Its power is mainly ideational, related to scientific advice and soft orchestration to mobilize nonstate actors. The UNFCCC also has limited

effectiveness, as its compliance, enforcement, and implementation mechanisms are weak. However, the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement do provide a foundation for global decarbonization and climate resilience. Moreover, the bottom-up pledge and review process of the Paris Agreement has better aligned the UNFCCC with the domestic and international realities of global climate politics. Also promising are the notable levels of citizen and elite legitimacy vis-à-vis the UNFCCC, also in comparison with several other major international organizations. Although the UNFCCC has faced several major de-legitimation challenges, it has recovered each time.

The EU is generally more fit for purpose than the UNFCCC. This regional organization has unique supranational power to regulate climate change and enforce its policies. The EU has also exercised ideational power by way of global leadership in climate change for three decades. With respect to effectiveness, the EU achieved and indeed over-complied with its 2020 emissions reduction target. However, its 2030 target of a 55 percent reduction in emissions is unlikely to be reached unless all member states increase their ambitions. The EU will need to enforce stringent and binding climate and energy legislation in order to achieve a systemic transformation to carbon neutrality. In order to achieve this, the EU's climate policy enjoys a high level of legitimacy in government circles, among civil society groups, and with the public at large.

To be sure, the UNFCCC and the EU are not sufficient by themselves to curb global warming. Policy outputs from these two international organizations are only a first—although crucial—step toward a climate governance that is fit for purpose. The UNFCCC and EU have paved the way for domestic climate legislation and institutions, as well as climate commitments from diverse nonstate actors such as business, cities, and civil society. The UNFCCC and the EU have also provided access to global citizen activism—e.g., through Fridays for Future—which has mobilized public opinion in support of large-scale action on climate change.

6. Ways Forward

This report has examined whether global governance is fit for purpose. We have considered this issue with particular focus on three preconditions for well-functioning global governance: power, effectiveness, and legitimacy. Our center of attention has been the classic international organizations that constitute core pillars of global governance and play frontline roles in addressing transboundary problems. Do these international organizations hold the power required to develop, implement, and enforce global policies? Do they wield this power with sufficient effectiveness to reduce transboundary problems? And do they possess legitimacy as governing institutions in the eyes of citizens and elites? In this concluding chapter, we summarize the key findings of the report, discuss factors that constrain the ability of global governance to deliver, and suggest ways that global governance could become more fit for purpose going forward.

Debates in academia and policy circles have revolved around two competing accounts of the strength and quality of contemporary global governance. Pessimists have argued that global governance is poorly equipped to effectively address transboundary challenges, since international organizations usually lack coercive means, easily become gridlocked, and generally suffer from legitimacy deficits. Optimists, in contrast, have argued that global governance is well suited to take on the challenges of a globalized world, since international organizations enjoy growing power, only multilateral cooperation can solve cross-border problems, and global publics generally tend to be supportive.

This report paints a more nuanced picture, siding with neither of

these perspectives, but lending some support to both. Our conclusion is that, overall, contemporary international organizations have notable levels of power, effectiveness, and legitimacy, but that current arrangements are insufficient to tackle challenges of the future. Factors weighing on international cooperation are concerns about sovereignty, influence, values, finances, and domestic politics. For global governance to live up to expectations, state and nonstate actors need to reinvest in international cooperation. We outline three possible ways forward, with varying levels of ambition: upgrading interstate collaboration, expanding new modes of global governance, and transforming global governance.

Fit for Purpose? A Mixed Record

Contemporary global governance enjoys many qualities that make it well equipped to solve global problems. Over time, international organizations have come to possess multiple and sometimes far-reaching means of power, have become quite effective at developing and enforcing global policies, and have gained popular legitimacy that is broadly on par with that of national governments.

Yet international organizations also struggle with deficits of power, effectiveness, and legitimacy. While the urgency of transboundary problems continues to intensify, the empowerment of international organizations has stalled, the effectiveness of global policies often falls short of achieving key goals, and the legitimacy of multilateral institutions suffers from pervasive gaps between elites and citizens.

