

DECISION MAKING IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: AN INTEREST
BASED APPROACH TO VOTING RULE SELECTION

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It is no good to get a 75-percent vote which represents, in an extreme case three countries with, shall I say 30 countries voting in the negative, but accounting for only 25-percent, and expect the legislatures of those countries to implement the recommendation.

Leroy D. Stinebower, U.S. Department of State

Introduction

Since 1944, there has been an unprecedented proliferation of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). Of the 495 organizations listed in the Correlates of War IGO data set, 402 were created in the post war era (Pevehouse, Nordstrom & Warnke v2.1). These IGOs have reflected the need for institutionalized policy coordination among nation-states on matters ranging from security to economics and the environment. Despite this, there is still relatively little scholarship on the broader patterns that IGOs display across issue area, function, size, membership, and founding period. Much extant scholarship has instead focused on one or a handful of prominent cases such as the European Union, the World Trade Organization and the North American Free Trade Association. This has prompted a call for scholarship that bridges the divide between theories of international cooperation and broader empirical studies of international organizations (Hafner-Burton, Von Stein & Gartzke 2008). This paper takes a step towards achieving this goal., focusing in particular on one of the most prominent features of international organizations: voting rules.

Of the wide range of institutional design features, voting rules are perhaps the most visible expression of the organization of power in IGOs. If power is the ability to control and influence outcomes, than voting rules are crucial to the distribution of power within international organizations. Those states that hold greater decision-making power within an organization are in a position of privilege and wield the most influence over how gains are disbursed among the organizations membership. Consequently, states spend considerable time and resources negotiating which decision-making procedures and institution should adopt. Such negotiations are often contentious as states seek to influence the degree and distribution of costs and benefits from institutional mem-

bership. The existence of different systems of voting across IGOs suggests that the outcomes of bargaining and negotiations over decision making rules are not uniform. Specifically, we identify three broad categories or types of voting rule in the universe of IGOs: unanimity, majoritarian and weighted voting procedures. This raises the question: why do states select different voting rules for different IGOs?

We posit that voting rules reflect trade-offs between the multiple goals that states seek to achieve in the design of an IGO. Our core argument is that states do not only seek control or influence over IGOs, but they also want to promote IGO membership, activism and compliance with IGO decisions. These objectives coexist and compete and different voting systems will promote some of these objectives at the expense of others. Thus, states selection of voting rules depends on which goals they prioritize and we identify the circumstances under which these different goals will weigh more or less heavily on the selection of voting rules. Thus, our approach adopts many of the assumptions that are characteristic of the rational design approach to the study of international institutions. In particular, we assume that states have a set of interests which they seek to promote in the design of IGOs, and this is reflected in the selection of voting rules in particular (Koremenos, Lipson & Snidal 2001).

Where we depart from much extant research in the rational design school is in terms of the institutional scope of our analysis. Rather than focusing on a small number of IGOs we develop and then empirically evaluate general propositions regarding states' interests and preferences over voting rules. We acknowledge that all IGOs are not created equally and that the design processes of individual institutions are idiosyncratic in many respects. However, our intent is to develop a framework that both captures and explains broader design trends that are common across a variety of IGOs. Consequently, we develop general arguments that can be employed to explain differences in voting rules across economic, security, commodity, banking and multi-issue IGOs. This approach allows us to explain, not only why voting procedures in NATO are based on the principle of unanimity, but also gives us leverage over the question, why does NATO adopt unanimity voting but the African Groundnut Council (AGC) employs weighted voting procedures?

To evaluate our arguments about the conditions under which states will prefer a particular type

of voting rule, we employ an original data set of the characteristics of over 100 IGOs. While the core feature of the data set is information on voting rules in each IGO, it also includes information on IGOs initial membership (such as their number, system of government and material capabilities) and date of establishment. Our sample constitutes 30 per cent of the universe of IGOs. As such, our empirical approach, along with our general theoretical approach, is a response to Hafner-Burton, Von Stein, and Gartzke’s call “for a broad empirical research approach that molds and sharpens theories about IOs by conducting systematic tests in large sample environments” in order to “understand better the complex ways in which different kinds of IOs function” (2008, 176).

The paper is organized as follows. The first section presents a classification of voting systems in IGOs based upon two dimensions: symmetry and polarity. We then presents our interest based explanation of voting rule selection and explore the conditions under which states will favor different types of voting rule. The next two sections present the data, research design and results of empirical analysis and, in the the final section, we present our conclusions.

A Taxonomy of Voting Rules

While voting rules in IGOs have taken on many different forms, they can be classified into three broad categories based on where they fall along two dimensions: symmetry of influence and polarity. Symmetry of influence refers to the distribution of voting power among institutional members. When symmetry is at its highest, or is “perfect”, each state has equal voting power and thus equal influence over institutional decisions. When symmetry is low, some states have much greater voting power than others. Polarity relates to the direction of influence of a given voting rule. The direction of influence is positive when voting rules are designed to give states the power to push the IGO towards a decision. Polarity is negative when voting rules imbue states with the capacity to block or prevent the IGO from reaching decisions (e.g. veto power). In other words, polarity can be distilled as the power to advance a desired policy versus the power to block an undesirable one. These two dimensions, symmetry of influence and polarity, are continua, ranging from low to high, and positive to negative respectively, rather than fixed points.

