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The Legitimacy of International Institutions among Rising and Established Powers

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Abstract
The expectation that state voice drives perceptions of the legitimacy of international institutions is a common theme in academic scholarship and policy discourse on global power shifts. This article tests this expectation empirically, using novel and unique survey data on legitimacy perceptions toward eight international institutions among political and societal elites in six countries, comprising both rising and established powers. The article finds only limited support for a link between a state's voice in an international institution and elite perceptions of legitimacy. Differences in formal state representation are only partly reflected in patterns of perceived legitimacy across the six countries. In addition, there is no evidence at the individual level that assessments of state voice shape elites' perceptions of institutional legitimacy. Instead, considerations of good governance best predict whether elites perceive of international institutions as more or less legitimate. These findings suggest that only institutional reforms which are seen to favor general qualities of good governance, and not narrow demands for state voice, are likely to be rewarded with greater legitimacy.

Policy Implications

- The link between a state's voice in an international institution and the perceived legitimacy of this institution among state elites is weaker than policy-makers typically assume.
- Policy-makers striving to secure the legitimacy of international institutions should focus on ensuring that these institutions work in a democratic, effective, and fair fashion, rather than on satisfying each state's demands for more voice.
- Policy-makers with this aim should only accommodate demands for greater state voice when such reforms contribute to making international institutions more democratic, effective, and fair.
- Policy-makers in states challenging or defending existing institutional arrangements should be aware that claims for greater voice framed in terms of legitimacy is a rhetorical strategy that resonates poorly with elites' own conception of the legitimacy of these institutions.

Recent decades have witnessed a shift in the global distribution of power, from established powers in Europe and North America to rising powers in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Brooks and Wohlworth, 2015/2016; Layne, 2012; Kruck and Zangl, this issue). This power shift is broadly seen to challenge the legitimacy of international institutions at the core of the global order, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), United Nations Security Council (UNSC), World Bank, and World Trade Organization (WTO).[1.] The central issue claimed to cause the discontent of rising powers is the mismatch between state voice in decision-making and state power in material terms. While rising powers may have found the distribution of institutional privileges acceptable in times of Western dominance, they now increasingly contest the legitimacy of arrangements that deny them due voice in decision-making (Stephen and Zürn, 2019).

The expectation that state voice drives perceptions of legitimacy underpins the growing literature on global power shifts and international institutions. While existing scholarship makes varying predictions about the likelihood that rising and established powers will succeed in negotiating institutional adaptation (Kruck and Zangl, this issue), all rest on the assumption of a link between voice and legitimacy. According to one argument, the global power shift will undermine the legitimacy of the existing order, as established powers will be unwilling to meet the demands of rising powers (Gilpin, 1981). According to another argument, established powers can accommodate the demands of rising powers within existing institutions, thus preserving their legitimacy (Ikenberry, 2011). According to a third argument, the legitimacy of international institutions will depend on how distributional conflicts over voice are solved within particular issue-specific settings (Stephen and Zürn, 2019).

The expectation that state voice shapes institutional legitimacy is prominent in policy debates over global governance reform as well. For instance, it is commonly argued by proponents of reform to the UNSC that existing arrangements must be changed if the Council is to remain legitimate among regional powers without a permanent seat (German Federal Foreign Office, 2019; Hurd, 2008). Similar links between state voice and institutional legitimacy are regularly drawn in the context of the IMF (where it becomes an argument for upgrading China's voting rights), the G7 (where it accounts for non-members discontent with this exclusive institution), and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (where it explains favorable views of this inclusive institution among states otherwise often marginalized).

The purpose of this article is to test this expectation of a link between state voice and institutional legitimacy. To this end, we examine unique data on elite opinion from the Legitimacy in Global Governance (LegGov) Elite Survey conducted in 2017–2019. We focus specifically on elite opinion, because it captures the extent to which leading circles in a country consider international institutions to be legitimate. The survey covers 722 political and societal elites in six countries – Brazil, Germany, the Philippines, Russia, South Africa, and the US – comprising both rising and established powers. The survey measures the perceived legitimacy of eight international institutions in the areas of economic, security, and sustainable development governance, using elites' confidence in these institutions as the measure of perceived legitimacy.

Our test proceeds in two steps. We first conduct a congruence analysis at the country level, in which we assess whether a state's formal representation in an international institution is systematically related to perceptions of this institution's legitimacy among country elites. This analysis is sensitive to the specific distributions of formal privileges in particular institutions, which often reflect issue-specific power and therefore defy conventional distinctions between rising and established powers (Kruck and Zangl, this issue). The congruence analysis finds mixed support for a link between a state's formal representation in an international institution and elite perceptions of legitimacy. The fit is good in the context of the International Criminal Court (ICC), moderate in the context of the IMF, UNFCCC, World Bank, and World Health Organization (WHO), and poor in the context of the UNSC, G20, and WTO.

We then proceed to a regression analysis, since country-level associations may hide stronger or weaker relationships at the individual level, and since regression analysis allows us to control for the simultaneous impact of other factors potentially shaping elites' legitimacy perceptions. The regression analysis examines the relationship between elites' subjective assessments of state influence in the decision-making of the IMF, UNFCCC, and UNSC, and their legitimacy perceptions toward these institutions. The analysis does not support the expectation that state voice determines legitimacy perceptions. Instead, it establishes that general qualities of good governance best predict elite perceptions of institutional legitimacy. The more satisfied elites are with democracy, effectiveness, and fairness in international institutions, the more they regard these institutions to be legitimate. This result holds across all six countries, but the importance of each institutional quality varies across countries and institutions.

