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The politics of legitimation in international organizations

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The Politics of Legitimation in International Organizations

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Introduction

Scholars are widely agreed that international organizations (IOs) are in need of legitimation to govern effectively (Hurd 1999, 2008; Tallberg and Zürn 2019), and a growing body of research now investigates various aspects of IO legitimacy and legitimation. One strand of literature assesses the normative legitimacy of IOs, examining whether they meet a set of predefined criteria, such as transparency or accountability, and whether their performance is in line with external normative expectations (e.g., Buchanan and Keohane 2006; Zweifel 2006; Frederking and Patane 2017). A second strand examines what has been termed the empirical (or sociological) legitimacy of IOs. This research analyzes whether various constituencies believe in the legitimacy of IOs (Weber 1968) and how relevant actors confer legitimacy on, or withhold legitimacy from, them. Scholars working in this tradition measure the beliefs (or attitudes) of individuals about the legitimacy of IOs through survey analysis (Caldeira and Gibson 1995; Edwards 2009; Johnson 2011; Ecker-Ehrhardt 2012; Dellmuth and Tallberg 2015; Schlipphak 2015), investigate how IOs are legitimated or delegitimated in the quality press (e.g. Schmidtke 2019), or examine how IOs engage in self-legitimation devising strategies which they expect to confer legitimacy on themselves (e.g. Halliday et al. 2010).

While this literature on IO legitimation has advanced our knowledge in important ways, we lack a clear understanding of how and why states legitimate and delegitimate the IOs that they are members of. This is unfortunate. If legitimation matters and IOs depend on legitimation by their member states, it is important to understand *which states* confer legitimacy on IOs, which challenge their legitimacy, and why. Giving an answer to this question matters not only from a theoretical perspective but also in practical terms as it helps us understand states' grievances and learn how they can be addressed.

To address this gap in the literature, we provide the first systematic empirical analysis of which states seek to legitimate or delegitimate IOs. We present six hypotheses that link specific characteristics of states to their discursive legitimation strategies. Such strategies denote the purposeful use of public claims – justified by reference to shared normative standards – through which states seek to generate legitimacy for an IO or to undermine it (see Goddard 2006, 40; 2010). Claiming legitimacy for an actor or institution in the public sphere and providing normative justifications for these claims is widely considered to be an important political act (Kratochwil 1989; Hurd 1999), or even "the lifeblood of the politics of legitimation" (Reus-Smit 2007, 159; see also Weber 1968; Habermas 1979; Steffek 2003; Hurd 2008; Gronau and Schmidtke 2016). Discursive legitimation is not the only strategy by means of which states seek to legitimate or delegitimate IOs. In fact, states frequently combine discursive with non-discursive legitimation strategies when they interact with IOs (Bäckstrand and Söderbaum, 2019). Nonetheless, studying discursive legitimation is an important way of getting to the heart of IO legitimation processes.

Empirically, we focus on how states seek to legitimate or delegitimate the United Nations (UN) Security Council, arguably the "most powerful international organization ever known to the world of states" (Hurd 2008, 12, see also Alvarez 1995). It brings together the economic and

military resources of the world's most powerful countries, its decisions are legally binding, and it can authorize coercive measures including the use of force. These powers require legitimation. At the same time, the Council lacks the resources and mechanisms necessary to enforce its rules and decisions independently. To effectively monitor compliance with its resolutions, deploy peacekeeping operations or enforce sanctions, the Council critically depends on legitimation and support from UN member states. The discourse we analyze comes from public debates in the UN General Assembly, an important discursive space within which UN member states have the opportunity to publicly claim legitimacy for the Security Council or challenge its legitimacy. To test our hypotheses about which states claim legitimacy for the Council, we use an original dataset comprising more than 1,500 supportive and critical evaluative statements that UN member states made about the Council's legitimacy in seven debates in the General Assembly over the period 1991–2009.

We show that states' (de)legitimation strategies vis-à-vis the UN Security Council can be explained neither by factors related to a state's material interests nor by its normative convictions alone – they seem, instead, to be driven by both considerations. Specifically, we find that supportive and critical statements about the Council's legitimacy can be accounted for by three main factors. The first is membership. Whether states claim legitimacy for the Council is strongly associated with their membership of this body. While this finding in itself is hardly surprising, it suggests that processes of self-legitimation operate in the Council. Second, and more surprisingly, UN member states that are willing to delegate sovereignty to supranational organizations are more likely to challenge the Council's legitimacy, suggesting that these states would prefer the Council to be able to compromise states' sovereignty more often. Finally, states that hold unfavorable attitudes towards the United States (US) are more likely to challenge the Council's legitimacy, pointing to an interesting link between the legitimacy claims member states make about IOs and the attitudes they hold vis-à-vis the organizations'

dominant member(s). At a more general level, our findings suggest that making evaluative statements in General Assembly debates is not an empty diplomatic exercise, nor does it happen at random. States use these debates in a purposeful way either to assert the Council's legitimacy or challenge it. Their discourse follows discernable patterns that can be explained by specific state characteristics.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows. The next section introduces the theoretical framework and presents our hypotheses regarding the impact of specific characteristics on the propensity of states to affirm or challenge the Security Council's legitimacy. The third section describes our data and method. The fourth and fifth sections present and discuss our findings. The final section provides a summary and sketches out avenues for future research.

Theoretical Framework

Legitimacy and Legitimation

Legitimacy denotes a recognized right to rule. Rather than being an inherent quality of an actor or institution, it is based on beliefs or perceptions held by relevant audiences (Weber 1968; Clark 2005; Tyler 2006). However, beliefs in the legitimacy of someone or something need to be tied to normative standards. Accordingly, legitimacy is the "generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman 1995, 547; see also Beetham 1991, 11).

Legitimacy is not a static property of an actor or institution but is produced and maintained through legitimation. In this process, actors seek to establish the legitimacy of an actor or institution by taking specific actions, using symbols, or making claims about its desirability or normative appropriateness that they expect to resonate with a target audience. The purpose of these strategies is to present an entity as being legitimate and, in so doing, to provide reasons for it to be approved of and supported (Berger and Luckmann 1967, 92-93; Clark 2005, 2-3; Reus-Smit 2007; Goddard and Krebs 2015, 13-17). Yet, legitimation strategies are not automatically successful in actually conferring legitimacy. Rather, for legitimation to induce a belief in the legitimacy of an actor or institution, and for political authority to "be legitimate," legitimacy claims need to be recognized by relevant audiences (Beetham 1991, 110; Reus-Smit 2007, 159-160; Welsh and Zaum 2013, 71; Bexell 2014, 293).