POWER

As states have increasingly sought to tackle common problems together, *multilateral institutions have been equipped with significant means of power*. From around 1950 until around 2010, international organizations were granted legal authority in an expanding number of policy domains, were equipped with far-reaching institutional means to facilitate cooperation, were given greater material resources to pursue these goals, and developed novel ways to influence state behavior through ideational power. While such power means vary extensively across multilateral institutions, the general trend until recently was growth and expansion. Today, international organizations are better

equipped than ever to address the broad variety of transboundary problems that require joint action.

Yet developments over the past decade suggest that problems lie ahead. We see less creation of new international organizations, and those that already exist no longer attract growing capacities for addressing transboundary challenges. *The era of empowerment appears to have come to an end*, or at least to have hit an extended plateau. Multilateral bodies are not gaining new policy competences at the same rate. The growth in institutional power has stopped, and in some respects has even gone into reverse, as states have become more reluctant to pursue supranational cooperation. Material resources for international organizations are not expanding and have in some respects become more constrained. While ideational power is still on the rise, this development likely reflects international organizations deliberately shifting to softer means of influence as compensation for the greater constraints on legal, institutional, and material power.

It is *questionable whether current levels of power for international organizations are sufficient* to address urgent global problems. Gaps in governance in several crucial policy areas—such as migration, energy, forestry, and digital technology—suggest that multilateral institutions do not have the necessary legal authority to develop adequate global solutions. Nor have the institutional means of international organizations been optimized for effective cooperation, despite widespread awareness of the benefits of greater delegation, more majority voting, and more binding rules. The material resources of international organizations are generally very limited relative to the policy challenges that these bodies are tasked to solve (also compared to national governments). The ideational power of international organizations may be significant, but also requires audiences in state and society to listen.

These patterns and dynamics are evident in global climate governance, our illustrative case study. The UNFCCC has evolved into the principal forum for cooperation on global climate rules, even if it is accompanied by many more bodies across various levels and sectors of governance, including regional organizations such as the EU. Although the UNFCCC has been assigned an exceptionally ambitious governance task, it has very limited means of power—in some respects even less than previously. Institutional power is in short supply, as states have prioritized intergovernmental cooperation without delegation, major-

ity voting, and binding rules. The material means of the UNFCCC are limited, as states primarily invest in domestic climate adaptation and mitigation. By necessity, the UNFCCC largely relies on its ideational power, that is, its capacity to spread scientific knowledge about climate change and to inspire action from state and societal actors through norms and appeals. In comparison, the EU is better equipped both institutionally and materially, and illustrates the promise of having more powerful means. Yet the EU's reach is focused on Europe and cannot replace global action.

EFFECTIVENESS

Despite frequent claims that international organizations suffer from political deadlocks and negotiation failures, the general picture is more positive. Multilateral institutions *have continued to develop new policy in spite of a tumultuous context*, with global power shifts, member state withdrawals, and civil society protests. Moreover, the policy development of international organizations appears to be quite responsive to fluctuations in policy problems. When crises strike and situations worsen, international organizations typically respond by taking new policy initiatives that target those problems. To be sure, important cases of deadlock and failure exist, for instance, in the UNSC. However, the overall pattern of multilateral policymaking shows notable efficiency and responsiveness.

That said, new policies are not enough to ensure that international organizations are effective. For one, those initiatives must be sufficiently ambitious. Policies that hold back from tough targets and demand little or no adjustment in prevailing behavior are unlikely to solve global problems. Many signs indicate that the *current ambitions of international cooperation often fall short of what is required*. Multilateral negotiations typically converge on lowest-common-denominator solutions that all key parties can accept, especially when agreement requires consensus. This dynamic means that the most ambitious proposals rarely come out as winners. Consider global efforts to fight climate change, combat poverty, stabilize financial markets, and ensure safe migration.

Effective global governance also requires state and nonstate actors to follow the adopted policies. While not as bad as sometimes depicted, *rule compliance is far from perfect*. On the one hand, we observe

increased compliance over time for key international organizations in four important policy areas: international trade (WTO), financial stability (IMF), labor conditions (ILO), and European integration (EU). This trend suggests that the compliance mechanisms of these organizations are well able to deter, detect, and correct violations of the agreed rules. On the other hand, noncompliance remains a serious issue in multilateral cooperation, especially when institutions lack enforcement mechanisms that are on par with the EU, the IMF, and the WTO. We should also be careful not to equate compliance with problem solving, since high levels of compliance may reflect low levels of policy ambition.