Taken together, these findings challenge the expectation of a link between state voice and institutional legitimacy that characterizes existing scholarship and policy discourse. If we consult the actual opinions of governing elites in rising and established powers, this link is tenuous at best. It appears that elites are less guided by narrow assessments of their own state's influence in an institution and more by qualities of collectively desirable governance (see also Binder and Heupel, this issue). These findings suggest that conflicts over state voice are unlikely to undermine the legitimacy of international institutions, that states which invoke a link between voice and legitimacy likely engage in a strategy of rhetorical coercion to extract concessions (Kruck and Zangl, this issue), and that reforms will best favor institutional legitimacy if they focus on general qualities of good governance rather than specific demands for state voice.

State voice and institutional legitimacy

Research on global power shifts tends to suggest that rising and established powers conceive of the legitimacy of international institutions based on state voice. Voice refers to the representation and influence of a state in the decision-making of an international institution. Many international institutions distribute voice unequally by giving some states a greater formal say than others in decision-making (Blake and Payton, 2015). In other institutions, where formal representation is equal for all, informal practices give certain states more influence than others (Stone, 2011).

The expectation of a link between state voice and institutional legitimacy grows out of the conventional narrative about global power shifts and international institutions (Acharya, 2016; Ikenberry, 2011, 2018a; Kruck and Zangl, this issue; Stephen and Zürn, 2019). According to this narrative, the US and its allies successfully constructed a liberal global order in the aftermath of the Second World War. The core of this liberal order was a number of international institutions, among them, the IMF, the World Bank, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and the UN. These international institutions were structured to favor the interests of the Western powers both in terms of procedural rules and substantive policies. Procedurally, they institutionalized inequalities by giving the Western powers particular advantages in decision-making. The IMF and the World Bank distributed voting power based on capital contributions, the UN granted exclusive veto privileges to five great powers, and the GATT informally relied on agreements between the US and Europe. Substantively, these international institutions tended to pursue policy agendas aligned with Western liberal ideals of free trade, human rights, and liberalization.

This liberal global order reached its climax in the 1990s, when the Western powers, inspired by the end of the Cold War, moved to expand the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU), create the ICC, and introduce new liberal norms such as responsibility to protect, human security, and sustainable development.

With the rise of new regional and global powers, the distribution of state voice within this institutional order has been called into question. What may have appeared as a reasonable distribution of voice in times of Western dominance is increasingly seen as unjust and unreflective of economic and political realities. The distribution of structural capabilities has shifted decisively in favor of the rising powers, while the US and its allies are in relative decline, economically, demographically, and militarily. This shift in geopolitical weight has gone hand in hand with demands for greater representation and influence in global governance. At the forefront of these demands are the BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa – but also other powers call for greater influence. For instance, regional powers without permanent seats have called for institutional reforms that would make the UNSC more inclusive and egalitarian. China has demanded a recalibration of the system of voting weights in the IMF and the World Bank. Brazil and India have requested to become part of the core negotiating group of the WTO, previously restricted to the US, the EU, Japan, and Canada.

These concerns with state voice in times of global power shifts are closely linked to perceptions of institutional legitimacy, according to many analyses. When criticizing the distribution of privileges within existing international institutions, rising powers challenge the legitimacy of arrangements that do not provide them with adequate voice in decision-making. Conversely, when defending the legitimacy of existing institutions, the established powers confirm their commitment to an order whose decision-making arrangements serve them well. While legitimacy could result from multiple standards, both rising and established powers appear particularly concerned with their own relative voice (Stephen and Zürn, 2019; Zürn and Stephen, 2010). The question of whether and how to reform the liberal international order to changing power realities is therefore intimately bound up with issues of legitimacy. 'The legitimacy of the rules and leadership roles of global governance is in dispute,' as Stephen (2017, p. 483) puts it. Ikenberry (2018a, p. 19) concurs: '[T]he crisis of the liberal order is a crisis of legitimacy.'

Existing scholarship is less united on the implications of this link between state voice and institutional legitimacy for the overall legitimacy and future development of the global order. These differences are rooted in varying assessments of the likelihood that international institutions accommodate the demands of rising powers – not of the link between voice and legitimacy as such. According to one argument, rooted in power transition theory, the global power shift will undermine the legitimacy of the existing order, as established powers will be unwilling to meet the demands of rising powers, eventually leading to the demise of this order (Gilpin, 1981; Schweller and Pu, 2011; Wohlworth, 2009). According to a second argument, associated with liberal internationalism, demands for greater voice can be effectively accommodated within the current order, which therefore will maintain or gain legitimacy in the eyes of rising powers – states that even may become its new constituencies (Ikenberry, 2011, 2018b). According to a third argument, advanced in recent empirical research, the picture is neither as gloomy as power transition theorists suggest, nor as bright as liberal internationalists expect. Rising powers accept the current global order as a system of rules and institutions for the management of transnational problems, but are genuinely dissatisfied with inequalities in decision-making to their disadvantage (Stephen and Zürn, 2019). Depending on how reforms are negotiated within specific settings, distributional conflicts over voice will therefore have either positive or negative consequences for the perceived legitimacy of these international institutions.