The three broad categories into which we group voting rules based on symmetry of influence

and polarity are: unanimity, majoritarian, and weighted voting rules.¹ An institution is said to have a unanimity voting rule when decisions can only be taken with the endorsement of all members (i.e. every member has veto power). Unanimity voting affirms that no state can be forced to accept an unfavorable policy because the median voter prefers it or because a more powerful state does. We consider unanimity procedures as universal. That is, a voting rule cannot be said to embody the principle of unanimity unless it gives a veto to *every single voting member*. Consequently, unanimity voting reflects high symmetry of influence². Moreover, unanimity voting in international organizations is the one voting rule that reflects the principle of sovereign immunity, or non-interference, because it affords members of an organization the ability to block undesirable outcomes. In order for a measure to pass, agreement, or at the very least abstention, is required from all of the members of an organization to achieve an outcome. Thus, unanimity voting is characterized by a high level of negative voting power, focused on preventing rather than passing legislation.

The second voting rule type is majoritarian voting. According to our categorization, majoritarian voting rules afford no state veto power and each state has one vote, or each state's vote carries the same weight. The most prevalent majoritarian decision rule requires approval from fifty percent plus one of the membership to pass a measure. While other special majority rules exist they maintain the one state, one vote premise, but they are not as common. Majoritarian rules, like unanimity voting procedures, have a high level of symmetry of influence.³ However, voting power is more "positive" under majoritarian voting procedures as no single state has a significant capacity to block or prevent institutional outcomes, each state can simply throw their support behind or against organizational decisions. Thus states, particularly powerful states, may be wary of majoritarian procedures as they offer little formal avenues to prevent undesirable outcomes.

Weighted voting describes a family of voting practices whose common feature is that some

¹Zamora (1980) similarly classifies voting rules based around the idea of symmetry of influence, though he is not explicit about the existence of such a dimension..

²In this regard, we depart from previous accounts of voting rules in the Security Council for instance that consider the body to have unanimity procedures, as the majority of members in the institution do not possess a veto.

³This is true in terms of individual voters (i.e. states), but majoritarian rules can be manipulated more readily by the formation of voting blocs, making coalitions an important feature of IGOs with these types of decision making procedures.

members of the institution have greater voting power and thus, more influence and control over decisions. In this way, weighted voting rules are necessarily asymmetric, however, they can range from being highly asymmetric to moderately so. For example, voting power in the World Bank is weighted according to contributions to its stock of capital. Thus, at founding the World Bank the United States held over three billion dollars in subscriptions and the United Kingdom 1.3 billion, whereas as Ecuador held 3.2 million dollars and Iceland only one million in subscriptions. Thus, the United States alone maintained roughly one-third of the voting power in an organization that requires a simple majority to pass measures, making it highly asymmetric in terms of the influence that the United States had over the organization at its founding. Today, the United States wields about 16 percent of the voting power whereas 21 African countries represented by a single director maintain about three percent combined.

In terms of polarity, weighted voting procedures fall near the center of the positive-negative scale as they contain both positive and negative power elements. Weighted voting has positive power characteristics because no state has veto power and it affords certain states greater voting influence, thus enabling them to push through decisions more easily, often without having to gather the support of a large number of states. Conversely, weighted voting is associated with negative power as those states whose votes are most heavily weighted may be in a position to block decisions, or at the very least, make passing measures with which they disagree very difficult by forcing those in favor of the policy to build a large coalition to counterbalance their voting power.

While there is some variation within these three categories, all are present in the universe of IGOs and each carries with it certain costs and benefits for different states in the international system. In the next section we investigate the trade-offs inherent in each type of voting rule and offer an interest-based explanation for the conditions under which states should prefer one of the type of voting rule to another.

An Interest Based Explanation of Voting Rule Preferences

In this section, we offer a rationalist explanation of the variation in voting rules across IGOs in which we assume that “states use international institutions to further their own goals, and they design

institutions accordingly” (Koremenos, Lipson & Snidal 2001, 762). Thus, IGO design features, such as voting rules, reflect states’ interests and preferences. More accurately, they reflect the outcome of a keenly contested bargaining process among probable member states. We assume that joining an IGO is a voluntary act and thus voting rules, to some degree, reflect a compromise between the preferences of the founding member states.⁴ More specifically, they reflect a compromise among the multiple, and often competing objectives, that individual states seek to achieve when establishing the voting rules in a new IGO: control, membership/contributions, compliance and activism.

First and foremost, we assume that states will seek to maximize their *control* or influence over institutional decisions, through the design of voting rules, in order to pull those decisions closer to their most preferred outcomes. We acknowledge that *informal* power and influence plays an important role in determining outcomes in IGOs (see Stone 2008) and also that voting in some organizations is a very rare event. However, formal rules, and voting rules in particular, are still important with respect to control and influence because they have the ability to shape the use of power through informal avenues such as lobbying. Furthermore, while in many cases IGOs attempt to take decisions by consensus, in the absence of a consensus, most organizations default to a predetermined voting procedure. Thus, formal, *de jure*, decision rules remain influential by affecting states willingness to achieve an outcome by consensus in informal negotiations (Zamora 1980, 568). In other words, an outcome based on weighted voting for instance casts a shadow over negotiations where states know that they will either be disadvantaged or favored by a decision that reverts to the default rule (Steinberg 2002). While voting rules should not be understood as the definitive expression of control in an organization, we argue that the establishment of such formal rules offers insights into the preferences of those states involved in their creation.

