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The Autonomy of International Bureaucracies

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Abstract:
International bureaucracies are becoming increasingly important for global governance. Little systematic knowledge is available, however, about the autonomous influence international bureaucracies may have on policymaking. Against this background, this chapter proposes a concept for analyzing the structural basis of the autonomy of international bureaucracies. In awareness of the fact that administrative influence is not an automatic function of structural potentials, the focus on structural aspects still appears to be the appropriate point of departure for an empirical-analytical endeavor geared at eventually enabling comparisons between a larger number of international bureaucracies.
1. Introduction

International organizations seem to be persistently gaining in importance vis-à-vis national governments. One crucial dimension of the significance of international organizations such as the IMF, the World Bank, and the WHO is their growing administrative basis. It looks as though the defining feature of international interaction in the twenty-first century is thus no longer “anarchy” but “bureaucratization.” This development raises questions about the role of international bureaucracies in global governance. We know little, however, about the factors that determine administrative influence in the international context. This is the gap we address here by studying the “autonomy” of the administrative basis of international organizations.

We will concentrate specifically on intra-organizational structures as a (we believe, decisive) dimension of the bureaucratic autonomy of what are in essence secretariats of international governmental organizations (IGOs). As we will explain below, there are other (non-structure-based) ways of empirically conceptualizing bureaucratic autonomy. We believe, however, that focusing on structural aspects is the appropriate choice when embarking on an empirical-analytical endeavor aimed at eventually enabling comparisons between a large number of international bureaucracies.

Moreover, the notion of structural autonomy, especially when studied in the context of bureaucracies, points to a particular concept of potential influence assumed implicitly or explicitly by the analyst.1 Bureaucratic influence is also studied using other concepts, of which the most prominent are probably discretion (Hawkins et al. 2006) and authority (Barnett and Finnemore 2004). There is obviously some overlap between these different concepts, but opting for one or the other still significantly determines the particular perspective of the researcher on bureaucratic influence. We have thus reserved a space in this chapter to illuminate the elements that constitute the main empirical basis of these alternative concepts and to specify how the focus of the concept of bureaucratic autonomy is different. In short, it is the emphasis on the characteristics of the administration or bureaucracy itself that makes bureaucratic autonomy our ideal starting point in the quest for a solid empirical basis to investigate whether and to what extent public administration in a global or internationalized context can rely on existing knowledge or requires new concepts and theories.

With a view to contributing to this debate, the chapter proceeds as follows. In the next section we discuss the particularities of the international context compared to the national contexts in which bureaucracies must operate. We then focus on a more thorough review of “autonomy” with respect to international organizations and bureaucracies, referring to important studies in the fields of comparative public administration and international relations. We draw guidelines from this review for conceptualizing the bureaucratic autonomy of international administrations and then define and specify a concept of bureaucratic autonomy and propose a means for its empirical measurement, underpinning our concept of autonomy with empirical data. We hope this will help the reader to assess its value for identifying differences between degrees of structural bureaucratic autonomy in a sample of international organizations.

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1 Bureaucratic influence can refer either to an observable effect of administrative behavior on an outcome that would not have occurred otherwise (Biermann and Siebenhüner 2009) or to potential influence that may not have manifested itself in a particular setting. Whereas the first notion is usually applied by scholars of public policy, the second hinges on an understanding of potential influence as the independent room for maneuver of individuals, organizational subunits, or entire organizations. In our contribution, we use the latter understanding.
bureaucracies. We conclude by discussing the potentials (and limitations) our approach may have for studying international bureaucracies.

2. Managing global governance: What makes international bureaucracies different?

What is different about the context in which international bureaucracies operate? What might be the implications for international or national administrations operating internationally? Public-administration scholars used to cope quite well with the bureaucratization or autonomy of national bureaucracies (and how to keep it in check), so why should globalization or internationalization be an issue?