In sum: while existing research offers varying predictions of the future legitimacy and status of the current global order, it appears united in an expectation that state voice is a powerful determinant of the legitimacy of international institutions among rising and established powers. In the empirical analysis, we confront this expectation with new data.

Data: the LegGov Elite Survey

In order to evaluate the relationship between state voice and institutional legitimacy, we draw on novel and unique data from the LegGov Elite Survey, fielded between October 2017 and August 2019 (for a full description of the survey design and implementation, see Appendix S1). Using elite opinion to assess this expectation makes sense for several reasons. First, it allows us to capture the extent to which leading circles in a country find international institutions legitimate or not. It thus offers a fair way of examining whether those who govern a country are guided by considerations of state voice in international institutions. Second, since elites represent states internationally, elite opinion could have consequences for how states position themselves in debates over institutional reform (Lipscy, 2017; Kruck and Zangl, this issue; Zangl et al., 2016). Finally, elite opinion has advantages compared to alternative measures of the legitimacy of international institutions. Legitimation and delegitimation discourse by state representatives in the public realm often has strategic intent and can therefore be expected to less accurately capture sincere legitimacy perceptions (Binder and Heupel, 2015; Stephen and Zürn, 2019). Similarly, public opinion is a less optimal measure, since the general public is less informed about international institutions than elites, and since the link to state behavior in international institutions is less immediate.

The LegGov Elite Survey covers elite opinion in six countries: Brazil, Germany, the Philippines, South Africa, Russia, and the USA, comprising a total of 722 elite individuals. This sample spans states with varying positions in international institutions. While the US and Germany often are described as established powers in the current institutional order, Brazil, Russia, and South Africa are often presented as rising powers with aspirations for more central roles in global governance. The Philippines, finally, qualifies as a state that is neither established nor rising, thus offering an interesting case for comparison.

Elites are defined in this survey as people holding leading positions in key organizations in society that strive to be politically influential. While most studies of elite opinion focus on political elites exclusively, the LegGov Elite Survey covered societal elites as well, based on the idea that a multitude of organizations aspire to influence politics. In the category of political elites, the survey covered partisan-political and bureaucratic elites, such as elected politicians, party officials, senior civil servants, and career diplomats. In the general category of societal elites, the survey covered elites in media, civil society, research, and business circles, such as senior editors, advocacy directors, university professors, and company managers.

Since an exhaustive database of elites is not available, a random sample of respondents in each country could not be drawn, as is commonly done in similar studies of the general public. Instead, the survey used a targeted selection procedure in two steps (Hoffmann-Lange, 2009). First, the most central organizations within each of the six elite sectors were selected. Next, within those organizations, people in mid- and high-level positions who have a coordinating or strategic function and work on substantive issues were identified. The survey includes at least 100 interviews per country, evenly divided across the two categories of political and societal elites. The preferred survey method was telephone interviews. While the response rate is less central to the quality of a targeted quota sample compared to a random probability sample, it should be noted that the survey reached a respectable response rate of 38 per cent (Walgrave and Joly, 2018).

In line with a growing body of research, the survey relies on respondents' confidence in institutions as a measure of legitimacy perceptions.[2.] Interviewees were asked to indicate whether they had (0) 'no confidence at all,' (1) 'not very much confidence,' (2) 'quite a lot of confidence,' or (3) 'a great deal of confidence.' This operationalization is anchored in systems theory, which conceives of legitimacy as the reservoir of confidence in a political system, independent of short-term satisfaction with its distributional outcomes (Easton, 1975). While some studies use a multi-item measure with the aim to capture various complexities of legitimacy as a concept, these studies usually invoke a broader conceptualization of legitimacy, incorporating normative standards to be met by an institution and/or acceptance of the rules of an institution (e.g., Anderson et al., 2019; Gilley, 2006; Nasiritousi and Verhaegen, 2020). The question about confidence in the respective international institutions preceded, and was not immediately followed by, questions operationalizing the independent variables used for this analysis.

For the purposes of this article, we use data on the eight intergovernmental institutions covered by the LegGov Elite Survey: the G20, ICC, IMF, UNFCCC, UNSC, WHO, World Bank, and WTO. Intergovernmental institutions offer the most relevant context for evaluating whether considerations of state voice drive elites' legitimacy perceptions. The eight institutions vary on two relevant dimensions. First, they span institutions in three broad issue areas: economic, sustainable development, and security governance. Second, they present different ways of distributing formal representation among the six studied states, generating clear expectations about patterns in legitimacy.

Empirical analysis

The analysis evaluates the relationship between state voice and institutional legitimacy in two steps. The first part offers a congruence analysis (George and Bennett, 2005) at the country level, examining whether differences in the formal representation of states in international institutions are reflected in patterns of perceived legitimacy for these institutions. The second part goes one step further by offering an individual-level analysis of the relationship between elites' subjective assessments of state voice and their legitimacy perceptions toward three specific institutions: the IMF, UNFCCC, and UNSC.