Ultimately, effectiveness boils down to whether multilateral institutions reach their goals and impact the problems they are asked to tackle. The overall picture is that *international organizations generally have positive effects in the areas they govern, but often fall short of solving the problems that they are meant to address*. Multilateral institutions in the areas of security, trade, development, and human rights have often helped to reduce their focal problems. Peacekeeping has contributed to reductions in violence, trade agreements to growing volumes of commerce and investment, development programs to better health conditions, and human rights treaties to fewer violations. Yet, despite these positive effects, international organizations rarely achieve their full goals, especially when the objective is to eliminate rather than ameliorate the global problem at hand. The world still overflows with military conflict, trade protectionism, human poverty, rights abuse, and other challenges, despite the best efforts of multilateral institutions.

Global climate governance well illustrates these patterns and dynamics around effectiveness. The core rules in global efforts to combat climate change have evolved over time through successive treaties and protocols, supplemented by a variety of implementing provisions and programs. However, this policy development has come at the cost of diluted ambitions, as well as weakened implementation mechanisms. The Paris Agreement even allows each state to set its own targets for GHG emission reductions, without any binding commitment to collective targets. Predictably, the result is good compliance with national objectives, but collectively insufficient measures to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. In comparison, the EU's ambitions go much further, including a binding and enforceable climate law that requires all

EU member states to be carbon neutral by 2050. Yet the EU's capacity to mitigate global climate change is limited, since its member countries account for less than 10 percent of current total global emissions.

LEGITIMACY

Contrary to common assertions, *international organizations do not suffer from a general legitimacy crisis*. Instead, multilateral institutions tend to enjoy moderate levels of approval among both citizens and elites. In fact, overall average citizen confidence in international organizations slightly exceeds the average confidence in national governments.

Furthermore, there is limited evidence of a downward trend in the perceived legitimacy of international organizations. Instead, public approval of multilateral cooperation appears to hold quite steady over time, albeit with some fluctuations. For instance, both the UN and the EU have experienced a decline in legitimacy in the early twenty-first century, but have since seen their support recover. Many international organizations have experienced no serious challenge to their legitimacy over the past 35 years, and among those that have, the reasons tend to be specific to the case at hand, rather than a reflection of general unhappiness with multilateral cooperation.

However, there are notable differences in levels of legitimacy beliefs toward global governance across organizations and countries, indicating that *international organizations enjoy less approval in some circles*. Certain multilateral institutions attract greater legitimacy than others. Both citizens and elites differentiate between international organizations, generally expressing more support for human security organizations (ICC, UN, WHO) than economic organizations (IMF, World Bank, WTO). Similarly, international organizations are perceived as more legitimate in some countries than in others. For instance, citizens in the Philippines and Germany accord greater legitimacy to multilateral institutions than citizens in Brazil and Russia.

Particularly worrying is a *notable elite-citizen gap in legitimacy beliefs* vis-à-vis global governance. Leaders in politics and society tend to regard international organizations as more legitimate than the general public. Elites on average have moderately high legitimacy beliefs toward multilateral institutions, while citizens on average hold medium legitimacy beliefs. This divergence between elite and citizen legitimacy assessments prevails for all six major international organizations ex-

amined, in all but one of five diverse countries, and for all of six types of elites. However, these elite-citizen divides are not limited to multilateral cooperation, since a similar gap in legitimacy beliefs prevails toward national governments. These findings indicate that both global and national arenas are experiencing a cleavage in the legitimacy that elites and citizens accord to governance institutions.

International organizations are subject to intense politics of legitimization and de-legitimation. On the side of legitimization, international organizations and their supporters seek to boost public support through justifications and endorsements. On the side of delegitimation, opponents of global governance aim to undermine popular approval through criticisms and dismissals. Processes of legitimization and delegitimation typically occur at the same time and in response to each other. Legitimation tends to be more common, but delegitimation tends to be more influential. Negative messages tend to have greater impact on citizen legitimacy beliefs toward international organizations than positive ones. Indeed, anti-globalization elites have skillfully exploited the grievances of particular groups and countries, even as average levels of legitimacy toward global governance have remained in the medium range.