Claiming legitimacy for an institution is a strategic act (Hurd 2008; Brassett and Tsingou 2011, 292) and, as such, is purposefully carried out by actors who are embedded in their social and cultural environment (Goddard 2006, 50). By making such claims, however, states not only seek to advance their material interests. They also engage in legitimation strategies because the institution in question may help them to achieve normative goals. Specifically, legitimation strategies may be used to consolidate the status quo against competing claims to authority, to expand the authority of a power holder, and to manage or reduce legitimacy deficits (Zaum 2013). At the same time, legitimation is "laced through with contestation" (Goddard and Krebs 2015, 15) as the politics of legitimation involves rulers and their opponents engaging in attempts at (de)legitimation and attaching different meanings to political processes (Barker 2001, 24-28, 112). Actors may or may not believe in the claims they make (Krebs 2015, 15-16; Welsh and Zaum 2013, 71). However, even insincere claims presuppose genuine legitimacy beliefs in at least segments of the target audience. Otherwise, any legitimation strategy used to realize one's (material or normative) goals would be futile (see Hurd 2005, 498).

We concentrate on discursive (de)legitimation strategies that states use within IO fora. Claiming legitimacy for or challenging the legitimacy of an IO in a public debate within an organization is attractive to states in various ways.[1] IOs typically provide institutionalized discursive spaces in which all states can make themselves heard on a regular basis; by contrast, "exit" from an existing organization (Hirschman 1970), creating a competing organization (Morse and Keohane 2014), or taking unilateral action outside an IO are options that are available to only a few powerful states (Voeten 2001; Stone 2011, 14). States that are satisfied with an IO – because they benefit from it materially or because it promulgates their ideas (or both) – are given the opportunity to establish its legitimacy and express their support for it. By claiming legitimacy for an IO, and by justifying these claims through references to normative standards, states seek to generate and maintain the belief among their peers that the organization is desirable and should be supported. At the same time, states that are negatively affected by an IO or no longer share its normative goals can use public debates in an IO in an attempt to publicly undermine its legitimacy. By publicly denying legitimacy to an IO and providing justification for the organization's illegitimacy, dissatisfied states seek to challenge the institutional status quo and to communicate to others that the institution is not worthy of support. In both cases, however, states use discursive legitimation strategies either to persuade other states that an IO is worthy, or unworthy, of support, or at least to deprive them of the "rhetorical materials needed to craft a socially sustainable rebuttal" (Krebs and Jackson 2007, 36).

[1] Krasner's (1985, 16) view of IOs as fora that developing states use to challenge the substantives norms and procedural rules favored by Western states resembles this conceptualization of IOs as fora for the (de)legitimation of IOs. However, Krasner's work is not primarily concerned with legitimation.

A further advantage that public IO debates offer is that they allow states to express themselves comparatively freely.[2] Making a public claim in a debate of this kind neither carries any legal obligations, nor does it commit a state in the long run. As a result, states can make (de)legitimating statements that are in line with their material interests or reflect their normative convictions.[3] This does not mean that public discourse in IOs is entirely unconstrained. Statements usually follow certain diplomatic conventions. Truly revolutionary discourse occurs rarely (or not at all), as participation in these debates reflects a degree of acceptance of, or acquiescence in, the organization in the first place. Furthermore, states may face consequences if their statements contrast too starkly with those that powerful states make. Still, as we have shown elsewhere, these constraints are not strong enough to compel states to shy away from making very critical assessments of the Council in General Assembly debates.

Finally, legitimation strategies can be applied not only by actors external to an organization but also by the organization itself or by its members – who then engage in self-legitimation as they seek to bestow legitimacy on themselves. As Weber noted, every system of authority "attempts to establish and to cultivate the belief in its legitimacy" (1968, 213). Self-legitimation is oriented outward if the legitimacy claims are directed at nonmembers of the organization or its decision-making body (Welsh and Zaum 2013). But self-legitimation can also be oriented inward, at the organization and its member states if IOs and their members practice self-legitimation to justify their claim to authority in their own eyes and to assure themselves that their exercise of power is rightful (Barker 2001; von Billerbeck 2020). Self-legitimation, then,

[2] On the General Assembly see Peterson (2006, 79) and Smith (2006, 155).

[3] Similar arguments have been made with respect to non-binding votes in the General Assembly (e.g., Gartzke 1998, 14; Voeten 2000). Recent research on the General Assembly argues that, compared to voting, making a public speech in the Assembly imposes fewer constraints on states (Baturo et al. 2017).

comprises "ceremonial actions and practices" performed in a "private theatre for rulers" for the purposes of consolidating the ruling group (Barker 2001, 35, 41). If inward-oriented self-legitimation practices serve to assure IOs (and their member states) of their raison d'être, they are likely to generate a sense of community and confirm the ruler's or ruling group's identity (Barker 2001, 50).

Hypotheses

If IOs offer institutionalized discursive spaces for their own (de)legitimation that are attractive to states, we should observe, first, that the discourse in IO fora is not an empty diplomatic exercise in which all states make more or less the same statement about an IO's legitimacy and, second, that states do not make their statements randomly. Instead, we should observe states employing (de)legitimating discourse in a purposeful way so that their discourse should follow discernable patterns that can be explained by specific state characteristics. Existing research has not examined which states claim legitimacy for the UN Security Council and why. We therefore draw on International Relations (IR) theory and the scholarship on IOs to formulate, and subsequently test, six hypotheses that link legitimacy claims to specific features of states. Some of our hypotheses are based on the assumption that UN member states claim legitimacy for the Council to advance their material interests. Other hypotheses suggest that states make legitimacy claims that are in line with their normative convictions. Some hypotheses suggest that Council members engage in self-legitimation, while others refer to the legitimation of the Council by the wider UN membership.

Institutional power. According to standard realist theorizing in IR, IOs are instruments of state power. They do not have an independent causal effect on state behavior but rather reflect the parochial interests of their most powerful member state(s) (Waltz 1979; Mearsheimer 1994).

Applying this to the Security Council, the five permanent Council members (P5) are privileged states that use the Security Council as an instrument to pursue their own interests. In particular, the P5 are able to use the Council as a device for intervening in the domestic affairs of other states. Armed with the veto right, the P5 can block any decision that conflicts with their interests and invoke the "hidden veto" – the threat to make use of their veto right – to control the Council's agenda (Nahory 2004). Consequently, the P5 are able to exercise institutional power, in the sense that they can benefit from an international institution that clearly advantages them over other states. This requires the recognition of the Council's legitimacy by the UN membership, which should lead the P5 to engage in self-legitimation seeking to confer legitimacy to the body in which they hold permanent membership. Hypothesis 1 therefore reads as follows:

Hypothesis 1. *The five permanent member states are more likely to claim legitimacy for the Security Council than UN member states that lack the privileges of permanent Council membership.*

Symbolic power. States not only use IOs to advance their material interests, they also appreciate the symbolic power and prestige that IO membership brings with it. In the case of the Security Council, the ten nonpermanent seats are believed to have high symbolic value for states. States that seek election to the Council go to great lengths to secure the necessary votes, mounting costly campaigns in which they champion popular causes, trade votes, offer foreign aid, or bribe individuals who possess voting power (Malone 2000). On this view, Council membership – albeit temporary – allows states to advance their status by associating themselves with the aura of the Security Council. A seat on the Council is a "source of authority-by-association," reflecting some of the authority that the Council possesses by virtue of its

perceived legitimacy onto the state in question (Hurd 2002).[4] We hence derive the following hypothesis again suggesting self-legitimation dynamics, as the Council's ten elected members (E10) are expected to bestow legitimacy on the body of which they temporarily form part:

Hypothesis 2: *The ten elected members of the Security Council are more likely to claim legitimacy for the Council than states that do not belong to the E10.*

Economic predominance. IOs help states to transform their economic power into political influence in international politics. Economically powerful states have been successful in shaping the international order, including the IOs on which this order rests, in ways that match their interests. The result is global stratification, a primary institution of international society that becomes visible in secondary institutions (see Clark 2011, 55), in which economically powerful states have a disproportionate influence on decision-making (see Tallberg 2008). Therefore, these states have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. The Security Council is a central pillar of the international system and helps consolidate the current world order. This line of reasoning suggests the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: *Economically powerful states, which benefit most from the international status quo, are more likely to claim legitimacy for the Security Council than economically weak states on the margins of the international system.*

Intervention target. Many IOs can impose costs on member states that do not comply with their obligations. After the Cold War, a number of UN member states that the Council found to be in violation of their obligations under the UN Charter became targets of coercive Security

[4] Recent research suggests that elected members use the Council to advance their material interests as well (Mikulaschek 2018; Binder and Golub 2020)

Council action. Nonmilitary enforcement measures, such as the sanctions against North Korea, impose significant costs on a state. Their aim is to induce the state's government to make policy changes by targeting it and the support base it relies on. Likewise, military interventions against governments, such as the military campaign in Libya, have resulted in regime change. Such outcomes are naturally criticized by power holders and tend to foment opposition to the Council (see Hurd 2005; Richmond 2006). This gives rise to the following theoretical expectation:

Hypothesis 4: *States targeted by Security Council intervention are more likely to challenge the body's legitimacy than states left untargeted*.

Sovereignty. IOs have begun to interfere more deeply in the domestic realm of states since the end of the Cold War (Zürn et al. 2012). The Security Council is no exception. According to the traditional reading, the UN Charter permits the Council to maintain and restore peace only between states. Today, however, the Council interprets Article 39 of the Charter much more expansively and identifies domestic conflict as a threat to international peace and security (Wallensteen and Johannson 2004). In addition, the Council has begun to adopt quasi-legislative resolutions that oblige all UN member states to introduce general domestic legislation concerning the fight against terrorism (Talmon 2005). This encroachment on their sovereignty is not endorsed in the same way by all states. While "post-Westphalian" states are willing to accept that, in some situations, norms such as human rights should prevail over the traditional principle of state sovereignty, others deplore the increased ease with which the Council disregards the classic assumption that states possess sole authority to make decisions regarding the population within their territory (Gill and Reilly 2000). This leads to the following proposition:

Hypothesis 5: *States that adhere to a traditional notion of sovereignty are more likely to challenge the Security Council's legitimacy than states that accept interference under specific conditions*.

Guilt-by-association. Finally, scholars point to a link between the perception of an IO's legitimacy and the general perception of states that have significant institutionalized and ideational influence on that institution. Unfavorable views on the part of a state that is perceived as dominating an IO are assumed to undermine the IO's legitimacy (Johnson 2011). Conversely, favorable views on the part of a state that dominates an IO will bolster its legitimacy. The US, with its preeminent material and immaterial influence on the Security Council, is its most powerful member. Not only is the US one of the five members with veto power, but it is also the sole member with a credible outside option (it can realize its preferences by acting outside the Council), which further promotes its leverage inside the Council (Voeten 2001). Moreover, of all the UN member states, the US has been the most successful in embedding the norms it values in the UN (Ikenberry 2001). Given that UN members are aware of the US's special influence in the Council, the following hypothesis can be derived:

Hypothesis 6: *States that take an unfavorable view of the US and its foreign policy are more likely to challenge the Security Council's legitimacy than states that hold positive views of the US.*

Empirical Analysis

Data and Method

The data for this study consist of debates that took place in the UN General Assembly on the subject of the annual report submitted to it by the Security Council.[5] General Assembly debates are an ideal testing ground for our hypotheses because the Assembly consists of a large number of politically, economically, culturally and geographically diverse states. The General Assembly has also been described as the town square of international politics (Abbott and Snidal 1998, 24) giving each member the opportunity to express its views on crucial issues such as the legitimacy of institutions like the Security Council (Smith 2006, 155).

We focus on the General Assembly debates on the Security Council's annual reports as these debates provide all UN member states with the opportunity to evaluate the Security Council's general functioning as well as its specific policies.[6] The annual report lists all the activities of the Council and its subsidiary bodies in the previous year, including activities related to cross-cutting issues such as gender and the protection of civilians. In addition, the report details every Council resolution that has been issued and every meeting that has been held, lists issues that have been brought to the body's attention, and summarizes the status of the debate on the reform of the Council's working methods. When assessing the Council's functioning and policies, states often refer to various aspects of legitimacy (e.g., "there is a need for greater transparency in the work of the Security Council"[7]); likewise, many statements explicitly link assessments to the Council's legitimacy (e.g., "an undemocratic process is undermining the legitimacy of

[5] UN General Assembly. Available at http://unbisnet.un.org/. Accessed January 12, 2016.

[6] Consider the following statement from the representative of Italy: "This annual occasion provides the entire membership of the General Assembly with an opportunity for collective reflection. I would like to take this opportunity to share my thoughts on the work of the Security Council in the fundamental area of peace and security" (A/55/PV.35, October 17, 2000, 11).

[7] A/52/PV.38, October 29, 1997, 12, statement by Malaysia.

the Council's decisions"[8]). By analyzing debates that are regularly held in the same forum and on the subject of different versions of the same document, our study keeps the context constant and ensures the comparability of the material.

Our sample consists of seven General Assembly debates on Security Council annual reports over the period 1991–2009. We follow the logic of systematic sampling and examine every third debate during the first two decades following the end of the Cold War (the debates in 1991, 1994, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2006, and 2009). Unlike random sampling, we keep sampling intervals constant to make sure that we cover the time frame of our analysis evenly. Periodicity is not an issue in our sample, because neither the annual debates nor the reports are affected by cyclical patterns (Babbie 2011). A total of 115 UN member states participated in these debates making supportive or critical statements about the Council's legitimacy. Potential selection effects (Heckman 1979; Berk 1983) – in the sense that some states might be systematically more likely to participate in these debates than others – are not an issue in our paper, as state representation in them is nearly universal. This is because the speakers in the debates we examine[9] regularly make statements on behalf of regional organizations such as the European Union (EU) or the Caribbean Community,[10] of large groups of states, such as the non-aligned

[8] A/58/PV.28, October 13, 2003, 13, statement by Jamaica.

[9] The exception is the debate in 1991 during which speakers did not make any statements on behalf of larger groups. We therefore estimated our models without the statements made in the 1991 debate. This did not change our results.

[10] E.g., Italy, A/58/PV.30, October 14, 2003, 19; Barbados, A/61/PV.72, December 11, 2006, 9.

movement,[11] the G77,[12] or the African group,[13] and of smaller groups, such as the GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova).[14] As a result, the statements we analyze in this study represent legitimacy claims made by almost every UN member state – either directly or indirectly through larger groups. The baseline probability of issuing a statement therefore does not systematically vary across UN member states.