States, however, do not only care about control. They also seek effective *membership* which means having those states join the organization whose contribution and participation is essential if the IGO’s aims are to be achieved. In addition, states seek to ensure *compliance* with decisions

⁴We recognize that voting rules, like other IGO design features, are not static and can evolve over time. Our analysis here focuses on the initial design of voting rules in IGOs because we believe that the renegotiation of institutional design presents a different bargaining dynamic to the negotiation of institutional design as the former involves higher sunk costs and the creation of existing institution-specific “assets”. We leave the investigation of the renegotiation of voting rules to future research.

taken by the IGO⁵. Under anarchy, the potential for defection from agreements made under the auspices of an IGO is often high and, as Zamora (1980) argues, “the way in which decisions are made [in IGOs] will have a direct and immediate effect on the members’ observance of them” (566). Finally, states seek a modicum of *activism* from the IGOs that they join in that they expect them to respond effectively to the problems that they are created to help solve (Koremenos, Lipson & Snidal 2001). It is difficult, if not impossible, for any single state to achieve its ideal outcome in terms of control, membership, compliance, and activism. For example, if one state truly maximizes control to the point where it has dictatorial power over institutional decisions, it is unlikely that it will attract any other states to become members of the institution. Consequently, states must trade-off objectives in these four areas and below we outline the conditions under which states adjudicate among these trade-offs by selecting different voting rules.

Unanimity Voting

Historically, unanimity has been the default voting rule in IGOs (Feld, Jordan & Hurwitz 1994). The reason for this is that unanimity voting entails low sovereignty costs. As unanimity voting allows individual states to retain the power to veto any decisions or actions to which they object, they cede little sovereignty and authority to the IGO. This universal veto allows each state to exercise significant, but equal, control over institutional decisions and block any decisions which they find to be contrary to their interests. Thus, unanimity voting is able to attract members to IGOs because states are able to use their veto to protect their interests. A further strength of unanimity voting is that, as Maggi and Morelli (2006) have shown, it is the optimal voting rule for achieving compliance when third-party enforcement is absent (i.e. under anarchy). This is because decisions taken under such procedures are self-enforcing. Once states agree upon a particular policy, there is no incentive to deviate for if such an incentive did exist it is assumed that the state would have used its veto to block the passage of the policy.

However, this universal capacity to block decisions is not without its drawbacks. The need to find a universally acceptable outcome means that unanimity voting is often associated with

⁵Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal (2001) highlight the importance issues of control and compliance, or enforcement, in the institutional design process.

gridlock and is prone to lowest common denominator outcomes. Thus, while unanimity voting delivers compliance, it hinders the ability of institutions to act swiftly and yields “shallower” cooperation⁶. The point is well-made by Zamora (1980) who argues that, “The disadvantage of the rule of unanimity, of course, is that international agreement is impossible to obtain when any single participant can block a decision; to achieve unanimous consent, the strength of a decision must be diluted so as to please everyone” (p.574). Thus, while unanimity promotes control, compliance and membership, it necessarily comes at the expense of IGO activism. Under what circumstances will states accept this trade-off?

We posit that when states prioritize guarding against undesirable institutional outcomes and protecting their sovereignty, unanimity voting should be the rule of choice. Following Feld et al. (1994), we argue that states and their leaders will prize control and the ability to block undesirable IGO policies above IGO activism when their core interests are engaged by the institution. The suggestion that states’ core interests are invoked in the “high” politics of security matters and less so in the “low” politics of economics, the environment and health is common, particularly in the security studies literature and it is often associated with realist scholars such as E.H. Carr (1946) who argue that the dominant motivation of states is the pursuit of power or survival (Ripsman 2004). However, while security matters undoubtedly strike at the core of state interests, one should not to dismiss the importance of economic institutions to states and to their leaders. Several scholars have argued persuasively that matters of survival and security are not always easily divorced from economic exchange (e.g. Gowa 1994, Brooks 2005, Ripsman 2004). For example, Gowa argues that the efficiency gains from trade and specialization free up resources that can be used to strengthen a state militarily. Meanwhile, Hirschman ([1945] 1969) and others have stressed the capacity for trade patterns to lead to uneven gains for trading partners. These uneven gains may be translated into future power advantages on the battlefield or may leave states vulnerable to coercion by trading partners who can credibly threaten to disrupt economic exchange. Thus, even from a realist perspective that endorses the primacy of power and security, state leaders will view their

⁶Downs, Roche and Barsoom(1996) alert scholars to the fact that a high level of compliance may simply reflect shallow cooperation where states do not engage in substantial deviations from how they would have behaved in the absence of an agreement.

core interests as affected by economic institutions.

A second argument highlighting the importance of economic institutions can be cast at the domestic level. It is important to recognize that while leaders pursue the core interests of the state, they also have individual interests that they seek to promote. Most simply, leaders seek both the survival of state and their own “political survival” (Bueno De Mesquita, Smith, Siverson & Morrow 2003). Furthermore, economic outcomes are often critical to leaders’ success in promoting their own political survival as they are often rewarded for economic success and punished for economic failure (Duch & Stevenson 2008, Lewis-Beck 1990). Thus, they have a strong interest in being able to influence the positions taken by economic IGOs and they will seek to establish voting rules that promote this influence. Accordingly, we expect leaders to prefer unanimity voting to alternative voting rules in economic⁷, and security IGOs.

In contrast, we expect that, all else equal, leaders will eschew weighted voting systems in organizations that engage their core interests. Weighted voting privileges some states at the expense of others, allowing them to pull the final outcome closer to their ideal point and potentially further away from other members of the IGO. States that anticipate being disadvantaged by voting rules are not likely to consent to allow other states to have a greater say over outcomes that are important to them. Furthermore, in matters of security where states’ concerns over relative gains are heightened, unprivileged states will view the potential to pull the outcome closer to the ideal point of some states at their expense as a potential relative loss.