The first difference is the lack of a coherent legal (or constitutional) order. International public law is less comprehensive than sophisticated national systems and bureaucratic actors thus have few “reference options” or, put differently, are probably less bound by legal traditions and standards than their national counterparts. It is also common for IGOs and their bureaucracies to be confronted with not just one but with multiple or complex principals (Lyne, Nielson, and Tierney 2006, 45). Theoretically, their capacity to exploit cleavages among principles might thus be considerable. Another important difference is that policymaking in or with IGOs is characterized by a strong focus on policy formulation combined with insufficient means to enforce decisions directly and a strong dependence on national administrations for implementation. Moreover, international bureaucracies have multiple external relations, both horizontally and vertically, which results in a highly volatile external environment that “changes with every admission of a new Member, with every revolution, almost with every election” (Haas 1964, 385). A staff characterized by considerable professional and cultural heterogeneity and the existence of direct or indirect accountability gaps, in particular the lack of scrutiny by an elected parliament, are additional features. Whatever the potential impact of such factors—they might actually increase or decrease the potential for bureaucratic influence—these examples indicate that the international context is indeed quite different to the national. We contend that the internationalized context poses new challenges with respect to autonomy and especially with respect to the control of international administrations. More concretely, the exercise of bureaucratic control appears to be more difficult since the international context is characterized by greater uncertainty, ambiguity, and heterogeneity than the national environment in which administrations usually operate. Let us illustrate these claims with an example. Political parties—via their apparatus at national and subnational level and also via followers within the bureaucracy held together by their ideological world view—can exercise informal but effective control over bureaucratic actions. “Undesired” plans or actions by the bureaucracy may be quickly communicated to party leaders, who can put pressure on executive office holders (if the party leaders are not contemporarily ministers heading the administration) or can leak crucial information to the press to exert media pressure. International bureaucracies do not face such control mechanisms because political parties do not dominate the international level in a comparable way. Depending on the perspective, this might not be altogether a bad thing. It does highlight, however, that the usual mechanisms on which we rely for bureaucratic control in the national context may be ineffective in the international sphere. Globalization and internationalization should thus encourage public-administration scholars to question the traditional usage of
some of their concepts; revisiting bureaucratic control in general and the autonomy of public administrations in particular thus appears not only justified but also necessary.

3. Reviewing autonomy concepts in public administration and international relations

Bureaucratic autonomy can be related to formal or informal policy expertise or other forms of policymaking authority. However, we restrict ourselves to what we define as structural bureaucratic autonomy. This means we focus on formal administrative competences, rules, arrangements, and resources because these, in our view, are the preconditions for any autonomous bureaucratic action at international level. Focusing in this way on administrative structures allows for comparisons across organizations. We therefore—as a first trial—apply our autonomy concept to empirical data in order to assess its quality in revealing differences between degrees of structural bureaucratic autonomy in a sample of international bureaucracies.

There are two evident areas of political analysis that relate to our focus on international bureaucratic autonomy. First, and obviously, the concept of bureaucratic autonomy originated in the field of public administration. Second, similar empirical phenomena are studied in international relations under the heading of “authority” and “delegation.” Given the scarcity of studies on the bureaucratic autonomy of international secretariats (or public administration in global governance, more generally), we inquire to what extent empirical studies in these two fields provide guidance for our endeavor.

Public Administration

Public Administration (PA) research at the national level has advanced our understanding of the organizational structures of ministerial bureaucracies and their impact on national policymaking (Niskanen 1971; Page 1985; Dunleavy 1991). However, with the exception of studies about the European Commission, this perspective has not yet been systematically extended to international constellations. Therefore, research on bureaucratic autonomy has remained rather “national” in nature, and—in particular—“hard” empirical comparative work is rare. Moreover, theoretically derived indicator-based concepts that would enable large-n or medium-n comparisons between variants of administrative structures are even rarer. The classic study is the Aston Group project (Pugh et al. 1968; Pugh and Hinings 1976), which sought to develop Max Weber’s ideal type of bureaucracy into empirically measurable dimensions. It was hoped that this would provide a method for verifying whether administrative systems increasingly “bureaucratize” or perhaps, depending on some external factors or internal reforms, may even “de-bureaucratize.” Empirical results showed that various subdimensions would sometimes change in opposite directions, i.e., toward more and less bureaucratization at the same time.

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2 Questions of “ politicization” as the antithesis of “independence” or “autonomy” have regularly been raised in studies of the European Commission (for an overview, see Bauer and Ege 2012).

3 Major efforts have been devoted to descriptive comparisons of administrative change in the context of the New Public Management waves (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004; Kickert 2008), but not to the analysis of the changing roles, functions, and impacts of national ministerial bureaucracies in increasingly interdependent multilevel administrations (for exceptions, see Peters and Pierre 2004; Egeberg 2006; Page and Wright 2007).