To code supportive and critical evaluations of the Council's legitimacy made by UN member states in these debates, we use a qualitative content analysis approach. We code all statements on the Council in which states refer to standards relevant to the body's legitimacy when they justify their claims. To identify relevant statements, we derive twelve indicators from dominant legitimacy theories. According to theories of legal legitimacy, institutions are legitimate if the transfer of authority is based on consent (Simmons 2001) and if institutions stay within the limits of their mandate (Bodanksy 1999, 605, 608). Based on these theories we derive four indicators, namely article 39, chapter VII, instruments, and competence, capturing statements that evaluate the Council's expansive interpretation of Article 39 of the UN Charter, its increased reference to Chapter VII powers in its resolutions, its frequent authorization of coercive instruments, and its interference in the competences of other IO bodies. According to theories of procedural legitimacy, institutions are legitimate if their procedures are fair (e.g., Chayes and Chayes 1995, 127; Caney 2006, 748-749). Again, we derive four indicators – participation, transparency, accountability and great power dominance – allowing us to detect statements that evaluate the possibility of participation in decision-making for non-permanent

[11] E.g., Indonesia, A/49/PV.48, October, 31, 1994, 2; The Philippines, A/52/PV.38, October 29, 1997, 11; South Africa, A/55/PV.37, October, 19, 2000, 21; Egypt, A/64/PV.43, November 12, 2009, 5.

[12] E.g., Nigeria, A/55/PV.37, October 19, 2000, 24.

[13] E.g., Niger A/61/PV.74, December 12, 2006, 1.

[14] E.g., Ukraine, A/58/PV.28, October 13, 2003, 20.

Council members, the availability of information on internal Council debates, mechanisms to hold the Council responsible for its (in)action, and the power asymmetries in the Council. Finally, according to theories of performance legitimacy, the legitimacy of institutions depends on their output, that is, whether they fulfil their mandate and contribute to collective problem-solving (Scharpf 1999, 6, 11). Again, we derive four indicators from these theories, namely mandate, consistency, great power restraint and human rights, allowing us to identify statements that evaluate the Council's fulfilment of its mandate, its (in)consistent treatment of security challenges, its ability to prevent the permanent members from using force without Council approval, and its compliance with international human rights standards.[15] Each evaluative statement about these indicators by means of which states claim legitimacy for the Council or challenge its legitimacy is coded either "positive" or "negative." The coding unit is an evaluative statement on a specific legitimacy indicator by a specific speaker in a specific debate.[16]

An example may help explain our coding procedure. The following is a statement made by the representative from Colombia during a General Assembly debate in 2006:

[15] A detailed coding scheme is available upon request.

[16] A statement begins and ends if one of the following conditions is met: (a) the speaker changes, (b) the indicator changes, or (c) the evaluation of an indicator changes (see de Wilde 2011, 178-179). The coding of the debates was carried out by both authors on the basis of a coding scheme that we developed in close collaboration through an iterative process between the three legitimacy theories (legal, procedural, and performance), the relevant scholarship on the UN Security Council, and the empirical material (General Assembly debates). We calculated intercoder reliability as follows: number of agreements/(number of agreements + number of disagreements). Intercoder reliability is well above .8 (or 80%).

> "We would also like to underscore the importance of the Council's focusing its efforts on threats to international peace and security. Diluting the Council's agenda with issues that are not directly related to its mandate … calls into question the legitimacy of its functions."[17]

This statement is assigned a code for the year it is made ("2006"), a code for the indicator addressed by the speaker ("article 39"), a code for the evaluation of the Council's legitimacy ("negative"), and a code for the state that makes the statement ("Colombia"). If the same speaker, later in the debate, praised improvements in the Council's transparency, we would treat this as a new evaluative statement and assigned the codes "2006," "transparency," "positive," and "Colombia."

Because speakers sometimes swing back and forth between different legitimacy indicators within one oral contribution, they may refer to the same indicator several times. By contrast, other speakers structure their contributions in such a way that they evaluate an individual indicator only once. When coding the debates, we took into account only one "positive" and one "negative" evaluative statement for each indicator per speaker and debate. This is because the frequency with which an indicator is emphasized might depend on the length of an oral contribution: States speaking toward the end of the debate might be inclined to use up less time; powerful states might feel entitled to more time to speak; less powerful states might see the debate as a precious opportunity to speak to a broad audience and therefore make prolonged statements, too. Finally, length and repetition may be a function of different oratorical styles. As a result, it is impossible to know whether repeated evaluation of the same indicator in the same debate is an indication of emphasis. This is less of a problem, however, as our interest lies

[17] A/61/PV.73, December 11, 2006, 7.

in the general inclination of each contributing state to address a specific aspect of the Council's legitimacy rather than in the frequency with which it makes statements on that same aspect.

Adopting this approach, we coded 1,527 evaluative legitimacy statements states made in 294 oral contributions. Of the 1,527 statements, 73 percent (1,119) were critical ("negative"), challenging the legitimacy of the Council. Only 27 percent (408) of all statements were supportive ("positive"), claiming legitimacy for the Council. Thus, claims by which states seek to challenge the Council's legitimacy far outnumber claims by which states seek to legitimate the Council. When making these evaluative statements about the Council's legitimacy, states predominantly refer to the Council's procedures to justify their claims. This applies to both negative and positive evaluations: As regards negative evaluations, 65 percent (728) refer to procedural legitimacy while 24 percent (267) and 11 percent (124) refer to performance and legal legitimacy, respectively. Similarly, as regards positive evaluations, 62 percent (252) relate to procedural legitimacy while 32 percent (131) and 6 percent (25) relate to performance and legal legitimacy, respectively. As regards indicators, among both negative and positive evaluations, transparency, accountability and mandate fulfillment are among the group of indicators referred to most often; among negative evaluations, participation is one of the indicators most referred to as well (see Figure 1 below). This challenges the widely held view that for IOs performance is the path to legitimacy (Gutner and Thompson 2010; Scharpf 1999). Rather, it seems that the norm of democratic governance (Dingwerth et al. 2019) has begun to diffuse to the extent that states increasingly accept it as reference point for the evaluation of IOs. We discuss these findings in great detail elsewhere but come back to the distribution across indicators when we discuss the implications of our findings.

< Figure 1 about here >

As regards development over time, in all debates negative statements clearly outnumber positive ones and statements on the Council's procedures clearly outnumber those on the body's performance and the legality of its actions. There have been some changes over time, but they have been relatively small. The difference between the share of negative and positive statements diminished slightly between 1991 and 2003, namely from 78% v. 22% in 1991 to 64% v. 36% in 2003. In 2006, the share of negative statements grew to 81% before falling back again in 2009 to approximately the value of 1991 (77%). There were some changes in the distribution of statements across the three sources of legitimacy but again there was no clear trend. The share of statements in each debate referring to the Council's procedures ranged from 59% to 69%, the share of statements on performance ranged from 22% to 32%, and the share of statements on legality ranged from 4% to 15%.