The discussion of unanimity voting has thus far has focused on states’ desires to protect their interests and avoid potentially undesirable outcomes. The potential for such undesirable outcomes increases when states preferences over institutional measures diverge. It is difficult to predict and measure preference divergence across a range of issues *ex ante*⁸. However, one potential source of preference divergence is domestic political institutions. Students of regional economic integra-

⁷As outlined below, this expectation does not apply to important subsets of economic IGOs such as funds, banks and commodity organizations.

⁸The very need for an IGO reflects some degree of divergence among their founding members as IGOs are created with the purpose of aligning states’ actions to achieve outcomes that are Pareto-superior to the outcomes expected if states had simply acted to further their own goals without coordination with others (Keohane 1984, Koremenos, Lipson & Snidal 2001). As Keohane (1984) argues, when states’ interests are perfectly aligned, they play a game of harmony and the need for regimes and institutions to influence state behavior is diminished.

tion have been struck by the varying degrees of institutionalization, openness and legalization of the integration process in different regions and one common explanation of the lower level of institutionalization and legalization in Asia is that Asian countries display greater diversity in economic, political and cultural institutions when compared to states in Europe or the Americas (see Haggard 1997, Katzenstein 1997, Kahler 2000, Mansfield & Milner 1999). Thus, in the eyes of some, the heterogeneity of institutions in East Asia plays a role in retarding the development of influential, binding IGOs such as those found in Europe and North America.

Implicit in this argument is the view that institutional differences across states translate into diverging interests and preferences over institutional design and institutional outcomes. While these institutions can be legal, economic and cultural, we focus here on political institutions, or regime type, for two reasons. Firstly, many other types of institutions such as legal and economic institutions are closely linked to and shaped by political institutions. For example, the existence of an independent judiciary is more a product of the development of a functioning democracy rather than a phenomenon distinct from political institutions. Secondly, many fields of research in International Relations have highlighted how domestic institutions shape interests, policy preferences and behavior in multiple issue areas (e.g. Mansfield, Milner & Rosendorff 2002, Milner & Kubota 2005, Bueno De Mesquita et al. 2003, Russett & Oneal 2001). Thus, we argue that when the homogeneity of domestic political institutions is low among states negotiating the creation of an IGO, they will expect greater disagreement over policy within the IGO and will therefore prefer to preserve their ability to veto through unanimity voting procedures.

While regime type may influence preferences over voting rules, it may be through a slightly different causal process. It has been suggested that authoritarian governments may be more reluctant than democracies to pay high sovereignty costs of institutional membership and will thus favor institutions that impose few obligations and constraints on them (Kahler 2000). If this argument is true, than autocratic states should favor unanimity voting more than democratic states as unanimity voting ensures that they can control institutional outcomes and will not be unwillingly constrained *by others*. Thus, according to this argument, the preponderant regime type rather than domestic institutional homogeneity is important and the more autocratic institutional founders are,

the more likely that the IGO they create will have unanimity voting procedures.

Majoritarian Voting

When compared to unanimity voting majoritarian voting presents a much greater loss of control over institutional decisions. Furthermore, states run the risk of facing the tyranny of the majority and if they anticipate being in the minority, this can act as a deterrent to membership for those states. The potential for such a dynamic was evident during the 1970s when developing countries endeavored to establish a New International Economic Order (NIEO) and in the creation of global organizations such as UNCLOS, developed countries protested actively against the use of majority voting which would put them in a minority position against developing countries (Zamora 1980). An excellent example of this was Australia's insistence on unanimity voting in the International Bauxite Association (IBA) as a condition of membership. Australia was keen to have veto power in the IBA because the IBA was established as part of developing countries' attempts to create the NIEO and strengthen their bargaining power vis-à-vis developed states. As the only developed country in the IBA, Australia realized the potential for it to be outvoted on major decisions. Given Australia's position as a leading bauxite producer, the other founding members of the IBA consented to Australia's wishes for unanimity voting in order to ensure its membership (Pollard 1984).

Compliance is also potentially problematic under majoritarian voting because those states in the minority or whose preferences diverge considerably from the median state can be prevented from exerting significant influence on institutional decisions. Faced with outcomes that are far from their ideal points, these will have strong incentives not to comply with decisions taken by the institution. The one strength of majoritarian voting is its capacity to promote IGO activism as no state has the ability to block decisions. Thus, decisions can be taken more quickly and they can be potentially more far-reaching. Given the potentially negative effects of majoritarian voting on compliance, effective membership and control, when will states ever favor activism sufficiently to agree to adopt majoritarian decision making procedures?

We believe that there is one key circumstance when this will be the case: when institutional membership is expected to be large. As the size of institutional membership grows, the diversity

of preferences also increases (de Melo, Panagariya & Rodrik 1996, Downs, Rocke & Barsoom 1998, Haggard 1997). This makes the blocking facility under unanimity voting highly problematic as membership grows because the potential of one member being sufficiently dissatisfied to threaten to use their veto increases. Thus, leaders are likely to favor majoritarian voting and reject unanimity voting when membership is large as the costs of unanimity in terms of institutional activism become too great⁹. This posited relationship between size and voting is very similar to the conjecture (V1) regarding individual control over institutional outcomes that Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal (2001) present in their introduction to the rational design volume of *IO*. They argue that each states' marginal influence over the final outcome diminishes as with each marginal increase in membership (assuming each new member has some say over institutional decisions). States are willing to concede this influence, even though it means having to accept undesirable outcomes on some occasions, because it prevents other states from blocking their own initiatives and promotes institutional activity towards the attainment of collective benefits.