4 It was thus difficult to extract implications for the theoretical understanding of bureaucratic autonomy from this project.
Studies in this tradition rely on a thorough theoretical foundation for their concepts because the impact of formal structural-institutional characteristics can seldom be directly observed in actor behavior. The literature on bureaucratic control presents good examples of how scholars of PA and political economy have grounded politico-administrative interaction in the analysis of structures (McCubbins, Noll, and Weingast 1987; Shepsle 1992; Epstein and O’Halloran 1999). Modeling the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats as a delegation contract, these studies argue that information asymmetries limit the ability of the political principal to sufficiently control the bureaucratic agent. If, in addition, the preferences of the agent are different from those of the principal, agency slippage (i.e., a deviating implementation of legislative acts) or even agency shirking (i.e., substitution of the principal’s objectives with the objectives of the agent) may occur.

The formal structure of public administrations (such as the number of hierarchical levels, the degree of functional specialization, the level of decentralization of competences, the quality of command structures, etc.) has nonetheless only rarely been systematically linked to organizational decision-making and hardly ever to policy outcomes (Hammond 1993; Meier and Bohte 2000). Kai-Uwe Schnapp has carried out perhaps the most comprehensive and sophisticated comparative study in this tradition to address the structural autonomy of ministerial bureaucracies (Schnapp 2004; also see Huber and Shipan 2002). Schnapp takes care to provide a measurement framework that allows a large-n comparison of the (structurally defined) potential of a political bureaucracy to influence policymaking. He seeks to quantify the influence of national ministerial bureaucracies using the structural characteristics of the relationship between administrations and political principals. However, Schnapp’s study relies heavily on national political-system variables (such as party organizations and coalition governments) and focuses on the oversight of policy implementation by officials; this makes it difficult to apply his approach to international bureaucracies, where implementation plays only a secondary role.

In sum, the concept of bureaucratic autonomy plays a central role in the study of national administrative systems, but it has elicited only modest theoretical or empirical research of a structurally comparative nature in recent years (at least in the European context). When autonomy has been studied, it has usually been either in highly abstract and stylized forms (mainly by rational-choice delegation theorists) or in the form of individual case studies that (at most) suggest descriptive typologies with a view to further comparison (Page 1985). Recently, calls for quantitative and systematic comparative analysis have intensified, and a number of (survey) projects are currently in progress (van de Walle and Hammerschmid 2011; Clinton et al. 2012; Kassim et al. 2012). However, these projects are not directly focused on the structural determinants of bureaucratic autonomy, but on attitudinal analysis.

International Relations

In the 1960s and 1970s, a number of publications in the discipline of International Relations (IR) pointed to the potential importance of what can be conceived of as organizational characteristics in the analysis of international cooperation and decision-making (Haas 1964; Cox 1969). Of particular note is the collaborative project “The
anatomy of influence: Decision making in international organizations" (Cox and Jacobson 1973). However, when the neorealist school (which conceptualizes problems of international order primarily in terms of relationships between powerful states) came to dominance, very little attention was devoted to the independent role of international organizations, let alone their international bureaucracies.

This neglect of “organizational variables” began to be cautiously questioned in the 1980s by scholars in regime theory and in programmatic articles that advocated bridging the gap between international relations and organizational sociology with regard to the study of international organizations. The organizational-sociology approach failed to achieve a critical mass of followers and only a few isolated publications emerged (Ness and Brechin 1988; also see Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986). Regime theory, on the other hand, was unable (or unwilling) to systematically incorporate intra-organizational variation in its conceptualizations of international cooperation. Regime scholars (in this respect still influenced by the neorealist paradigm) seemed to believe that theoretical abstraction would be impeded by a focus on organizational variables, and regime analysis therefore dealt “with institutions at such a general level that it has little to say about the particular institutional arrangements that organize international politics” (Abbott and Snidal 1998, 6).

With the consolidation of neo-institutionalist thinking within IR, and in particular with the development of constructivism and the trend toward “internationalized” policy analysis (Risse-Kappen 1996; Checkel 1998) and multi-level governance (Hooghe, and Marks 2003), the organizational features of international institutions have recently received renewed attention. One prominent example of this research trend is Martha Finnemore’s study of UNESCO, which has promoted certain bureaucratic designs for national science coordination (1993), but many more could be listed here (see, e.g., Barnett and Coleman 2005 and Nay 2011).