Variables and Measurement

Having described our data, we now turn to providing information on measurement and the models we use to test our hypotheses. According to the institutional power hypothesis, the P5 use the Security Council as an instrument of state power and are thus more likely to claim legitimacy for the Council. A state is coded "1" if it is a permanent Council member (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom (UK) and US), and coded "0" otherwise. In accordance with the symbolic power hypothesis, the E10 value the prestige that comes with temporary membership and are thus more likely to claim legitimacy for the Council than non-E10 states. A state is coded "1" if it is an elected nonpermanent member, and coded "0" otherwise. Following the economic predominance hypothesis, economically dominant states are less likely to challenge the Council's legitimacy than UN member states on the margins of the international system. Using International Monetary Fund data, we measure the economic status of a state by its share of global gross domestic product (GDP). The intervention target hypothesis expects a

state that has been a target of coercive Security Council action to be more likely to question the Council's legitimacy than a state unaffected by Council action. A state is coded "1" if it was the target of Council action under Chapter VII (sanctions or military intervention) during the year of the debate or the three preceding years; otherwise, the state is coded "0." According to the sovereignty hypothesis, states that are ready to compromise sovereignty rights under specific conditions are more likely to claim legitimacy for the Council than states with an absolute perspective on sovereignty. A state's willingness to compromise its sovereignty is difficult to measure. However, since consent to international adjudication involves a substantial relinquishment of sovereignty (Romano 2006, 793), we use a state's willingness to allow the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to exercise compulsory jurisdiction as a proxy for its readiness to compromise on sovereignty. A state is coded "1" if it has awarded compulsory jurisdiction to the ICJ, and coded "0" otherwise. Finally, the guilt-by-association hypothesis posits that states with an unfavorable attitude towards the US and its foreign policy are more likely to challenge the Council's legitimacy than states in which positive assessments of the US prevail. It is difficult to measure these attitudes, particularly at the government level. However, scholars use voting behavior in the General Assembly to assess the similarity of foreign policy preferences between pairs of states. We use ideal point data provided by Bailey et al. (2017) to construct ideological distance scores between the ideal points of a state participating in a General Assembly debate and the US.

We add two types of controls to our main model. First, to control for regional dynamics in the General Assembly, we include variables that identify a state as a member of one of the Assembly's regional groupings: the African Group, the Asia-Pacific Group, the Eastern European Group, the Latin American and Caribbean Group, and the Western European and Others Group. The last one is the reference group in our analysis. Second, we include a time

dummy that captures the year of the debate in which a state participated and use year fixed effects to control for temporal dynamics in our data.

The dependent variables are the number of supportive (models 1–3) and critical (models 4–6) statements about the Council's legitimacy made by a state during a General Assembly debate (unit of analysis). Taking into account our data generation process, we analyze positive and negative legitimacy statements separately. This is because states craft their statements carefully when they publicly assess the Council's legitimacy during General Assembly debates. Rather than only claiming legitimacy for the Council or only challenging the body's legitimacy, states often make more nuanced assessments that feature, to varying extents, both supportive and critical legitimacy statements. As argued earlier, claiming legitimacy for an IO (or challenging its legitimacy) through public evaluative statements is an important political act and should be considered as such. Thus, rather than lumping supportive and critical evaluations together, we want to examine supportive and critical legitimacy statements separately to identify what motivates each kind.

As noted, per speaker, we code just one supportive and one critical statement relating to each of the 12 legitimacy indicators during a debate. As a result, both dependent variables under consideration can range from 0 to 12. As Table 1 shows, empirically, the number of supportive statements per debate ranges from 0 (e.g., Philippines 1994) to 6 (e.g., Canada 2000), and the number of critical statements per state in a single debate ranges from 0 (e.g., Namibia 2000) to 10 (e.g., United Arab Emirates 2006). On average, each state makes 1.4 supportive and 3.8 critical legitimacy statements per debate.

< Table 1 about here >

Given the distribution and type of our dependent variables, the most appropriate model for our analysis is a count model. Specifically, we use a Poisson model, which, in the context of our analysis, estimates the probability that UN member states will make supportive and critical statements about the Council's legitimacy contingent upon a number of state features.[18] The problem of overdispersion, which often occurs in Poisson regressions, is not an issue for our data. The dispersion alphas for both count variables are close to zero and thus insignificant, and both models have highly significant Wald chi-squares, which suggests that the Poisson model fits the data well.[19] Our analysis also employs a negative binomial regression model, which yields identical results. As noted, we collected data across 115 states and seven debates held over the period 1991 to 2009. This results in an unbalanced panel consisting of 294 observations. To account for potential heteroskedasticity, we use robust standard errors clustered on states. Finally, a variance inflation factor (VIF) test shows that collinearity is not a problem in our analysis.[20]

Results

Table 2 reports the results of our analysis. We first explain supportive evaluations (models 1–3) and then discuss the determinants of critical evaluations of the Security Council's legitimacy

[18] For more detail, see King (1989) and Long (1997, ch.8).

[19] Moreover, the goodness of fit chi-squared test is statistically not significant.

[20] None of the main variables' VIF exceeds 2. The lowest 1/VIF score is below .74. The mean VIF is 1.18. Furthermore, we conducted a Wooldridge test for serial correlation in panel data. The F statics are insignificant, which indicates that there is no serial correlation in our dataset.

(model 4-6).[21] Models 1 and 4 include the variables of our six hypotheses, models 2 and 5 add regional controls, and models 3 and 6 add temporal controls.

< Table 2 about here >

As models 1–3 show, two variables explain which states claim legitimacy for the Council. First, permanent membership of the Council increases the likelihood of a state making supportive statements about the body's legitimacy. This is hardly surprising. In line with the institutional power hypothesis, the P5 are in a superior position when it comes to securing their interests by means of the Council and enjoy special institutional privileges associated with permanent membership. As they benefit in various ways from a Council that is widely considered as legitimate and worthy of support, they are more likely to publicly claim legitimacy for it. The second significant variable is elected membership, which also makes states more likely than others to issue statements in support of the Council's legitimacy. This corroborates the symbolic power hypothesis, according to which temporary Council members appreciate the prestige of a nonpermanent seat on the Council and therefore seek to generate legitimacy for the Council.[22]

To assess the substantive impact of our variables, we report percentage change (exponentiated raw coefficients) in the expected count – the number of supportive and critical statements – for unit change in the dichotomous independent variables and for standard deviation change in the continuous variables (holding all other factors constant). Whether permanent or temporary,

[21] The number of observations drops to 269 because the data on affinity scores, democracy scores, and GDP are not available for all observations in our analysis. By default, STATA deletes cases with missing values for any of the variables.

[22] Finally, the sovereignty variable comes close to being significant, at .05 (p = -.073).

membership strongly influences states to make supportive legitimacy statements. When all other variables are held constant, P5 or E10 membership increases the expected number of supportive statements by 85 percent and 74 percent, respectively.