Weighted Voting

The asymmetry of voting power and influence under weighted voting translates into an asymmetry of control over decisions taken in an IGO. Those whose votes are heavily weighted have considerably more control over institutional outcomes whereas those whose votes are not have much less influence. Institutional activism under weighted voting can be high or low depending on how closely aligned the preferences of those states with the greatest voting power are. For instance, during the Cold War, the UN Security Council was often rendered ineffective by disagreements between the United States and the Soviet Union, both of whom benefitted from the privilege of possessing one of only five rights of veto awarded to members of the UN. However, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has been very active since its creation following the Second World War as developed states, possessing the majority of votes, have consistently agreed over the broad framework of goals that

⁹Feld et al. (1994) and Zamora (1980) argue that majoritarian voting is also found when the issues at stake are primarily technical in nature and do not relate to states' vital interests. This argument is theoretically plausible and is not incompatible with any of the arguments presented here. However, we are skeptical about the feasibility of reliably categorizing IGOs as purely technical because many IGOs deal with technical matters but these technical matters often have political consequences. Moreover, many IGOs deal with both technical and non-technical issues.

the IMF should pursue (Zamora 1980).

Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal (2001) argue that “important” states whose institutional contributions are significant will not concede to equal voting power and control with other less important nations. In this regard, an important strength of weighted voting is that it makes effective membership more likely as those states whose role and contribution to the IGO is essential to its success are typically given greater voting power and are thus more willing to join and actively participate in the IGO. We expect that when the importance of states and their contributions to an IGO are clear and easily measurable, weighted voting will be the rule of choice. This is the case for funds and banks where contributions have a clear monetary value and are directly related to the ability of the IGO to act effectively. Furthermore, when states contribute a large amount of funds they will expect to have greater control over the institution and how those funds are managed. A similar dynamic should also exist for commodity or producers’ organizations where market share can be used to determine voting power. Those states who production or consumption is large are important to the success of price or production coordination and they can therefore negotiate effectively for, and legitimately expect, more control over the IGO.

We also expect weighted voting to be present when major powers are founding members of an IGO. There are several reasons why this is so. Firstly, as is widely argued in the extant literature on the creation of international institutions, by institutionalists and realists alike, institutions are often created by, and for the benefit of, the most powerful members of the international system (Krasner 1991, Keohane 1984, Mearsheimer 1994, Abbott & Snidal 1998). Furthermore, Martin and Simmons (1998) emphasize how formal institutions help entrench the distribution of power. Accordingly, we expect that major powers will demand voting rules that give them more influence and control over institutional decisions (i.e. weighted voting). This view echoes Abbott and Snidal’s (1998) argument that, “[IGO] decision structures frequently guarantee disproportionate influence for powerful states” (10) and, Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal’s (2001) conjecture that power asymmetries in membership will produce asymmetries in control, or how decisions are made in the institution. Secondly, smaller, weaker states will concede to greater voting influence for major powers because, as in the case of banks and commodity organizations, major powers are

frequently the states which make the greatest material contributions to IGOs and they are the most influential actors in the international system. Thus, their membership often strengthens the influence and reach of the IGO. Finally, major powers are uniquely able to induce compliance with IGO decisions.

At first glance, weighted voting seems to pose significant obstacles to compliance as some states, often a minority of the IGO's membership, have considerable influence over institutional decisions and are thus able to potentially force their preferences on other states who often constitute a majority. As Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal (2001) point out, under majoritarian voting, states may find themselves in the majority on some occasions and in the minority on others and thus may be willing to abide by IGO decisions when they are in the minority, in the expectation that they will reap the benefits of other states' reciprocal compliance when they are in the majority. However, under weighted voting, those states whose votes are not heavily weighted are frequently in a position where they have little influence over institutional decisions. This leads, in turn, to the frequent subordination of their preferences causing weaker states to often have little incentive to comply with decisions taken by the IGO. Once defection becomes widespread then the institution will become weak and privileged members with greater voting power will not be able achieve their goals through the institution.

While this perspective is valid, it fails to acknowledge that compliance can be induced through the use of side-payments or threats to induce actors to comply with decisions in situations where the benefits of defection would normally outweigh the costs. Institutions can facilitate this strategy by offering opportunities for credible issue linkages (Martin 1992, Keohane 1984). Importantly, this is a strategy at the disposal of powerful states who have interests in multiple issue areas and have the economic and military capabilities to carry out threats and fulfill promises of rewards for compliance. Thus, another reason why we expect weighted voting to be more common when major powers are founding members of IGOs is that major powers have the requisite resources and reach to promote compliance through side-payments or threats.

Table 1: Summary of Hypotheses

U1:	Unanimity voting is <i>more</i> likely in security IGOs.
U2:	Unanimity voting is <i>more</i> likely in economic IGOs.
U3:	Unanimity voting is <i>less</i> likely as membership increases.
U4:	Unanimity voting is <i>more</i> likely as regime type diversity increases.
M1:	Majority voting is <i>more</i> likely as membership size increases.
W1:	Weighted voting is <i>more</i> likely when a major power is a member.
W2:	Weighted voting is <i>more</i> likely in a contribution-based IGO.