With respect to organizational features and bureaucratic organization, in particular, the most influential publication in recent years has certainly been the 2004 book by Barnett and Finnemore entitled Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics. With reference to Max Weber, the autonomy of international bureaucracies is explained by the need for a division of labor, the concentration of resources (personnel, finances) in international organizations (i.e., at a central level), and the emergence of unique policy expertise within these organizations (Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 20-27). Rules for the World has advanced organizational and specifically bureaucratic variables to a more prominent position within IR research. However, the distinction between administrative and organizational features, the conceptualization of bureaucratic autonomy, how one should make comparative empirical observation, and how precisely bureaucratic autonomy influences policymaking (against the wills of powerful member states) often remain vague.

There is a related discussion in the rational-choice institutionalist tradition, mainly within the field of principal-agent analysis. The study of the relationship between IGOs and their member states—specifically, the question of why and under which conditions states delegate policymaking authority to IGOs—is of particular interest for this chapter (Pollack 1997; Hawkins et al. 2006; for a comprehensive overview, see Conceição-Heldt 2011). Three studies are of special relevance because they seek to empirically measure the amount of “agency” or “independence” delegated to IGOs. First, Haftel

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5 However, such issues can hardly be said to be in the mainstream of the field (cf. Keohane, Macedo, and Moravcsik 2009).
and Thompson describe an indicator-based empirical study on the independence of IGOs (2006). They suggest a simple conceptualization of how to measure such “independence” using six indicators applied to a sample of 30 regional IGOs. The (non-)existence of a permanent “bureaucracy” is just one (!) factor in their concept of independence; consequently, differential claims regarding the impact of bureaucratic structures in the international sphere are impossible on the basis of this study. Second, Brown (2010) provides a fairly comprehensive discussion of how to measure “delegation.” However, his work is largely conceptual; only two IGOs are coded to illustrate the usefulness of his method for empirically capturing delegation across IGOs and over time. A third attempt comes from Alexandru Grigorescu (2010), who approaches the puzzle of delegation from the opposite direction. He investigates the national determinants of the bureaucratic oversight mechanisms that constrain the autonomy of IGOs. Grigorescu describes the symbolic need of nations to signal their democratic oversight to national constituencies, the political will of national governments to maintain control over organizational policies, and the resources and learning processes at work.

In sum, current research in IR indicates that the field’s previous neglect of the organizational basis of international organizations has begun to be remedied. However, no consensus has been established—let alone a consolidated theory—regarding the conditions under which international bureaucracies actually autonomously influence policy outputs in substantial ways. The greatest progress has been made in the debate about the conditions for the delegation of competences to IGOs, as studied through principal-agent analyses. However, also in this area, indicator-based analyses that would open the door to medium-n systematic comparative studies remain rare. There is, finally, little analytical leverage in IR to systematically distinguish between international organizations as political entities and their bureaucratic apparatuses.

Summary of the literature review

In order to shed light on the question of how to (generally) conceptualize and empirically operationalize varying degrees of structural bureaucratic autonomy vis-à-vis political leadership (in specific contexts), we have reviewed pertinent studies in both PA and IR. Despite the importance of the “instrument-or-master debate” in these two subdisciplines, only a few truly comparative studies have attempted to measure autonomy across a larger number of units. Two problems are symptomatic of the current debate in these fields: IR has developed an interest in comparative IGO research but rarely separates bureaucracy-related variables from the political features of organizations. PA has neglected quantitative structural comparisons in the study of national bureaucratic autonomy and has not yet taken up the empirical challenge of investigating the administrative basis of international organizations. This being so, a solid conceptualization of structural autonomy of international bureaucracies, such as we propose below, might constitute an important step forward in bringing the debates in the various subdisciplinary camps closer together.