Congruence analysis: formal state representation and institutional legitimacy

The congruence analysis operationalizes state voice as the formal representation of a state in the major decision-making body of an international institution. We would expect elites in states that enjoy better representation in a given international institution to perceive of this institution as more legitimate than elites in states that are less well represented. This analysis recognizes and exploits that state representation is distributed differently across institutional settings, making broad generalizations about some states as rising and others as established in all settings misleading (Kruck and Zangl, this issue; Stephen and Zürn, 2019).

Table 1 offers the basis for evaluating this expectation by showing the share of elite respondents in each country with a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the eight institutions in the sample. Next to the general category of elites in each country, the table distinguishes between political and societal elites on the expectation that state representation might matter most for political elites, whose role is to represent the state in question. We begin by discussing the five institutions with unequal representation and then turn to the three institutions with equal representation.

The *UN Security Council* has 15 members of which five are permanent members and enjoy a veto in UNSC decision-making, while the other ten elected non-permanent members rotate on a two-year basis. Among our six states, Russia and the US have permanent seats on the Security Council, while Brazil has acted as a non-permanent member ten times, Germany six times, the Philippines four times, and South Africa three times (UN, 2019). Together with India and Japan, Brazil and Germany are part of the G4 that repeatedly has demanded a reform of the Security Council with

Table 1. Elite confidence in international institutions by country and elite category

	All countries			Brazil			Germany			Philippines			Russia			South Africa			USA		
	Total	Pol.	Soc.	Total	Pol.	Soc.	Total	Pol.	Soc.	Total	Pol.	Soc.	Total	Pol.	Soc.	Total	Pol.	Soc.	Total	Pol.	Soc.
UNSC	54	56	52	59	66	53	55	63	48	52	65	38	73	69	78	33	30	35	55	54	56
IMF	52	56	48	63	66	61	56	68	45	44	49	39	45	39	51	37	47	29	63	62	63
World Bank	57	60	54	66	70	61	59	73	46	61	71	50	49	40	59	38	37	39	69	66	74
G20	49	53	45	60	61	59	39	50	29	43	48	37	68	65	71	30	35	26	57	58	56
ICC	64	64	64	81	81	81	98	98	98	65	63	67	47	50	43	31	28	34	61	60	61
WHO	85	88	83	93	92	95	86	87	85	88	89	88	78	89	67	84	91	78	80	79	80
UNFCCC	64	67	61	77	80	73	60	64	56	69	73	65	55	62	47	59	61	58	63	61	65
WTO	54	60	54	73	79	66	57	72	44	48	53	42	46	31	62	39	37	41	59	59	60
All	58	63	54	78	82	73	61	70	51	63	76	50	48	48	49	36	40	33	64	58	71
N	722	365	357	124	64	60	123	60	63	122	65	57	108	55	53	123	56	67	122	65	57

Note: Numbers are percentage of respondents with a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the institution.
Source: LegGov Elite Survey.

permanent seats for these states (Deutsche Welle, 2004). As Germany puts it: 'The German Government wants to see a reform of the Security Council that reflects the changed geopolitical environment since 1945' (German Federal Foreign Office, 2019). Reform proposals frequently include suggestions for a permanent African seat on the Council, and South Africa is one of the main regional contenders (Venter, 2003). The Philippines does not appear to have aspired to a permanent seat on the Security Council.

The composition of the Security Council, and related calls for reform, leads to the expectation that this institution enjoys greater legitimacy among elites in the US and Russia than in Brazil, Germany, South Africa, and the Philippines. As Table 1 indicates, this does not tend to be the case. While a particularly large portion of the Russian elites has confidence in the UNSC (73 per cent), the other observations are not in line with the expectation. Elites in Brazil (59 per cent), Germany (55 per cent), the US (55 per cent), and the Philippines (52 per cent) have very similar levels of confidence in the UNSC, while elites in South Africa (33 per cent) have considerably less confidence in the institution. The fit with the expectation is not improved by considering political elites specifically or the number of times a state has held a rotating seat on the UNSC.

The IMF and the World Bank allocate voting power in their main decision-making bodies based on the relative positions of member countries in the world economy, as reflected in GDP and contributions to the institutions (IMF, 2019; World Bank, 2019). Both the IMF and the World Bank have reformed the allocation of voting shares during the past decade, mainly in response to China's growing importance in the world economy, but also to the benefit of other BRICS countries (IMF, 2016). The US enjoys the greatest voting power by far in both institutions (IMF 16.52 per cent; WB 15.68 per cent), but also Germany is among the states with most voting power (5.32; 3.96). Russia (2.59; 2.74) and Brazil (2.22; 2.21), too, enjoy substantial voting power, while South Africa (0.64; 0.76) and the Philippines (0.44; 0.43) have considerably less.

According to the conventional expectation, the distribution of voting power in the IMF and the World Bank should be reflected in greater perceived legitimacy of these institutions in the US, followed by Germany, Russia, Brazil, the Philippines, and South Africa. Table 1 supports this expectation to some extent: while elites in Brazil show more confidence than expected, and Russian elites less confidence than expected, elites in the other countries largely conform to the expected pattern of confidence. The IMF and the World Bank enjoy the broadest support among US elites (63 per cent; 69 per cent), but are also regarded favorably by elites in Brazil (63 per cent; 66 per cent). Confidence is slightly less extensive in Germany (56 per cent; 59 per cent). While the World Bank enjoys broad legitimacy among elites in the Philippines (61 per cent), the IMF is seen as legitimate by a minority (44 per cent). Less than half of the interviewees in Russia have confidence in the IMF and World Bank (45 per cent; 49 per cent). Elites in South Africa are most skeptical of these two institutions (37 per cent; 38 per cent).