Research Design

Dependent Variable: Voting Rules in IGOs

To evaluate the hypotheses presented in the section above and summarized in Table 1, we collected data on the voting rules of 135 intergovernmental organizations founded between 1930-1998. The cases in the data set are a subset of the 495 IGOs in the Correlates of War IGO membership data (Pevehouse, Nordstrom & Warnke v2.1). Organizations that expired prior to 1945 were excluded as a result of missing or unreliable data. Furthermore, we confined our observations to economic, security, commodity, and general (multi-issue area) institutions.

Information on voting rules was gathered from primary and secondary sources including official charters, constitutional documents and declarations of the institutions themselves deposited with the United Nations Treaty Series or printed in international legal compendia such as Peaslee's (1974) *International Governmental Organizations and Constitutional Documents* and *Basic Documents of African Regional Organizations* (Sohn 1972). Additional information on membership and voting rules was collected from web sites of individual organizations. Through analysis of these documents and their articles on voting, IGOs were coded as having one of the following voting rules: unanimity, majoritarian, or weighted.

Organizations and their rules evolve over time; however, since we are interested in the initial outcome of negotiations over an institution we code the voting rules in the year that the organization was founded. For example, while the voting rules in the European Union, established by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, changed with subsequent treaties including Amsterdam and Nice, we

only code the voting rules and membership of the European Union in 1992. The reason for doing this is that once an institution is established, the cost-benefit calculus that states face when considering redesigning the institutions architecture is distinct from that facing states engaged in creating a new institution. For example, states derive benefits from existing institutions and, in order to maintain those benefits, they may be more willing to compromise with others in the redrafting of the voting rules than if the institution did not yet exist.

Several institutions have provisions for two or more voting rules. For many, extraordinary voting procedures are reserved for modification to the membership or amendments to the charter of the organization only. In such cases, the voting rule employed for conventional business of the IGO was coded. However, in other cases, such as the European Union, different voting rules are prescribed for different issues. For these institutions, the voting rule assigned for the decisions that required the most policy adjustment (i.e. not simply procedural votes) was selected as the institutional voting rule as this is when voting rules can be said to “matter most”. Finally, for institutions that had multiple decision making organs, voting rules for the supreme decision making body were coded as in most cases they represented the body: a) to whom all others were responsible; b) most likely to pass decisions when disagreement existed at lower levels of decision making; c) likely to take decisions on the most important and contentious matters facing the IGO. Reason (a) is particularly important as in many IGOs, most every day decisions on the operation of the IGO are not taken by the most senior body. However, lower bodies must take into account, and indeed follow, the collective preference at the most senior level and that collective preference is shaped by the voting rules in the supreme body.

Independent Variables

To examine the role of IGO size, we used initial IGO membership as a proxy for those states that were present at negotiations over an IGO and accepted the final outcome. We coded as members those states that were considered to be “founding members of the IGO by being present during the negotiations and they must have subsequently signed and ratified the founding charter of the

organization.¹⁰ As we are interested in how large membership size can introduce gridlock under some voting schemes we include a measure for membership size: *membership size* is a continuous variable that ranges from 3 to 127¹¹.

According to our argument the type of organization or the particular issue area that it addresses may have direct implications for the type of voting rule selected. Therefore, we include the following dummy variables:

Security Organization: coded 1 if the main focus of the institution is security/defense (e.g. NATO).

Commodity Organization: coded 1 if the institution regulates the production and/or distribution of a single commodity (e.g. Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries).

Bank/Fund: coded 1 if the institution uses contributions for lending and investment purposes (e.g. Islamic Development Bank).

Economic: coded 1 if the institution if the organization deals with economic issues such as trade that are not contribution based (e.g. World Trade Organization).

The baseline category is the general, or multi-issue organization (e.g. the United Nations) and an organization is coded as such when all other issue area dummies equal 0.

We have argued that the divergence in domestic political institutions can lead to an increased desire for control over international policies. Thus, we include a measure for *regime type diversity* that is the standard deviation of the Polity IV (Marshall & Jaggers 2006) combined democracy-autocracy scores¹² for all of the states coded as founding members of the IGO.

Finally, we have argued that in IGOs where there is a major power among the membership we should expect the IGO to exhibit weighted voting as major powers will push for more control and

¹⁰In cases where information on the founding members was not available, we extrapolated from the original signatories of the treaty and considered signatories that ratified within a period of two years to have had membership in the year of treaty adoption.

¹¹While Pevehouse, Nordstrom, and Warnke (Pevehouse, Nordstrom & Warnke v2.1) have developed an impressive data set on membership in IGOs, we have collected data on membership and start dates independently because we focus on the date of treaty adoption and the identity of those states present at founding due to our interest in the outcome of negotiations towards the creation of IGOs. Data in the Pevehouse, Nordstrom, and Warnke data set often begin when an IGO enters into force and therefore may include members not present at founding and the entry date may be several years after decisions regarding the design of the institution were taken as entry into force of IGOs can take several years.

¹²This measure ranges from -10 to 10 where higher numbers reflect a greater level of democracy and a lower level of autocracy.

influence over the organization and have the resources to offer inducements to ensure compliance. We therefore include a dummy variable *major power* that is coded 1 if at least one major power was a founding member of the IGO. Major power status was determined using the Correlates of War Projects listing of major powers (Correlates of War Project 2008)¹³.

Control Variables

It is possible that the relationship between power and weighted voting is not exclusive to major powers and that regardless of whether or not they are major powers, the more powerful states within a group negotiating towards an IGO will always insist on greater voting power. If this is true, we should expect that when the difference in capabilities across founding members of an IGO is low, weighted voting will be less likely, and when it is high, weighted voting will be more likely. We account for this argument using a measure of *power diversity*, which is the standard deviation of the Correlates of War's national material capabilities measure (cinc score) (Singer, Bremer & Stuckey 1972).