Models 4–6, which estimate the probability that states will challenge the Council's legitimacy by making critical statements in the GA (again justified by reference to the normative standards of legitimacy we capture through our indicators), show that four variables are statistically significant.

Permanent members are less likely to publicly challenge the Council's legitimacy. These findings lend support to the institutional power hypothesis. As expected, P5 members, which benefit most from the Council and its perception as a legitimate institution worthy of state support, have no interest in undermining its legitimacy.

Likewise, again in line with our theoretical expectations, states with a large ideological distance between themselves and the US are more inclined to challenge the Council's legitimacy. This suggests that states that view the Council as influenced or dominated by the US, a state whose interests they do not share or accept and whose normative positions they disagree with, are not afraid to deny its legitimacy. This lends support to the guilt-by-association argument that scholars have shown to exist at the level of individuals (Johnson 2011). Our analysis suggests that this also applies to states and governments.

Contrary to our theoretical expectations, we find that economically powerful states are more likely to challenge the Council's legitimacy. This conflicts with the economic predominance hypothesis, which posits that economically powerful states are less likely to question the Council's legitimacy because they benefit most from the world order that the institution helps

to prop up. Our findings suggest that states that have increased their economic power over time may be dissatisfied with the fact that their new standing is not reflected in reforms to the Council's decision-making procedures. We know that rising powers frequently try to convert their newly won economic power into decision-making power in international institutions. For instance, in the World Trade Organization India and Brazil have gone to great lengths to become members of the core negotiations group (Zangl et al. 2016). However, in the Security Council attempts by rising powers to gain more influence have so far been unsuccessful. "Old" and "new" rising powers have repeatedly launched reform initiatives with the aim of getting more decision-making power in the Council, often explicitly making the argument that their increased economic power and standing in world politics justifies greater decision-making power – but they have been unable to assert themselves (Nadin 2016). Rising powers' frustration with their inability to convert economic power into institutionalized power in the Security Council shows in statements by economically powerful states that have not been granted permanent membership in the Council – and may provide a partial explanation as to why the proportion of positive statements fell between 2003 and 2006, precisely at a time when rising powers realized that their quest for permanent Council membership would not be satisfied. For instance, the representative of Japan used the 2006 debate in the General Assembly on the Security Council's annual report to underline that "(t)he Security Council must represent the political realities of the twenty-first century. A reformed Council must let major stakeholders — on whom the implementation of its decisions depends — participate in its decision-making."[23]

Another finding that runs counter to our theoretical expectation is that states holding the view that sovereignty is not an absolute value but may be compromised if warranted by humanitarian

[23] A/61/PV.73, December 11, 2006, 6. India made a similar statement in 2003 (A/5X/PV.7, September 23, 2003, 3).

exigencies or other crises are more likely to evaluate the Council's legitimacy negatively. This is inconsistent with the sovereignty hypothesis, according to which "post-Westphalian" states are less likely to challenge the Council's legitimacy because the body regularly authorizes intrusive missions that violate states' sovereignty rights. It seems that "post-Westphalian" states want to see the Council go even further. They may be concerned that the Council often fails to agree on interventions because some of its members are reluctant to undermine the sovereignty norm. In fact, despite the 2005 UN World Summit's endorsement of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), the Council's intervention practice continues to be highly inconsistent. While the Council intervenes in some humanitarian crises, clearly compromising the host state's sovereignty, it very often shies away from intervening in others, not least because powerful Council members oppose its undermining of state sovereignty. The Council's failure to help halt the war in Syria is one of the most glaring examples of its inability to authorize a humanitarian intervention if it faces strong opposition among its members – and it has elicited a great deal of criticism from states portraying the Council as a body unprepared to act when it is needed most. Evidence of the frustration felt by UN member states about a Security Council paralyzed in the face of serious humanitarian emergencies can also be found in many of the statements made by states in General Assembly debates. Sweden's representative, for instance, underlined in the 1997 debate that it "is legitimate for the Council to be concerned when great numbers of innocent civilians are killed, when gross violations of human rights occur or when democratically elected leaders are overthrown by violent means … Respect for sovereignty is of course a fundamental principle in the work of the United Nations, but affected countries all too often try at any price to avoid what they perceive as outside interference."[24] Three years later, Canada made a similar statement, arguing that "(i)n the global age, mass victimization

[24] A/52/PV.38, October 29, 1997, 9.

and abuse of people are not tolerable. State sovereignty cannot be a shield behind which such acts are perpetrated with impunity."[25]

In substantive terms, P5 membership reduces the expected number of critical statements by 27 percent, while a standard deviation increase (approximately .93 points on a scale from .534 to 5.02) in the ideal point distance with the US increases the expected number of critical legitimacy statements by 29 percent. States that have accepted conditional breaches of the sovereignty norm, approximated by their acceptance of compulsory ICJ jurisdiction, are, on the other hand, expected to make 13 percent more negative statements than states that have refused to do so. A state's share of world GDP, a measure of its economic predominance, appears to have only a small impact: a standard deviation increase (approximately 1.8 percent in the share of world GDP) increases the expected number of critical statements by 4 percent.

Contrary to our theoretical expectation, whether a state has been a target of Security Council intervention does not affect its likelihood of making positive or negative statements about the Council's legitimacy. One possible interpretation of this finding is that, while some governments resent intervention by the UN, others have benefitted from it in the sense that it brought them into power in the first place or helped them to remain in power. Furthermore, the time variable and year fixed effects in models 3 and 6 are insignificant, which suggests there is no temporal dependency in our data. Interestingly, as models 2 and 5 suggest, none of the regional control variables tests out as significant either. The widely observed regional dynamics in the General Assembly do not seem to apply to statements about the Security Council's legitimacy during debates.

[25] A/55/PV.36, October 18, 2000, 11-12.

Discussion

The results show that there are discernable patterns that structure how states claim legitimacy for the UN Security Council or challenge its legitimacy. Supportive and critical claims regarding the Council's legitimacy vary significantly across UN member states and can be explained by specific state features. This lends support to our argument that discursive legitimation and delegitimation in the General Assembly are neither random nor an aspect of an empty diplomatic exercise in which all states make roughly the same sort of statements. Rather, our findings suggest that states use these debates purposefully to make supportive and critical assessments of the Council's legitimacy – and that they do so in order to advance their material interests or normative goals.

Our findings show, furthermore, that states that tend to make supportive or critical statements about the Council's legitimacy are motivated by different concerns. In other words, while specific features make states more or less likely to claim legitimacy for the Council, the absence of these features does not necessarily make states more or less likely to challenge its legitimacy.[26] The picture is more complex.