If we only consider political elites, the fit with the expectation is worse, as political elites in Germany have most confidence in the IMF and World Bank, and political elites in Russia the least confidence in the IMF and second least in the World Bank.

The G20 brings together representatives of the 19 most economically important states in the world as well as the European Union. Originally founded in 1999 for meetings among finance ministers and central bank governors, it was elevated in status in 2008, when it was extended to heads of state and government. All of our six states except the Philippines are members of the G20. The G20 is frequently seen as an effort by the established powers on the G7 to accommodate demands from rising powers for a greater role in the governing of the world economy. While states outside the G20 have contested its membership composition, the Philippines does not appear to be among those, even if its economy is not far behind the lesser developed members of the institution. Decisions in the G20 are taken through consensus, giving all member states equal formal weight.

The composition of the G20 suggests that elites in Brazil, Germany, Russia, South Africa, and the US should find the institution more legitimate than elites in the Philippines. If we consider that the G20 offers some regional powers the representation they have long sought in the governing of the world economy, we could expect it to be particularly appreciated in Brazil, Russia, and South Africa, which are not part of the G7. Table 1 offers weak support for this expectation: greater representation does not appear to have yielded a systematic legitimacy dividend. The share of elites that have confidence in the G20 is the lowest in South Africa (30 per cent) and the highest in Russia (68 per cent), Brazil (60 per cent) and the US (57 per cent). The Philippines (43 per cent) and Germany (39 per cent) fall in between. Focusing only on political elites has mixed effects for the fit: while the figures improve for Germany and South Africa, in line with the expectation, they also improve for the Philippines and decline for Russia, contrary to the expectation.

The ICC is open to all states for membership and is governed by the Assembly of States Parties, in which all member states have one vote. Yet some states have chosen not to sign or ratify the Rome Statute, and some have chosen to leave the court. Among our six states, Brazil, Germany, and South Africa are members of the ICC, while the Philippines, Russia, and the US are not. However, South Africa's status is unclear, as the government announced in 2016 that the country would leave the court, and confirmed this intention in 2019, but so far has not done so (Ncana, 2019; The Guardian, 2016). The Philippines was originally a member of the ICC, but declared in 2018 – during the field period of the LegGov Elite Survey – that it would withdraw from the court, and then officially left in March 2019 (Gutierrez, 2019). Russia signed the Rome Statute in 2000, but never ratified it, and then formally withdrew its signature in 2016 (Walker and Bowcott, 2016). The US participated in the negotiations leading to the establishment of the court, but subsequently voted against the Rome Statute.

State representation on the ICC and contestation among non-members lead to an expectation that the court is perceived as more legitimate among elites in Brazil, Germany, and possibly South Africa, than in the Philippines, Russia, and the US. Table 1 offers support for this expectation. The very broad legitimacy of the ICC among elites in Germany (98 per cent) and Brazil (81 per cent) stands out, as does the very weak legitimacy of the court in South Africa (31 per cent). Russian elites, too, show little confidence in the institution (47 per cent). The ICC enjoys medium legitimacy in the Philippines (65 per cent) and the US (61 per cent). Only focusing on political elites does not change the picture. This pattern suggests a mutually reinforcing relationship between membership and legitimacy where the court enjoys greater legitimacy among elites in states that have chosen to sign the Rome Statute and stay committed. In this respect, the case of the ICC is slightly different than the other institutions, as the legitimacy of the court among elites likely influenced state decisions on whether or not to join the court, which in turn determines state representation on the court.

Finally, let us consider international institutions where all six states are members and enjoy equal formal status. While operating in the shadow of informal power differentials (Stone, 2011), the *WHO*, *UNFCCC*, and *WTO* all subscribe to equal formal representation and voting power. We would expect these equalities to be reflected in relatively similar perceptions of the legitimacy of these international institutions among elites in the six countries. Table 1 indicates a pattern largely conformant to this expectation for the WHO and the UNFCCC, which tend to enjoy very high (WHO) or high (UNFCCC) legitimacy across the board. For the WTO, the spread is greater, ranging from elites in Brazil (73 per cent) to elites in the US (59 per cent), Germany (57 per cent), Philippines (48 per cent), Russia (46 per cent) and South Africa (39 per cent). Focusing only on political elites does not change this picture, while the pattern is more heterogeneous among societal elites.

In sum: the congruence analysis offers mixed support for a link between state representation and legitimacy perceptions. The comparison across states for single institutions shows a good fit for the ICC, a moderate fit for the IMF, World Bank, WHO, and UNFCCC, and a poor fit for the UNSC, G20, and WTO.

Regression analysis: perceived state influence and institutional legitimacy

While the congruence analysis examined the relationship between state representation and legitimacy perceptions at the country level, these aggregate numbers may hide a stronger or weaker relationship at the individual level. To assess if this is the case, we proceed to a regression analysis of elites' legitimacy perceptions toward three key institutions in economic, sustainable development, and security governance – the IMF, UNFCCC, and UNSC – which are subject to an in-depth examination in the LegGov Elite Survey.