4. Definition and specification of the concept of bureaucratic autonomy

We saw in the literature review that scholars of PA and IR use different theoretical concepts to study international bureaucracies and that the meanings of these concepts
are notoriously controversial. Thus, we should first define the “background concept” (Adcock and Collier 2001, 531)\textsuperscript{6} and delimit it from other concepts present in the literature before we specify what we see as the statutory dimension and empirical implications. Numerous concepts are used to capture the empirical phenomenon of organizational independence and potential influence. In the following, we discuss in further detail the meanings of the two most pertinent of these—authority and discretion—and distinguish them from our understanding of bureaucratic autonomy.

Authority is a concept that is prominent in both IR and PA research. In both literatures, there are essentially two distinct understandings of authority. The differences are best visible in the study by Barnett and Finne more (2004). Their understandings of “moral authority” and “expert authority” are based on the power of bureaucratic organizations to construct and interpret the social world. Accordingly, it is conceptualized as an effect that an administration may have on peers or social groups and depends to a large degree on the perception among them. To study bureaucratic authority empirically, the analyst is hence well advised to pay attention to the interlocutors of the organization to be studied. What Barnett and Finne more term “delegated authority”, on the other hand, is basically used as a synonym for the competences that have been delegated to the bureaucracy (see Brown 2010; Hooghe and Marks 2012). Autonomy, in contrast, is external to the contractual arrangement between politics and administration. “By having and acting on a distinct set of preferences,” Ellinas and Suleiman argue “bureaucracies go beyond their institutional mandate, thereby challenging the political power of their overseers and creating a need to control them” (2012, 7, also see Carpenter 2001, 17).

Similarly, discretion is also based on a transaction-cost and contractual logic but conceptualizes bureaucratic influence as “something the principal intentionally [emphasis added] designs into its contract” in order to give the agent greater flexibility in the execution of its tasks (Hawkins et al. 2006, 8). It is thus not so much about what has been formally delegated to agents but how free they are when it comes to the process of translating general rules or tasks into specific action. Again, bureaucratic autonomy is distinct from discretion because it is seen as “an unavoidable [emphasis added] by-product of imperfect control over agents” (Hawkins et al. 2006, 8). In contrast to authority and discretion, the concept of autonomy places much greater emphasis on the importance of the institutional foundation and intra-organizational factors. It is neutral with regard to the consequences for the principals because it aims to capture “the range of potential independent action that is available to an agent and can be used to benefit or undermine the principal” (Hawkins et al. 2006, 8).

Looking at the semantic origin of the term autonomy, we learn that the word originates from ancient Greek (αὐτο self and νόμος law) and literally means “one who gives oneself his/her own law.” In political philosophy the core idea of individual autonomy is that of personal rule over the self, free from the controlling interference of others. The concept of bureaucratic autonomy (i.e., the ability of an administration to deviate from the preferences of its political principals or to influence principals’ preferences in the first place) is central to the comparative study of bureaucracies. There is, however, no consensus with respect to the term’s precise definition or to how varying degrees

\textsuperscript{6} The authors argue that because “background concepts routinely include a variety of meanings, the formation of systematized concepts often involves choosing among them […]. A careful examination of diverse meanings helps clarify the options, but ultimately choices must be made” (Adcock and Collier 2001, 532).
of bureaucratic autonomy are best measured (Kim 2008, 33). Nonetheless, it is clear that bureaucratic autonomy is multidimensional and relative. The quality of bureaucratic autonomy obviously depends on variations in the institutional environment—on the one hand, on the exercise of political control over the administration and, on the other, on the administration’s structure and resources (which define its potential to develop autonomous preferences and engage independently in certain actions).

In line with previous studies of bureaucratic and organizational autonomy (Carpenter 2001; Verhoest et al. 2004; Caughey, Cohon, and Chatfield 2009; Ellinas and Suleiman 2012), structural bureaucratic autonomy can thus be conceived of by considering two subconcepts:

1. the capacity of the administration to develop autonomous preferences (“autonomy of will”);
2. its ability to translate these preferences into action (“autonomy of action”).

In order to develop an autonomous will, an administration requires both the internal cohesion necessary to overcome problems of collective action and the capacity to develop preferences that are different from political principals (also see Tsebelis 2002). The ability of the bureaucracy to translate these preferences into action crucially depends—in our view—on three additional factors: statutory powers (i.e., formal organizational competences vis-à-vis political principals during the policy cycle), the resources of the administration, and (absence of) member-state control and political scrutiny. Figure 1 provides an overview of this conceptualization of bureaucratic autonomy.