Global climate governance illustrates many of these patterns and dynamics. While no systematic data are available on citizen legitimacy beliefs toward the UNFCCC, research indicates that the institution has extensive support among elites. The UNFCCC enjoys higher legitimacy than the IMF in all of the examined countries, except the US, and higher legitimacy than the UNSC in all of the examined countries, except Russia. Yet these higher levels of approval among elites have not prevented anti-globalist critics (including political leaders such as Jair Bolsonaro and Donald Trump) from attacking the UNFCCC. The EU's climate policies also enjoy broad citizen support, although the levels of approval vary considerably between member countries.

Key Obstacles

What are the key factors that prevent global governance from realizing its full potential? Behind the mixed record described above are a set of deep-seated obstacles that hamper the power, effectiveness, and legitimacy of international organizations. We group these obstacles un-

der five main headings: sovereignty concerns, influence distributions, clashing values, financial costs, and domestic politics. All five factors present major challenges for advocates of international cooperation. Indeed, these obstacles have tended to grow in recent times with global power shifts, increased autocratization of political regimes, and the rise of anti-globalist populism and nationalism.

SOVEREIGNTY CONCERNS

A state's concern about its sovereignty presents a prominent constraint on global governance. *International cooperation invariably involves some limitation on a state's freedom of action* in exchange for a greater collective ability to address joint problems. Supranational cooperation involves greater restrictions on sovereignty, as states delegate power to multilateral bodies, pool power in interstate decision-making bodies, and accept binding rules. Intergovernmental cooperation implies fewer restrictions on sovereignty, as states refrain from delegation, pooling, and bindingness. However, sovereignty problems also lie in the mind—a consequence of understanding the world in statist terms.

This report shows that such *concerns with national sovereignty present significant obstacles to the power, effectiveness, and legitimacy of international organizations*, making global governance less fit for purpose than it could be. Fixations on sovereignty frequently prevent member states from giving international organizations the institutional power they need to better develop and enforce policies. Notably, multilateral institutions would benefit from further reliance on majority decision-making, greater sanctioning power, and increased use of binding rules. Instead, the problem-solving potential of international organizations is often held back by consensus decision-making, insufficient enforcement powers, and non-binding rules. Sovereignty concerns have also been invoked to justify states leaving international organizations, as in the case of the withdrawal of the Philippines from the ICC and the UK's exit from the EU.

The constraining effect of sovereignty has been *exacerbated by growing autocratization across the contemporary world*. Autocratic governments tend to be more concerned about national sovereignty, making them less likely to join international organizations, commit to international treaties, and accept international courts and tribunals. In addition, sovereignty concerns have grown *more acute in recent years with*

rising populism and nationalism. Anti-globalist parties and politicians are particularly anxious to preserve state sovereignty, leading them to resist international cooperation, particularly when it involves supranational components that threaten national autonomy.

INFLUENCE DISTRIBUTIONS

Another key constraint on global governance relates to distributions of power in multilateral cooperation. *International organizations typically accord greater voice to some states than others.* In some international organizations—such as the IMF, the UNSC, and the World Bank—these disparities are formally reflected in voting arrangements. In other multilateral institutions, which formally give all states an equal say—such as the UNFCCC, the WHO, and the WTO—power inequalities manifest in informal practices.

This report provides several illustrations of how *concerns about the distribution of influence get in the way of more powerful, effective, and legitimate global governance.* Historically dominant states in Europe and North America fight to preserve their privileges in key international organizations, even when these states are in structural decline. This resistance to reform hurts effectiveness, and reallocations of influence would also benefit legitimacy. The UNSC is a prime example in this respect, where adjustments to membership and veto power are arguably long overdue. Resistance to reform from older powers has already led rising powers to create several competing international organizations, including China's establishment of the AIIB and the BRICS' creation of the New Development Bank (NDB), in competition with the ADB and the World Bank, respectively. Such developments can generate unhelpful duplication and fragmentation.

Shifts in global power from established states in Europe and North America to rising states in Africa, Asia, and Latin America will continue. (Re-)emergent powers will increasingly demand a greater say in global governance. While some of these demands for recalibrated influence have been met by reforms (e.g., redistributed votes at the IMF) or innovations (e.g., creation of the G20), adjustments overall have been quite limited. By and large, the historically established powers have held on to the international organizations that they created in the aftermath of the Second World War. Yet concerns with the distribution of influence in multilateral institutions will not go away and, if anything,

are likely to intensify. It therefore becomes critical to arrive at power bargains that can help to harness the efforts of all states to the benefit of global governance.