In this analysis, we measure state voice through the variable *perceived influence*, based on the following question

'How much influence do you think [state] has in the decision-making process in each of the following international organizations? Do you think [state] has no influence at all (0), little influence (1), quite some influence (2) or a lot of influence (3)?' An advantage of this perceptions-based measure is the possibility to capture the influence of informal power as well, whereas the earlier analysis only took formal representation into account. Table 2 shows that elites' perceptions of state influence tend to reflect formal power differentials. In the case of the IMF, elite perceptions of influence mirror the relative formal voting power for all states except in Russia, where elites rate the state's influence lower than could be expected. Perceptions of state influence in the IMF are highest among US elites, followed by elites in Germany, Brazil, Russia, South Africa, and the Philippines. In the case of the UNSC, we observe the highest perceived influence among US and Russian elites, which accords with these states' exclusive status as permanent members. For states that are not permanent members of the UNSC, we do not observe a link between the number of times a state has held a rotating seat and elite perceptions of state influence. Finally, in the case of the UNFCCC, where states have equal formal status, we indeed observe smaller differences across country elites in the levels of perceived state influence. For elites from Brazil, the Philippines, and South Africa, we observe significantly higher levels of perceived influence than in the other institutions (confirmed by paired t-tests), which may reflect the better formal representation of these states in the UNFCCC. For elites from the US, we observe the lowest level of perceived influence in the UNFCCC, which suggests an awareness of the special status of the US in the IMF and UNSC.

Next to *perceived influence*, we include a range of other individual-level variables to control for alternative explanations (see Appendix S2 for question wording). First, we include three variables measuring satisfaction with democracy, effectiveness, and fairness in international institutions, based on the idea that elites care more about general qualities of good governance, than about the voice of their own particular state, when forming legitimacy beliefs. This alternative expectation is grounded in research on institutional sources of legitimacy in both domestic settings (Esaiassson et al., 2012; Newton and Norris, 2000) and international settings (Bernauer et al., 2019; Hurd, 2007; Scholte and Tallberg, 2018). We construct the variables *satisfaction democracy*, *satisfaction effectiveness*, and *satisfaction fairness* based on respondents' degree of satisfaction with these qualities for each individual institution. The weak correlation between these measures and *perceived influence* indicates that elites do not equate greater state voice with more democratic, effective, or fair governance, and that these measures thus tap distinct logics (Appendix S3).

Table 2. Perceived influence in the IMF, UNFCCC and UNSC by country

	IMF	UNFCCC	UNSC
Brazil	1.180	1.708	0.525
Germany	1.702	1.741	1.024
Philippines	0.915	1.310	0.629
Russia	0.925	1.495	2.584
South Africa	0.924	1.398	0.917
USA	2.483	1.850	2.429
All countries	1.362	1.586	1.328

Notes: Reported values are means. Scales range from 0 to 3. ANOVAs were used to test the significance of differences between countries per institution. For the IMF, all differences are significant except for the differences between Russia, South Africa and the Philippines. For the UNFCCC, there is no significant difference in perceived influence between elites in the US, Brazil and Germany, and between elites in South Africa, Russia and the Philippines. For the UNSC, perceived influence is significantly higher in the US and Russia, but it does not significantly differ between Brazil and the Philippines, and between Germany and South Africa.
Source: LegGov Elite Survey.

Second, we include two variables to evaluate the alternative that elites form legitimacy beliefs based on utilitarian calculation regarding costs and benefits from globalization (Anderson and Reichert, 1995; Curtis et al., 2014; Gabel, 1998). We include *education* based on the assumption that more educated elites are better positioned to reap the gains of globalization. In addition, we include *financial situation* based on the idea that elites with more optimistic assessments of their household finances already have reaped gains from globalization and will continue to do so.

Third, we include two variables to control for the possibility that elites form legitimacy beliefs toward international institutions based on the extent to which they hold a global orientation. The proposition here is that elites who 'think globally' are more likely to perceive of international institutions as legitimate sites of governance (Ecker-Ehrhardt, 2011; Norris, 2000). We use the variable *global preference* to assess the expectation that elites who have a stronger preference for problem-solving at the global level, as opposed other levels of governance, accord more legitimacy to international institutions. In addition, we include a measure of *global identification*, bases on responses to a question capturing the extent to which elites feel close to the world. Finally, we control for respondents' age and gender.

Table 3 presents logistic regression models that estimate the relationship between perceived influence and confidence in the IMF, UNFCCC and UNSC, while controlling for the alternative explanations. The models pool the respondents from all six countries, and we estimate bootstrapped clustered robust standard errors to account for this clustering of the data (Cameron et al., 2008). The analyses point to three main results. First, perceived influence is not significantly related to confidence in the three institutions. The posited relationship between state voice and institutional legitimacy thus does not appear to hold at the individual level and when controlling for a range of co-variates. Second, the findings strongly suggest that elites are motivated by general institutional qualities when forming legitimacy beliefs toward international institutions. The variables measuring satisfaction with effectiveness and fairness in the IMF,