Figure 1: The different dimensions of structural bureaucratic autonomy

Source: Authors’ compilation based on Caughey, Cohon, and Chatfield 2009 and Verhoest et al. 2004.
5. Applying bureaucratic autonomy to international organizations

In order to demonstrate how the concept of autonomy as presented above can be applied to real-world international bureaucracies, it is useful to conceive of an IGO as a political system (see Ege and Bauer 2013) consisting of a legislative assembly, a political executive, and the international bureaucracy with the Secretary-General. Table 1 provides an overview of the main organizational bodies, their tasks, and the relevant actors.

Table 1: The different organizational bodies of IGOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Participating actors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 legislative organ(s)</td>
<td>main deliberation and decision-making body of the IGO</td>
<td>representatives of all member states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 political executive</td>
<td>responsible for coordination between legislative and administrative bodies; often equipped with limited decision-making authority</td>
<td>a selection of member-state representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 the executive head or Secretary-General (SG)</td>
<td>represents the IGO externally, chairs meetings of the political executive, and serves as head of administration</td>
<td>the Secretary-General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 administrative executive (the secretariat)</td>
<td>the IPA is responsible for the day-to-day business of the IGO and supports the legislative and executive bodies</td>
<td>international civil servants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors' compilation.

Our prime interest lies in Rows 3 and 4. Because bureaucratic autonomy is also a relational concept, one also needs to consider the broader organizational governance structure in which 3 and 4 are "embedded." Thus, we also take into account the relation of 3 and 4 to the other organizational bodies.

We have selected ten major organizations from the population of IGOs (possessing a permanent secretariat) to illustrate how the intra-organizational perspective can be applied. Before introducing the required indicators, Table 2 provides a list of these organizations and specifies the IGO-specific terminology for the different bodies.

Table 2: Intra-organizational perspective on IGOs

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Table 2: Intra-organizational perspective on IGOs

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7 The overall population of IGOs is large. In their 15th edition the Yearbook of International Organizations counted 7,679 intergovernmental organizations of which 262 IGOs (the so-called “conventional international bodies”) constitute the population of our sample (Union of International Associations 2013).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>IGO</th>
<th>legislative organ(s)</th>
<th>political executive</th>
<th>executive head</th>
<th>administration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>EU</td>
<td>Council of the EU European Parliament</td>
<td>College of Commissioners</td>
<td>President of the Commission</td>
<td>Commissio Administrati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>IAEA</td>
<td>General Conference</td>
<td>Board of Governors</td>
<td>Director General</td>
<td>Secretariat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Conference</td>
<td>Governing Body</td>
<td>Director-General</td>
<td>International Labour Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>Board of Governors</td>
<td>Executive Board</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
<td>Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Council</td>
<td>Committees</td>
<td>Secretary-General</td>
<td>Secretariat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Summit Ministerial Council</td>
<td>Perman Council FSC</td>
<td>Chairman-in-Office</td>
<td>Secretary General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>UN</td>
<td>General Assembly</td>
<td>Security Council</td>
<td>Secretary-General</td>
<td>Secretariat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>UNESC O</td>
<td>General Conference</td>
<td>Executive Board</td>
<td>Director-General</td>
<td>Secretariat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Assembly</td>
<td>Executive Board</td>
<td>Director-General</td>
<td>Secretariat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>WIPO</td>
<td>General Assembly Specific Assemblies Conference</td>
<td>Coordination Committee</td>
<td>Director-General</td>
<td>Internation Bureau</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Authors’ compilation; for abbreviations, see Annex 1.