VALUE CONFLICTS

A third major obstacle to improved global governance—an issue that often intertwines with global power shifts—concerns divergences over core values. Existing international organizations largely rest on principles of a liberal world order, including national self-determination, representative democracy, human rights, open markets, the peaceful settlement of disputes, and the rule of international law. Yet the ongoing redistribution of power favors certain states that contest (some of) these values and promote alternative priorities. In addition, many actors challenge historically dominant states in Europe and North America for double standards in their application of liberal internationalist values through global governance.

This report notes different occasions where value conflicts hamper international cooperation through multilateral institutions. The growing gulf between liberal and authoritarian governments is one prominent instance. In addition, cultural tensions have arisen in international organizations over gender issues, LGBTQ+ persons, indigenous peoples, healthcare guidelines, religious values, treatment of ethnic minorities, and war crimes. Regarding double standards, critics often complain about selective prosecutions by the ICC, biased application of trade liberalization measures, inconsistent condemnations of wars, and so on.

Value clashes pose perplexing problems for global governance. On the one hand, pressing global challenges demand joint approaches across cultural divides. On the other hand, many state and nonstate actors insist on handling global challenges in line with their core values. In many situations, the divergent perspectives are irreconcilable, and many actors are reluctant to take issues to international venues where they feel their values are not sufficiently respected. As yet, international organizations—and world politics generally—struggle to create unity out of diversity.

FINANCIAL COSTS

A fourth obstacle that keeps states from investing more forcefully in global governance relates to funding. International cooperation comes with two main types of financial costs: the expenses of running the bureaucracies of international organizations and the expenses of implementing the policies agreed by those institutions. The first expense is actually quite modest, since international administrations are typically small, rarely reaching the size of a medium-sized city government. The second expense varies extensively, from the zero cost of refraining from human rights abuse to the substantial cost of transforming societies to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. States also face a third financial calculation: the opportunity cost of foregoing other expenditure that they could make instead of funding international organizations. For cash-strapped governments with demanding electorates, the *perceived opportunity cost of investing in international cooperation rather than other concerns* poses a dilemma.

This report provides several examples of how *concerns with costs lead states to underfund international organizations*, hurting their capacity to solve transboundary problems. In the case of climate change, for example, states often postpone necessary policy measures, even when it would make economic sense to address issues in the present rather than push them into the future when the problems would be even worse. In this respect, financial concerns often lead states to be shortsighted.

The rise of anti-globalist populism and nationalism has often exacerbated these financial constraints. For example, the populist Trump Administration in the US cut funding to international organizations and programs. Also, when anti-globalist parties have not won the reins of power, they have pressured governments to prioritize domestic concerns over international cooperation. We therefore observe a shift toward earmarked funding of multilateral institutions, as governments seek to tighten their financial and political control.

DOMESTIC POLITICS

A final major constraint on a state's engagement with global governance relates to the need for domestic support. International cooperation is often described as a two-level game, where progress at the global level is dependent on sufficient support at the domestic level. All governments, whether democratic or authoritarian, depend on

support from domestic constituencies in order to stay in power and to pursue prioritized policies. As a result, *governments always calculate what is politically palatable domestically* when deciding whether to support or resist global policies. Many countries require formal parliamentary ratification of international agreements. Domestic politics in this respect shape what is and what is not possible in global politics. While sometimes regrettable from an efficiency perspective, this requirement of domestic political support can also enhance accountability in international cooperation.

This report highlights several ways that *concerns with domestic political support constrain the development of global governance*. While public opinion toward international organizations is not as negative as anti-globalist populists claim, it is only moderately supportive. Hence, governments are constrained in terms of further large-scale transfers of power to international organizations. Moreover, issues of global governance are often not particularly salient in domestic politics, so that politicians have few votes to win with an internationalist agenda. Instead, governments frequently seek to score domestic political points in ways that negatively impact global governance—claiming credit when multilateral cooperation produces popular results, and blaming international organizations when multilateral cooperation produces unpopular outcomes.