Table 3. Multivariate logistic regression confidence in IMF, UNFCCC and UNSC

	IMF	UNFCCC	UNSC
Perceived influence	1.252 (0.173)	1.225 (0.298)	1.482 (0.358)
Satisfaction with institutional qualities			
Democracy	1.057 (0.037)	1.130 (0.068)*	1.254 (0.079)***
Effectiveness	1.185 (0.096)*	1.254 (0.116)*	1.923 (0.051)***
Fairness	1.980 (0.211)***	1.453 (0.065)***	1.248 (0.081)***
Utilitarian calculation			
Education (MA or PhD vs. lower education)	0.840 (0.204)	0.782 (0.290)	1.303 (0.349)
Financial situation	1.026 (0.045)	0.920 (0.052)	1.011 (0.041)
Global orientation			
Global preference			
Trade	1.375 (0.372)		
Development	1.028 (0.285)		
Environment		1.391 (0.207)*	
Defense			0.908 (0.281)
Global identification	1.291 (0.217)	0.902 (0.085)	1.155 (0.120)
Control variables			
Age	0.999 (0.007)	1.012 (0.011)	0.992 (0.010)
Gender (non-male vs. male)	1.469 (0.307)	0.865 (0.178)	0.898 (0.110)
Intercept	0.003 (0.003)***	0.036 (0.031)***	0.041 (0.031)***
N	636	610	653
Pseudo R^2	0.334	0.216	0.233

Notes: Models are logistic regressions with bootstrapped clustered robust standard errors to account for clustering by country. Reported values are odds ratios with standard errors in parentheses. *$p < 0.05$,**$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$. Variable education: As the elite respondents are very highly educated (only 3.7 per cent attained less than a BA degree), a dummy variable is used in the analyses distinguishing between respondents with a BA degree or lower (coded as 0), and those with a MA or PhD (coded as 1).
Source: LegGov Elite Survey.

UNFCCC, and UNSC are significantly positively related to confidence in the respective institutions. Satisfaction with democracy is positively related to confidence in the UNFCCC and UNSC, but not in the IMF. Third, elites' legitimacy perceptions do not appear to be substantially shaped by utilitarian calculations or global orientations. We only observe one significant relationship between global orientation and confidence: respondents who prefer to address environmental issues at the global level tend to have more confidence in the UNFCCC. Finally, respondents' age and gender are not significantly associated with their confidence in the three institutions.

Table 4 reports the findings for confidence in the IMF, UNFCCC, and UNSC by country. Because of the lower number of observations, the tables only include the main variable of interest, perceived influence, and the measures for satisfaction with democracy, effectiveness, and fairness, which were significantly related to confidence in all pooled analyses. The analyses confirm the absence of a relationship between perceived state influence and confidence in the three institutions in all six countries. In addition, they confirm the importance of elites' satisfaction with each of the three qualities of good governance, while indicating variation across institutions and countries. In the case of the IMF (Table 4a), satisfaction with the fairness of the institution appears to be the overriding concern for elites in all countries. For the UNFCCC (Table 4b), satisfaction with effectiveness is positively associated with confidence among elites in Brazil, Germany, and the US, while satisfaction with fairness is similarly related to confidence in Germany, the Philippines, and the US. Finally, in the case of the UNSC (Table 4c), satisfaction with democracy is a driving concern for elites in Germany and Russia, while its fairness appears to matter in Brazil.

In sum: these individual-level analyses find no support for the expected relationship between elites' perceptions of state influence in an institution and their confidence in that institution. Instead, the legitimacy beliefs of the interviewed elites are strongly and consistently related to their assessments of democracy, effectiveness, and fairness in these institutions.

Conclusion

The expectation that state voice drives perceptions of legitimacy is a common theme in academic scholarship and policy discourse on global power shifts and international institutions. In this article, we have tested this expectation empirically, using novel data on elite legitimacy perceptions in six countries in relation to eight international institutions. In a first step, we assessed this expectation at the country level, examining whether states' formal representation in these institutions is related to perceptions of legitimacy among country elites. In a second step, we evaluated this relationship at the individual level, examining whether elite persons base their perceptions of legitimacy on assessments of state voice in international institutions or on other considerations.

Table 4. Multivariate logistic regression confidence in the IMF, UNFCCC, and UNSC by country

	Brazil	Germany	Philippines	Russia	South Africa	USA
(a) IMF						
Perceived influence	2.061	2.237	0.741	1.435	1.070	1.100
	(1.19)	(1.13)	(0.29)	(0.51)	(0.37)	(0.51)
Democracy	0.952	1.092	1.254	1.031	0.983	1.215
	(0.23)	(0.18)	(0.28)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.24)
Effectiveness	1.588*	1.639**	1.308	0.847	1.180	1.189
	(0.30)	(0.31)	(0.30)	(0.13)	(0.19)	(0.24)
Fairness	1.956*	2.007**	2.345***	3.191***	1.620**	2.202**
	(0.51)	(0.46)	(0.58)	(0.92)	(0.30)	(0.53)
N	110	115	113	100	111	113
Pseudo R^2	0.481	0.386	0.437	0.344	0.199	0.365
(b) UNFCCC						
Perceived influence	0.960	1.708	1.832	1.022	1.473	0.768
	(0.36)	(0.81)	(0.64)	(0.34)	(0.51)	(0.25)
Democracy	1.234	1.195	1.079	0.959	1.372	1.026
	(0.26)	(0.19)	(0.24)	(0.12)	(0.26)	(0.20)
Effectiveness	1.917**	1.452*	1.105	0.922	1.483	1.509*
	(0.44)	(0.22)	(0.24)	(0.09)	(0.34)	(0.29)
Fairness	1.152	1.419*	1.723*	1.315	1.184	1.530*
	(0.28)	(0.25)	(0.44)	(0.19)	(0.24)	(0.32)
N	102	113	113	92	114	105
Pseudo R^2	0.334	0.278	0.273	0.050	0.263	0.291
(c) UNSC						
Perceived influence	0.948	2.086	1.470	1.319	1.240	1.507
	(0.43)	(1.18)	(0.46)	(0.58)	(0.49)	(0.50)
Democracy	1.331	1.501**	1.055	1.425*	1.025	1.119
	(0.26)	(0.23)	(0.16)	(0.23)	(0.20)	(0.15)
Effectiveness	1.020	1.205	1.262	1.210	1.412	1.352
	(0.18)	(0.19)	(0.21)	(0.19)	(0.25)	(0.21)
Fairness	1.809**	1.379	1.434	1.084	1.187	1.192
	(0.39)	(0.27)	(0.29)	(0.16)	(0.22)	(0.18)
N	110	120	111	103	119	115
Pseudo R^2	0.376	0.339	0.208	0.164	0.191	0.194