Based on these ten organizations, we now illustrate the value of the approach at hand by operationalizing and coding each of the five dimensions of bureaucratic autonomy by means of one exemplary indicator. Administrative cohesion is an important aspect of bureaucratic autonomy because only administrations that are sufficiently coherent will be able to overcome collective-action problems and develop an autonomous will. Thus, the homogeneity of an IGO’s administrative personnel is a suitable indicator to measure this cohesion. International bureaucracies are a lot more heterogeneous than traditional national administrations, however, because their members come from a variety of cultural backgrounds. In order to capture this variation in origin, we use the share of the ten largest nationality groups within the secretariat as compared to total
personnel.\textsuperscript{8} As we can see in the second column of Table 4, the bureaucracies of IGOs with universal membership like UNESCO, WHO, or ILO are quite heterogeneous with regard to the national background of their staff (rather low values), while in the OECD secretariat in Paris, the ten largest nationalities make up a hefty 84 percent of all employees. In order to capture the capacity to develop distinct preferences from the political principals, administrative differentiation is operationalized by taking into account the previous internal employment history of the executive head, measured as the percentage of Secretary-Generals who previously worked as civil servants within the organization. The underlying logic is that the SG has to fulfill a dual role as both a political and an administrative leader. If an external candidate is “implanted” from outside into the organization (from the diplomatic service or high-ranking political positions in the member states), as is usually the case in the OSCE or the EU, he or she is expected to be committed to the political side of the job and less able to play an independent role. In the WIPO and the WHO, in contrast, four out of five SGs come from within the bureaucracy, indicating a higher capacity to develop distinct administrative preferences.

Table 3: The five dimensions of bureaucratic autonomy and suggested measurement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Suggested measurement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1. Administrative cohesion</strong></td>
<td>Staff homogeneity: Share of the ten largest nationality groups within the secretariat as compared to total personnel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.2. Administrative differentiation</strong></td>
<td>Previous internal employment history of the executive head: Percentage of SGs that previously worked as civil servants within the organization (only the latest five SGs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.1. Statutory powers</strong></td>
<td>Sanctioning competence (also see Brown 2010): Ranging from naming-and-shaming mechanisms (0), denial of membership benefits (0.33), power to decree compulsory sanctions on noncompliant members (0.66), to the autonomous capacity to enforce sanctions (1). Sanctions related to the failure to pay mandatory financial contributions are not considered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.2. Administrative resources</strong></td>
<td>Independence of financial resources: Ranging from self-financing (1), mandatory contributions (0.5), to voluntary donations (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.3. Absence of political control over the bureaucracy</strong></td>
<td>Control capacity of the executive body: In order to be attributed the highest control capacity score, the executive must have no more than 30 members, meet at least once a week, and the term of office of the members must be at least 4 years. If one of the conditions is not satisfied, the value consequently decreases by 0.33 (the term of office is</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{8} Measuring homogeneity with regard to the national background of staff is, of course, only one possibility. The professional background (medical staff, lawyers, or economists) would also appear to be suitable here.
increased by 50% if certain countries are permanent members of the executive).

Source: Authors’ compilation if not indicated otherwise.

As regards the capacity for autonomous action, the statutory powers of the IGO vis-à-vis its member states at different stages of the policy cycle are of crucial importance. To exemplify the measurement of this dimension, we code the most powerful sanctioning competences available to an organization. The sanctioning indicator ranges from the most common form of naming-and-shaming mechanisms (coded 0, as for the OECD\(^9\)), the denial of membership benefits (0.33, as for UNESCO\(^{10}\)), the power to decree compulsory sanctions on noncompliant members (0.66, as for the EU\(^{11}\)), to the autonomous capacity to enforce sanctions (1, as for the UN via the Security Council). Administrative resources (e.g., personnel and finances) are a further dimension of a bureaucracy’s capacity for autonomous action. Thus, we measure the independence of an IGO’s income to finance the execution of its mandate. While some IGOs are completely self-financing (coded 1, as for the IMF and the WIPO), some depend on mandatory contributions from their members (0.5, as for the ILO). The worst case from the perspective of an IGO would be a budget depending exclusively on voluntary donations, which would almost eliminate its capacity for autonomous action (0; no empirical example).\(^{12}\) Finally, the absence of political control capacities is operationalized by taking into account the control capacity of the political executive.\(^{13}\) We measured this factor by taking into account different characteristics of the executive (also see Martinez-Diaz 2009). In order to be attributed the highest control-capacity score (1), the executive must have no more than 30 members, must meet at least once a week, and the term of office of the members must be at least 4 years. If one of the conditions is not satisfied, the value decreases by 0.33.\(^{14}\) Applying the indicator to our sample of international bureaucracies, the College of Commissioners in the EU, the Executive Board of the IMF, the Chairman-in-Office at the OSCE, and the UN Security Council all show high bureaucratic control capacities, while the Board of Governors of the IAEA, the Executive Board of the WHO, and the Coordination Committee of the WIPO (which comes closest to an executive) turn out to be less powerful in this regard.