The fact that permanent or elected members are more likely to claim legitimacy for the Security Council than states that do not enjoy Council membership suggests that the Council relies primarily on the support of a power center that comprises the US and other comparatively influential states, namely the remaining P5 members and elected members. Put differently, it is not the underprivileged states that claim legitimacy for the Council, but rather the comparatively powerful ones that benefit most from the current world order. On the face of it, this may seem

[26] The only exception is the P5 variable.

like good news for the Council. In many ways, powerful states are better positioned than their weaker counterparts to provide the body with practical and discursive support, as well as to sideline it and limit its relevance if they do not perceive it as legitimate. However, the dependence of the Council on the support of states that benefit most from its existence constitutes a serious risk. If supportive legitimacy claims are tied to individual benefit, states will begin to challenge the Council's legitimacy once they no longer reap benefits from it. However, if supportive claims were linked to considerations of a more cosmopolitan nature, states should continue to claim legitimacy for the Council even if they cease to pocket individual benefits (Easton 1975).

The fact that membership plays a key role in why states seek to legitimate the Security Council suggests that practices of self-legitimation are at work. When Security Council members engage in self-legitimation, they may well do so to appear legitimate in the eyes of non-Council members whose support, or at least acquiescence, they need for the functioning of the Council. However, self-legitimation may also be oriented inward in the sense that Council members draw satisfaction from the knowledge that they are interpreting the Council's legal mandate reasonably, that their decision-making procedures are fair, and that they are fulfilling the Council's mandate effectively. In short, they rest assured that their practices and privileges are legitimate. We do not argue that the self-legitimation pattern brought to light in this article suggests that the Security Council possesses a collective identity. There are obvious normative frictions among Council members, mostly related to the question of the conditions under which humanitarian considerations should trump the principle of nonintervention. Indeed, the collectivity of the Council has been considered a "myth" (Hurd 2002, 48) and scholars caution against treating the Council as a "corporate entity" (Welsh and Zaum 2013, 67–68). Nonetheless, member states are believed to have common assumptions about the general purpose and normative foundations of the Security Council, and they are seen as inhabiting

"overlapping lifeworlds" (Johnstone 2003, 456). The self-legitimation practiced by Council members is an expression of these commonalities. It reinforces a sense of belonging to the Security Council as a distinct group or community.

Critical legitimacy claims follow patterns that are more complex. States with three distinct features are more likely to challenge the Security Council's legitimacy. These states are united in their dissatisfaction with Council practices but differ in the concerns from which their dissatisfaction stems: holding unfavorable views of the US, disappointment at being unable to convert economic power into political influence, and the view that Council practices do not reflect their normative convictions. In turn, being a P5 member makes states less likely to seek to undermine the Council's legitimacy. Hence, the challenges to the Security Council's legitimacy cannot be attributed to a single concern held by states with particular characteristics. Rather, they can be traced back to the concerns of a heterogeneous group of states that are dissatisfied with the functioning and actions of the Council but differ in their specific concerns. Again, this may seem to bode well for the Council. After all, it is not pitted against a united front of critics that might jointly mobilize against it. Instead, it is confronted by different coalitions of critics and could thus devise tailored responses to their demands. However, this also poses a significant challenge. There is no one type of dissatisfaction that the Council can address to easily bolster its legitimacy.

Finally, while our analysis has focused on legitimation strategies, that is, the use of claims – justified in terms of shared normative standards – by means of which states try to cultivate or undermine the legitimacy of the Council, our empirical evidence suggests that these claims resonate with the relevant audience (the UN membership). First, even though statements are drafted prior to the General Assembly debates, states, when evaluating the Council's legitimacy, sometimes explicitly endorse the claims that other states have made before them in

the same debate. For instance, Italy's representative, when commenting on improvements in the Council's working methods, explicitly aligned himself with earlier statements, remarking that "I would mention the representatives of Jamaica, Japan, Brazil and Algeria. We fully agree with those remarks."[27] In addition, as noted above, legitimacy statements are regularly delivered on behalf of larger groups, requiring acceptance or recognition on the part of the members of these groups in the first place.

Second, and more importantly, our evidence suggests that states recognize the legitimacy claims of other states when these converge around identifiable topics and themes or "dominant narratives." Dominant narratives help actors give meaning to the world they live in (Krebs 2015; see also Goddard 2006, 43). In the General Assembly debates dominant narratives provide cues to states on what the most important sources of legitimacy are – procedural fairness, performance – and structure which arguments can be made. Although states are divided when they refer to these narratives, expressing either support or criticism, they are united in treating them as salient features when they justify the Security Council's legitimacy. More specifically, the patterns in our data show that the most frequent reference in states' legitimacy claims was to the Council's procedural legitimacy, followed by claims regarding its performance. But even the Council's legal legitimacy, the least salient source of such claims, was referred to by states almost 150 times. Again, this suggests that these claims are not isolated statements that go unheard but that they cluster around "narratives" that resonate (to different degrees) with UN member states. Finally, in the General Assembly debates on the annual report on the Security Council, states are both speakers and audience. This audience is relatively limited (193 currently). If 20 states challenge the Council's legitimacy by claiming that it has expanded its definition of what constitutes a threat to international peace and security, this is

[27] A/58/PV.28, October 13, 2003, 13.

meaningful because it indicates that a substantial segment of the UN membership recognizes this claim (or at least believes it will resonate with other UN member states).

Conclusion

This article has set out to examine which states use the discursive space provided by the UN General Assembly to claim legitimacy for the Security Council or challenge its legitimacy. While critical evaluations of the organization's legitimacy heavily outweigh supportive ones, there is considerable variation in which states seek to legitimate and which to delegitimate the Council. Some of our results are surprising and go against our theoretical expectations. For example, we found that economically powerful states and states that are ready to compromise their sovereignty under certain conditions are not less but more likely to challenge the legitimacy of the Security Council. Other findings are in line with our theoretical expectations. This holds in particular for Council membership, which is a very strong predictor of a state's attempt to legitimate or delegitimate the Council. Prima facie, this is unsurprising. What it suggests, however, is that practices of self-legitimation operate in the Council, lending support to small-N studies that highlight the importance of self-legitimation in international institutions. Finally, we have presented evidence that suggests that the legitimacy claims made by states in General Assembly debates resonate among the UN membership.

What do these results tell us about legitimation dynamics in other IOs? The Security Council differs from other IOs both with respect to its extraordinary competences and its internal power asymmetries between the veto-holding powers and the rest of its members. This makes it difficult to generalize our findings. At the same time, the Council shares a number of features with other IOs. It is not uncommon, for instance, for small groups of powerful IO member states that have secured privileges for themselves to be reluctant to extend these privileges to rising

powers (Vestergaard and Wade 2015). Moreover, just as in the UN, members of other IOs disagree over how deeply they want the IO to interfere in states' domestic realms. The considerations that drive states' (de)legitimation attempts with respect to the Security Council might therefore also shape (de)legitimation processes in other IOs. For instance, we might expect states that enjoy the right to possess nuclear weapons under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to be more likely to try to legitimate the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) than states that do not.[28] Likewise, we might expect states that hold conditional views on sovereignty to be more likely to challenge the legitimacy of the UN Human Rights Council, too, since they might prefer it to be tougher on human rights violators.[29] Hence, while we cannot directly generalize our findings to other IOs, there are indications that similar (de)legitimation dynamics can also be found elsewhere.