The frequent instances of deadlock in the U.N. Security Council during the Cold War period suggest that the Soviet Union and the United States were wary of the other wielding too much influence over IGOs and were careful to block each others influence. It is possible that such considerations spilled over into negotiations over voting rules during this period. If this is so, we expect that when superpower rivalry is present at the negotiation of an IGO, the voting rule will be unanimity so that the superpowers can maintain a veto and thus, block each others influence. *superpower rivalry* is a dummy variable coded 1 if the institution was created during the Cold War and both the United States and the Soviet Union were founding members. We also consider the possibility that interstate bargaining dynamics and the design of IGOs may be qualitatively different under unipolarity and bipolarity and therefore also include a dummy variable *cold war* that is coded 1 if the institution was created between 1945 and 1990.

Finally, there is a wide body of scholarship that argues that democracies behave differently

¹³We also measured major power membership as a count of the number of major powers that were founding members; however, we found that the presence of additional major power members beyond one does not effect voting rule selection. Thus, the critical difference is between having no major power member and having any major power member, regardless of their number.

to autocracies in international politics in both the realms of security (e.g. Gartzke & Gleditsch 2004) and economics (e.g. Mansfield, Milner & Rosendorff 2002). Consequently, we included the *democratic density* of an IGO as it may be that when democracies design institutions together, they favor different voting rules than autocracies, or in IGOs that are heterogeneous with respect to regime type. We follow Pevehouse (2002) in measuring the democratic density of IGOs as the mean level of democracy of the members of the organization. To measure democracy, we use the combined Polity democracy-autocracy score discussed above (Marshall & Jaggers 2006). All independent and control variables are measured at the time of institutional creation and descriptive statistics are presented in Table 2.

Method

The data in this analysis is cross-sectional and the dependent variable of interest, IGO voting rule, can assume one of three different and mutually exclusive outcomes—unanimity, majoritarian, or weighted. Because we are interested in which rule is the most likely one to be selected for an IGO by a group of states we employ a multinomial logistic regression model (Long 1998, Cameron & Traverdi 2005). Unanimity is the baseline alternative and, thus, the coefficients for majoritarian and weighted outcomes are interpreted in comparison to this category. For ease of interpretation, predicted probabilities for different covariate combinations are presented in combination with the results of three separate models.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	
Membership Size (Mean)	17.05
Cold War IGOs (Total)	19
Coldwar Rivalry IGOs (Total)	6
Major Power IGOs (Total)	62
Power Diversity (Mean)	0.02
Democratic Density (Mean)	1.38
Regime Type Diversity (Mean)	5.06
Commodity IGOs (Total)	23
Security IGOs (Total)	13
Bank/Fund IGOs (Total)	27
Economic IGOs (Total)	52
General IGOs (Total)	28

Table 3: Multinomial Logit Estimates of the Likelihood of Voting Rule Selection in IGOs

Covariate	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
Majoritarian Voting						
Membership Size	0.047 ^{.04} (0.023)	0.051 ^{.04} (0.025)	0.044 ^{.04} (0.021)	0.043 ^{.05} (0.022)	0.048 ^{.04} (0.024)	0.045 ^{.04} (0.021)
Cold War	-1.558 ^{.06} (0.820)	-1.477 ^{.09} (0.878)	-1.429 ^{.23} (1.182)	-1.636 ^{.07} (0.915)	-1.779 ^{.07} (0.975)	-1.093 ^{.55} (1.822)
Cold War Rivalry	-2.033 ^{.14} (1.377)	-2.291 ^{.14} (1.549)	-2.833 ^{.17} (2.062)	-1.677 ^{.22} (1.378)	-1.810 ^{.21} (1.455)	-2.898 ^{.08} (1.650)
Maj. Power Membership	0.524 ^{.35} (0.555)	0.662 ^{.24} (0.568)	1.134 ^{.11} (0.706)	1.174 ^{.02} (0.493)	1.307 ^{.01} (0.498)	3.248 ^{.00} (1.052)
Power Diversity	-12.103 ^{.20} (9.419)	-8.877 ^{.35} (9.557)	-10.104 ^{.27} (9.153)	1.421 ^{.84} (7.016)	-0.292 ^{.97} (7.100)	-7.799 ^{.41} (9.466)
Democratic Density		-0.058 ^{.27} (0.053)	-0.047 ^{.45} (0.062)		0.006 ^{.89} (0.046)	0.012 ^{.84} (0.062)
Regime Type Diversity		-0.079 ^{.42} (0.097)	-0.143 ^{.23} (0.118)		-0.126 ^{.17} (0.092)	-0.323 ^{.07} (0.179)
<i>Issue Area</i>						
Security			-1.131 ^{.29} (1.077)			-34.899 ^{.00} (1.348)
Commodity			0.700 ^{.39} (0.806)			4.453 ^{.00} (1.300)
Bank/Fund			0.280 ^{0.780} (1.001)			4.694 ^{.00} (1.252)
Economic			-1.154 ^{.08} (0.656)			-1.154 ^{.32} (1.161)
Constant	-1.023 ^{.01} (0.415)	-0.734 ^{.27} (0.658)	0.072 ^{.93} (0.853)	-1.443 ^{.01} (0.424)	-0.933 ^{.15} (0.639)	-2.310 ^{.03} (1.088)
Log-likelihood	-114.62	-108.88	-75.55	-114.62	-108.88	-75.55
N	121	118	118	121	118	118

Baseline Alternative is Unanimity Voting.