Constraints from domestic politics have become *even more prominent in the wake of growing anti-globalist populism and nationalism*. Anti-globalist political entrepreneurs in diverse countries from Russia to Sweden have succeeded to mobilize discontented citizens against multilateral cooperation. In severe cases, the consequences include defunding of international programs, exits from international treaties, and withdrawals from international organizations, with Brexit as the most prominent example.

Ways Forward

A well-functioning system of global governance is necessary for states and societies to be able to deal with growing transboundary challenges. Yet, as this report has shown, current arrangements are not delivering the full potential. How could global governance become more fit for purpose? In what ways could the power, effectiveness, and legiti-

macy of global governance be further strengthened? How could the constraints imposed by sovereignty concerns, influence distributions, conflicting values, financial costs, and domestic politics be navigated toward future reforms?

We conclude this report by outlining *three reform strategies*, each entailing a different level of change. All three strategies build on the same core insight: that we need forms of global cooperation that can better handle transboundary problems. *Renationalizing politics will not solve problems* such as climate change, military conflict, financial instability, trade protectionism, health pandemics, and unsafe migration.

The first strategy is to upgrade the classic interstate system of cooperation by strengthening international organizations. This approach is the most modest. The second strategy is to shift toward greater reliance on new modes of global governance. This approach recognizes that the classic interstate system is not sufficient and that more ambitious governance innovations are necessary. The third strategy prescribes a radical transformation of global governance, with a qualitative shift toward more supranational and democratic ways of organizing global governance.

Our three reform strategies speak to ongoing debates in policy circles, civil society, and academia about the best ways forward for global governance. While commentators have discussed reforms of global governance for decades, the subject has gained renewed topicality in recent years through multiple crises that afflict the world. Notably, UN Secretary-General Guterres has outlined visions for multilateral cooperation in “Our Common Agenda” in 2021. His High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism is currently developing concrete recommendations that will be considered at the Summit of the Future in 2024.

Many think pieces and reform proposals are now circulating on a variety of topics, including how to repurpose multilateral development banks, how to strengthen global health governance, how to boost trust among states, and how to promote greater youth participation (HLAB 2022). Combined with long-standing topics of debate, such as reform of the UNSC and more effective climate action, these proposals suggest a rich debate in the coming years on the future of global governance. Our three reform strategies do not side with specific proposals in this ongoing debate, but identify three general approaches

to reform, with varying levels of ambition.

UPGRADING INTERSTATE COOPERATION

The first strategy is to fix problems in the classic system of interstate cooperation that has developed since 1945 and constitutes the backbone of the liberal international order. This approach suggests that *current international organizations work reasonably well* and that the best way forward is to build on this proven track record, rather than to venture into risky transformations that could undermine what works in the current system. Yet even fixing existing international organizations will require significant reinvestment in multilateral cooperation, politically and economically.

The upgrade strategy builds on an assessment that contemporary international organizations overall have been quite helpful in addressing transboundary problems. While not always sufficient, they have made considerable headway on these challenges. Moreover, existing international organizations enjoy notable levels of legitimacy among both citizens and elites. On this reasoning, the indicated way forward is to *focus on improvements to this system of interstate cooperation*, especially considering all the effort that has gone into developing it and the likelihood that more far-reaching proposals would encounter stiff opposition in the current political climate.

As this report shows, research can offer a good understanding of the key issues that need fixing in current international organizations, and these assessments tend to resonate well with policymakers. Moreover, the proposed upgrades are *readily available*. These reforms typically focus on the power means at the disposal of international organizations, which in turn also have implications for their effectiveness and legitimacy.

Reforms that would help to upgrade the current system of interstate cooperation include:

- › *Closing gaps in governance* by giving international organizations greater legal power to regulate areas such as taxation, migration, energy, water, forestry, and digitalization.
- › *Relaxing hurdles in decision-making* of international organizations by shifting toward greater majority voting instead of consensus.
- › *Strengthening the compliance systems* of international organizations through more extensive enforcement powers and other capacities.

- › *Boosting the core funding* of international organizations, partially by increasing contributions and partially by refraining from earmarking.
- › *Reinforcing the ideational power* of international organizations by standing up for core values, defending scientific knowledge, and pushing back against anti-globalist narratives.
- › *Reallocating influence* within international organizations to better reflect new geopolitical realities, thus harnessing the capacities of rising powers.
- › *Opening up* international organizations *to greater involvement of nonstate actors* that can contribute expertise, resources, presence in the field, and democratic anchoring.
- › *Reducing duplication* across international organizations by developing comparative advantages, ensuring clear divisions of labor, and improving coordination.