If we apply these coding rules to the ten bureaucracies, we get a tentative picture of the patterns of bureaucratic autonomy in the international realm (see Table 4). For each indicator, the values range from 0 to 1, where higher values indicate higher autonomy. Only for the last dimension (control capacity of the executive body), low control values indicate higher autonomy.

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\(^{9}\) This includes the publishing of benchmarking lists such as a list of tax havens or the PISA study.

\(^{10}\) World Heritage sites may lose their designation when the UNESCO World Heritage Committee determines that a site is not properly managed or protected.

\(^{11}\) The European Commission can initiate an infringement procedure against a member state which is then decided by the European Court of Justice.

\(^{12}\) If IGO revenue is based on a mix of several sources, in-between scores of 0.125 are used.

\(^{13}\) This is not to deny that other organizational bodies (the legislative assembly) and external actors (NGOs) are important, too (see, e.g., McCubbins and Schwartz 1987).

\(^{14}\) In order to account for the fact that some executives have established permanent membership, which is believed to facilitate control of the administration, in such cases the term of office is increased by 50 percent.
Table 4: Patterns of bureaucratic autonomy in ten organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IGO</th>
<th>Staff homogeneity</th>
<th>Background of the SG</th>
<th>Sanctioning competences</th>
<th>Independent income</th>
<th>Executive control</th>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>IAEA</td>
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<td>.2</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSCE</td>
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<td>.33</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
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<td>.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>.39</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIPO</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

6. Conclusion

International bureaucrats are a group of actors that are most likely to gain influence over policymaking under the condition of increasing internationalization and globalization. The basis of their influence is determined by the characteristics of their organizational apparatus and crucial relationships between the bureaucratic apparatus and the political actors of an IGO. The autonomy of what we conceive of as international bureaucracies is thus of crucial importance, in our view, and should receive more systematic attention than heretofore.

We contribute to this debate by focusing on the structural basis of international bureaucracies’ power. The perspective on organizational structures is not the sole dimension of bureaucratic power, but it is a solid starting point and enables disciplined comparisons between large numbers of bureaucracies. Against this background, this chapter advanced on three fields. First, we developed a differential theoretical conceptualization of bureaucratic autonomy applicable to international bureaucracies (and perhaps elsewhere). Second, we exemplarily suggested five indicators for empirical measurement in order to capture the empirical variation of bureaucratic autonomy. Third, we illustrated the potential of such a conceptual yardstick by collecting data for the cases. While this attempt is only a “snapshot” indicating cross-sectional differences in the structural bureaucratic autonomy of a small number of international bureaucracies, it indicates potential for further research in the following ways. First, if the sample of IGOs under scrutiny is enlarged and data is collected over longer time periods, the organizational change and development of international bureaucracies can be studied more systematically. Second, the resulting index of
international bureaucratic autonomy will enable us to better differentiate (potentially policy-relevant) intra-organizational variation (e.g., between autonomy of will and autonomy of action or the respective dimensions). Third, this index might constitute a helpful independent variable for determining under which conditions international bureaucracies develop crucial influence in global policymaking.

More generally, this chapter highlights the challenges that PA research faces when its object “goes international.” We are only starting to realize that internationalization calls into question traditional approaches and concepts of PA research. Relevant research needs to engage in more systematic comparisons across countries and levels of government (including the supranational and international spheres). In addition, artificial disciplinary borders need to be reconsidered. As our approach hopefully highlights, much can be gained from a scrupulous dialogue between IR and PA. Public managers may learn from our study how international bureaucracies’ influence in particular policy fields may vary according to a number of factors, one important one being their internal structures and resources. Depending on the position of public managers, they may want to manipulate these factors in order to foster or downsize potential international influence. They may also recognize that international bureaucrats can be strategic partners with a view to the advancement of national agendas. All in all, what appears important to realize, in our eyes, is that we are only at the beginning of a process whose potential dynamics we are still unable to gauge.

Bibliography


Annex 1 – List of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSC</td>
<td>Forum for Security Co-operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAEA</td>
<td>International Atomic Energy Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGO</td>
<td>international governmental organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>member state(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>Secretary-General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIPO</td>
<td>World Intellectual Property Organization</td>
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</tbody>
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