Notes: Models are logistic regressions. Reported values are odds ratios with standard errors in parentheses. *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$.
Source: LegGov Elite Survey.

Our findings offer limited support for this expectation. First, formal differences in state representation are only partly reflected in patterns of perceived legitimacy across the six countries. There is a good fit between formal representation and perceived legitimacy for the ICC, a moderate fit for the IMF, World Bank, WHO, and UNFCCC, and a poor fit for the G20, UNSC, and WTO. Second, and most important, there is no evidence at the individual level for the expectation that assessments of state influence would be related to perceptions of institutional legitimacy. Instead, the legitimacy perceptions of elites in these six countries are mainly shaped by considerations of democracy, effectiveness, and fairness in these institutions.

While these findings are based on unique comparative data on elite perceptions, we should also be aware of the limitations. The LegGov Elite Survey uses a targeted selection of elites, rather than a random sample, which calls for caution in generalizing the findings. Moreover, the survey offers a snapshot at a particular point in time and future research is required to confirm that these findings are not shaped by time-specific factors. Finally, future research could assess the generalizability of these findings by extending the study to elites in other rising and established powers, such as China, India, Japan, and the United Kingdom.

Yet, if we take these preliminary findings at face value, they suggest three broader implications for research and policy on global power shifts and international institutional reforms. First, conflicts between rising and established powers over state voice are unlikely to undermine the legitimacy of existing international institutions (cf. Gilpin, 1981). The distribution of voice and ensuing conflict dimensions in international institutions rarely conform to a cleavage between rising and established powers (Stephen and Zürn, 2019). Moreover, elites in both rising and established powers primarily base their legitimacy beliefs on other considerations than state voice, further reducing the likelihood that zero-sum conflicts over legitimacy destabilize existing international institutions.

Second, states that question the legitimacy of international institutions with reference to their own voice appear to engage in a strategy of rhetorical coercion as conceptualized by Kruck and Zangl in their introduction to this special issue (Kruck and Zangl, this issue). This criticism does not seem to reflect sincere legitimacy concerns as much as strategic attempts to win concessions in institutional bargaining through delegitimation. By attacking international institutions for not giving them due voice, challengers of existing arrangements seek to delegitimize the positions of defenders that aim to preserve the status quo (Binder and Heupel, this issue; Fioretos, this issue; Goddard, this issue; MacDonald, this issue). These practices underline how states regularly deploy legitimation and delegitimation to achieve strategic ends in world politics (Hurd, 2007; Tallberg and Zürn, 2019).

Third, the outcomes of reform negotiations still matter for the legitimacy of international institutions, but in a different way than conventionally expected in the debate about global power shifts. It is not by satisfying each state's demands for more voice that international institutions secure their legitimacy, but by ensuring that they work in accordance with established principles of good governance – democracy, effectiveness, and fairness. These principles not only guide perceptions of legitimacy in the general public (Bernauer et al., 2019; Dellmuth et al., 2019), but also among political and societal elites, as we have shown. While a promotion of these principles may involve adjustments to state representation, only reforms that are seen to favor democracy, effectiveness, and fairness as general qualities of governance, rather than state voice in the narrow sense, would be rewarded with greater legitimacy.

Notes

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1. This article relies on a sociological understanding of legitimacy, where legitimacy is conceptualized as the perception or belief that an institution's authority is appropriately exercised (e.g., Hurd, 2007; Suchman, 1995; Tallberg et al., 2018; Tallberg and Zürn, 2019; Weber, 1922/1978). This is different from a normative understanding, where an institution's legitimacy is derived from its conformance to philosophical values such as justice and democracy (Buchanan and Keohane, 2006).
2. The use of confidence or trust as measures of legitimacy spans studies on domestic political institutions (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Newton and Norris 2000), domestic courts (Bühlmann and Kunz 2011; Caldeira 1986), international organizations (Dellmuth and Tallberg 2015; Johnson 2011), and international courts (Voeten 2013).

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of the article.

Appendix S1 Sampling and interview procedures LegGov Elite Survey.

Appendix S2 Operationalization of variables in Tables 3 and 4.

Appendix S3 Correlation perceived influence and qualities of good governance.

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