Yet even more modest reforms of the kind just enumerated demand considerable reinvestment and recommitment on the part of states as the underwriting members of international organizations. Moreover, such reforms would require compromises from states regarding sovereignty concerns, influence distributions, value conflicts, financial costs, and domestic politics. To this extent, the upgrading strategy is not an easy route.

EXPANDING NEW MODES OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

The second strategy toward the future involves a further shift toward new modes of global governance as a complement to classic interstate cooperation. While alternative institutional forms of global governance have been on the rise in recent decades, this strategy would make such modes the principal way of improving global governance going forward. This approach judges that adequate reforms to existing international organizations may prove very difficult to achieve and offers *a different plan of action that is less dependent on the will of states*.

New modes of global governance have features that make them less sensitive to the constraints that afflict classic international organizations, most notably, sovereignty concerns. In addition, these alternative institutional forms have characteristics that make them *particularly attractive for handling complex governance problems*, such as greater

flexibility and nonstate involvement.

Informal cooperation through transgovernmental networks, such as the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision and the G20, relaxes sovereignty concerns and offers greater flexibility than formal interstate cooperation. Transnational hybrid institutions, such as ICANN and the Global Fund, harness the combined resources of public and private actors. Transnational private initiatives, such as the FSC and the IASB, provide a way for the market to develop and enforce regulatory standards, removed from the constraints of states. Translocal cooperation arrangements, such as C40 Cities, bypass central governments to harness the efforts and resources of substate actors for global action.

Even states and established international organizations recognize that new modes of governance often make *positive contributions* alongside classic interstate cooperation. The UN has developed many public-private arrangements, for instance, to promote sustainable development, human rights, and global health. Organizations such as the OECD and the World Bank have turned to governance through performance indicators, such as PISA and Doing Business, which offer less intrusive ways to affect state and nonstate behavior.

Reforms that would propel a shift toward new modes of global governance include:

- › Allowing new modes of governance to *take the lead in areas* of global cooperation that are *subject to regulatory gaps*, such as taxation, migration, and digitalization.
- › *Experimenting* with new modes of governance *in areas* of interstate cooperation that have been *prone to deadlock and limited progress* in recent years, such as global trade.
- › Promoting *greater reliance by international organizations* on new modes of governance as a way of overcoming obstacles in classic interstate collaboration.
- › *Integrating cities and other substate actors* in global governance through more inclusive and networked modes of governance.
- › *Harnessing new modes of governance to secure greater funding* for global governance.
- › *Addressing weaknesses in new modes of global governance* through reforms aimed at strengthening accountability, reducing risks of capture, and bolstering enforcement.

As this final point indicates, new modes of global governance are no panacea either. In particular, they face significant accountability challenges and substantial risks of special-interest capture. In addition, problems of enforcement can be even more acute for these “soft law” mechanisms than in classic international organizations.

TRANSFORMING GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

The third strategy for the future moves from reform to the transformation of global governance. It builds on more radical proposals for how global governance may become more powerful, effective, and legitimate. This strategy reflects *pessimism about* the potential of achieving a fully functioning system of global governance through *incremental reform*. Instead, it calls for a fundamental shift in the organization of the current system of global governance toward more cosmopolitan or supranational forms of cooperation.

Proposals for such radical transformations of global governance tend to originate from academic and civil society circles, which are less constrained by the short-term pressures of interstate politics that face policymakers and thus better positioned to take *visionary long-term perspectives*. Yet, in frustrated policy circles, too, it becomes increasingly common to demand far-reaching changes in global governance.

Advocates of this approach suggest that we are facing *a new “Bretton Woods moment”*—a juncture, similar to the end of the Second World War, when the underlying order is in flux, new visions are necessary, and novel solutions are within reach. To critics who would dismiss such ideas as utopian, proponents of radical change would recall critical moments post-1918 and post-1945, when far-reaching innovations produced new architectures of global cooperation, reflected today in organizations such as the UN and the EU.