Our findings suggest at least three avenues for future research. First, while states are an important constituency for the legitimation of the Security Council, they are obviously not the only one. Future research should therefore scrutinize legitimacy claims about the Council expressed by the general public in selected UN member states. Second, scholars have argued that discursive legitimation and delegitimation matter as the latter often precedes more radical forms of opposition and the former may translate into practical support for an actor or

[28] For example, China, one of the five states allowed under the NPT to possess nuclear weapons, used the 2006 debate in the General Assembly on the annual report of the IAEA to state that "(o)ver the past half century, it (the IAEA) has had remarkable achievements in promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons." (A/61/PV.42, October 30, 2006, 12).

[29] For example, the Netherlands, speaking on behalf of the EU, used a General Debate in 2016 in the Human Rights Council to emphasize that "much work still lies ahead to ensure it (the Human Rights Council) fulfils its full potential." (Statement by H.E. Mr Roderick Van Schreven, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on behalf of the EU, June 13, 2016, 2).

organization. This presumed link requires thorough empirical analysis. Future research should systematically examine whether discursive attempts to (de)legitimate the Security Council have consequences and lead to greater (or less) practical support for it, for instance in the form either of compliance or non-compliance with its resolutions or of contributions to UN peacekeeping. At the same time, discursive legitimation may form part of a bundle of strategies with which states seek to realize their material interests and normative goals. Future research should therefore also examine the ways in which discursive legitimation is embedded in the broader portfolio of (de)legitimation strategies states have at their disposal. Third and finally, the analysis of legitimation processes within IOs should go beyond the UN Security Council. Future research should compare such processes across IOs that differ in terms of their purpose, membership, and decision-making rules, and of the organizational field in which they operate. This would require bringing the hypotheses to a more abstract level and developing indicators for the analysis of debates that apply not just to the Security Council but to IOs more broadly. Such a comparative analysis across IOs would allow us to assess the generalizability of our findings and help us get a more complete understanding of the legitimation and delegitimation of IOs in international politics.

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Table 1. Descriptive statistics

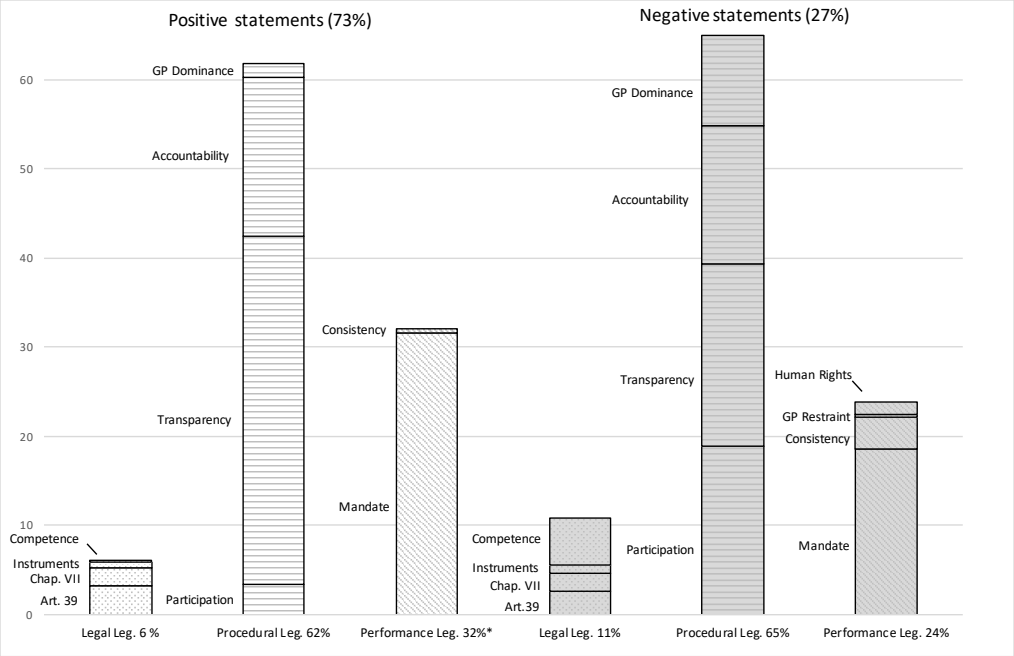
	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Pos. evaluations	294	1.388	1.129	0	6
Neg. evaluations	294	3.806	1.829	0	10
P5	294	.058	.234	0	1
E10	294	.133	.340	0	1
Target	294	.051	.220	0	1
ICJ	294	.337	.473	0	1
Distance with US	291	2.925	.953	.534	5.017
GDP share	280	1.347	2.808	.001	23.246
African	294	.197	.399	0	1
Asian	294	.299	.459	0	1
East European	294	.085	.279	0	1
Latin American	294	.194	.396	0	1
Time	294	5.037	1.702	1	7

Table 2. Poisson regression models of positive and negative statements on Council legitimacy

	Positive Statements			Negative Statements		
Model	(1) Baseline	(2) Regional controls	(3) Year-FE and time	(4) Baseline	(5) Regional controls	(6) Year-FE and time
P5	.600*	.555*	.617*	-.248**	-.213**	-.318**
	(.243)	(.242)	(.265)	(.0511)	(.0595)	(.0865)
E10	.589**	.591**	.553**	-.134	-.129	-.0760
	(.117)	(.122)	(.114)	(.0780)	(.0790)	(.0694)
Target	-.240	-.314	-.304	.119	.196	.174
	(.224)	(.215)	(.189)	(.128)	(.121)	(.0972)
ICJ	-.168	-.170	-.125	.112*	.133*	.124*
	(.114)	(.108)	(.108)	(.0526)	(.0554)	(.0502)
GDP share	-.00804	.00554	-.00154	.0320**	.0249*	.0409**
	(.0263)	(.0295)	(.0306)	(.0103)	(.0126)	(.0129)
Distance US	.0330	.0128	-.0144	.192**	.213**	.255**
	(.0628)	(.0973)	(.101)	(.0281)	(.0386)	(.0395)
African		.216	.214		-.160	-.214*
		(.249)	(.242)		(.112)	(.105)
Asian		.0107	.0350		.00422	-.0726
		(.254)	(.238)		(.112)	(.110)
East European		.169	.160		.0126	-.000959
		(.211)	(.209)		(.114)	(.108)
Latin America		-.0462	-.0201		.0772	.0120
		(.228)	(.218)		(.104)	(.106)
Time			-.0635			-.0110
			(.0432)			(.0549)
Constant	.189	.179	.519	.713**	.662**	.703
	(.208)	(.229)	(.400)	(.0933)	(.0994)	(.401)
Pseudo-Log.Lik.	-395.7	-394.1	-383.5	-524.6	-521.8	-511.5
Chi-squ.	46.20**	54.75**	101.3**	175.1**	191.2**	167.3**
AIC	805.4	810.1	801.0	1063.2	1065.5	1057.1
N	277	277	277	277	277	277

Standard errors clustered by country
Year fixed effects not shown
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Figure 1: Distribution of positive and negative statements on the Council's legitimacy



* No positive statement on the Council's performance legitimacy referred to either human rights or great power restraint.