While multiple visions for a transformed system of global governance circulate, an especially prominent one proposes a move toward *cosmopolitan cooperation*. This approach argues that global governance would become both more effective and more democratic by embracing supranational principles of organization, instead of clinging to an ultimately unproductive insistence on state sovereignty.

Measures that would transform global governance in a cosmopolitan direction include:

- › *Replacing weak international agencies*, such as the International

Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UNEP, with more fully empowered institutions, such as a World Migration Organization and a World Environmental Organization.

- › Equipping global organizations with *supranational authority* that overrides state sovereignty, as is already the case in the EU at a regional level.
- › Developing *democratic mechanisms* in the design of international organizations, such as global political parties, elected global assemblies, and global deliberative citizen forums.
- › Ensuring veritable *judicial power* in global governance by strengthening international courts, as well as the role of national courts in enforcing international law.
- › Creating a system of *international taxation* that generates much expanded own resources for international organizations and other global governance institutions.

Like the other two strategies, a transformational approach to the future of global governance faces several difficulties. For one thing, the realization of bigger changes requires larger and more sustained efforts. In this respect, the contemporary spread of anti-globalist populism and nationalism is not auspicious for cosmopolitan visions. Skepticism toward liberal cosmopolitanism might also be anticipated in some postcolonial quarters, which may need convincing that such designs do not impose yet more Western imperialism.

Thus, the future of global governance can go in different directions. The upgrade, reform, and transformational strategies each have their positive potentials, as well as their tricky aspects. The three approaches are not mutually exclusive, of course, as one could simultaneously pursue greater means for existing international organizations, expansion of new modes of global governance, and long-term moves toward greater supranationality. The challenge at hand is to develop pathways that are both attractive and feasible in forging a global governance that is more fit for purpose: powerful, effective, and legitimate.

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Karin Bäckstrand is Professor in Environmental Social Science at the Department of Political Science at Stockholm University and a researcher at the Institute for Future Studies. Her primary research revolves around global environmental politics, the role of science in environmental decision-making, the politics of climate change, and the democratic legitimacy of global governance. Bäckstrand received her PhD from Lund University in 2001 and has been a visiting scholar at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of Oxford. Bäckstrand's work is published in journals such as *Global Environmental Politics*, *European Journal of International Relations*, *Global Environmental Change*, *Environmental Politics*, and *Journal of European Public Policy*. Her books include *Governing the Climate-Energy Nexus: Institutional Complexity and Its Challenges to Effectiveness and Legitimacy* (co-authored, Cambridge University Press, 2020), *The Research Handbook on Climate Governance* (co-edited, Edward Elgar, 2015) and *Rethinking the Green State: Environmental Governance towards Climate and Sustainability Transition* (co-authored, Routledge, 2015). Bäckstrand has been awarded grants funded by the Swedish Research Council, Formas, the Swedish Foundation for Strategic Environmental Research (Mistra), the Swedish Energy Agency, and the European Commission. She has extensive experience of interactions with policymakers and civil society, and was a member of the Swedish Climate Policy Council from 2018 to 2022.

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Thomas Sommerer is Professor of International Organizations at the Department of Politics and Public Administration at the University of Potsdam. He has previously held positions at Stockholm University, University of Konstanz, University of Hamburg, and the Max Planck Institute in Bonn. His research is focused on the design and performance of international organizations, democracy and legitimacy in global governance, and transnational processes of diffusion and learning. His research has been published in journals such as *International Organization*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *Review of International Organizations*, *Journal of European Public Policy*, and *Journal of Peace Research*. His books include *Global Legitimacy Crises: Decline and Revival in Multilateral Governance* (Oxford University Press, 2022) and *The Opening Up of International Organizations: Transnational Access in Global Governance* (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Global problems—like climate change, health pandemics, financial crises, and military conflicts—demand global solutions. This insight has spurred major growth of global governance over the past 75 years. Yet is this system of global governance fit for purpose in combating today's transboundary problems?

The SNS Democracy Council 2023 examines this question with a focus on three preconditions for well-functioning global governance: power, effectiveness, and legitimacy. This report explores these themes in a comparative perspective, analyzing a broad range of international organizations in different policy areas, with an in-depth look at global climate governance as an illustrative case. The Council concludes that contemporary global governance is unable to deliver at its full potential and outlines strategies for making global governance more fit for purpose in the future.

SNS Democracy Council 2023:

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