Baseline Alternative is Unanimity Voting.

Results

The results of the multinomial logit estimations are presented in Table 3. The first model assesses the effects of power, membership size, and time period. The second model incorporates domestic political institutional variables democratic density and regime type diversity. The third model brings in organizational issue area. The predicted probabilities presented in Tables 4-6 and Figures 1 and 2 are calculated using estimates from model (3). The baseline category is unanimity voting and thus, the coefficients reflect the likelihood of majoritarian voting or weighted voting being selected compared to unanimity.

Across all models, the effect of membership size on voting rule selection is statistically significant and robust. The positive coefficients indicate that as membership size increases unanimity voting is less likely to be selected when compared to both majoritarian and weighted voting procedures, providing support for hypotheses U3 and M1. The argument that states are concerned about gridlock is given further support in Figure 1, where the effect of increasing membership size on the likelihood that a particular voting rule will be adopted is stronger for majoritarian than for weighted voting. There is an obvious downward trend in the likelihood of unanimity voting as membership size increases, with a probability of about 70 percent at the lowest levels of membership shrinking to a probability of almost 0 percent at higher levels. In contrast, the probability of majoritarian voting being selected approaches one as membership size grows.

The presence of a major power at the founding of an institution does not seem to have a bearing on the selection of a majoritarian voting rule. However, it does exert a strong effect on the probability of selecting a weighted voting rule that is statistically significant at the .01 level in the full model and is robust across all models. Table 4 illustrates the substantive effect of major power presence on voting rule selection across institutions covering different issue areas. Regardless of issue area, major power membership decreases the predicted probability of unanimity voting being chosen and this change in predicted probability is statistically significant at the 0.1 or 0.05 levels and ranges from 0.16 to 0.32. Alternatively, major power membership raises the predicted probability of weighted voting being selected and this shift is statistically significant at either the 0.1 or 0.05 level for all types of economic organization, including banks and commodity

Figure 1: Predicted Probabilities of Each Voting Rule Being Selected Given Different IGO Membership Sizes

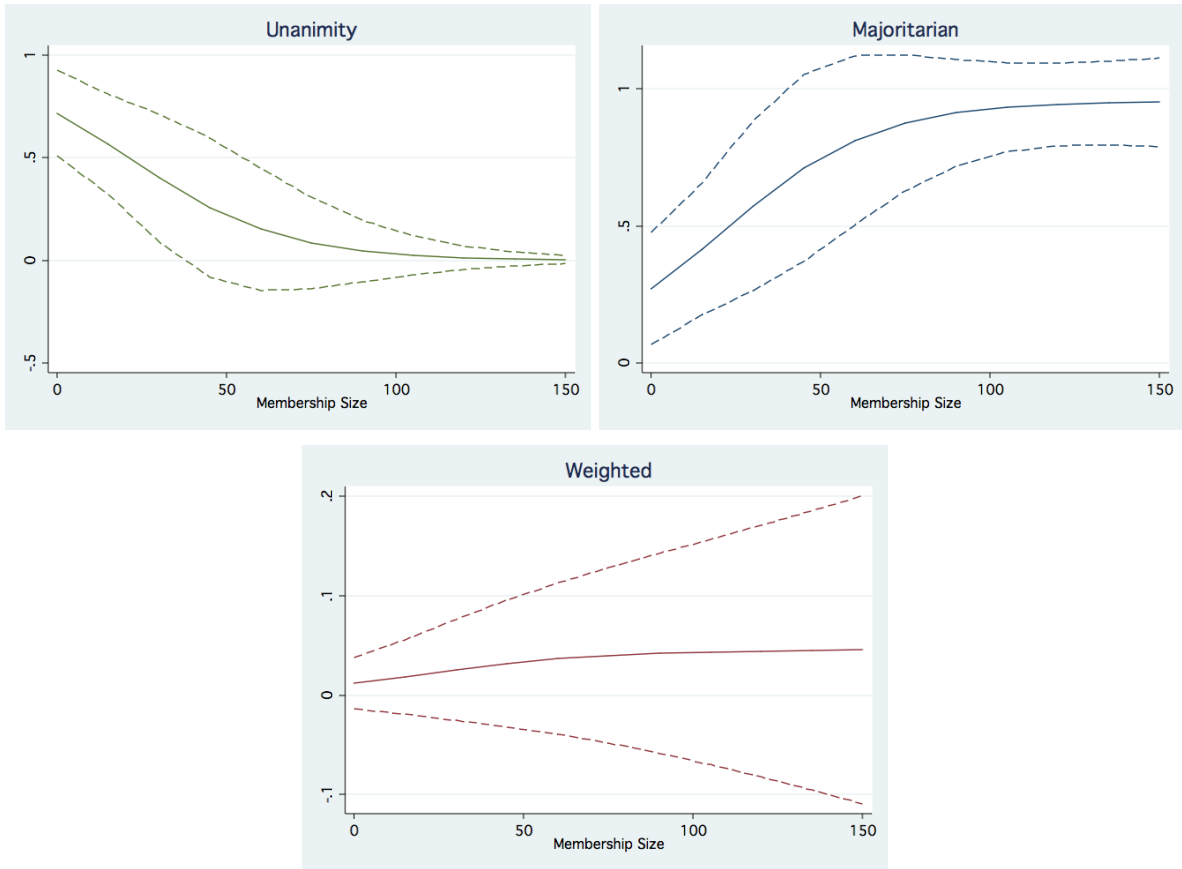
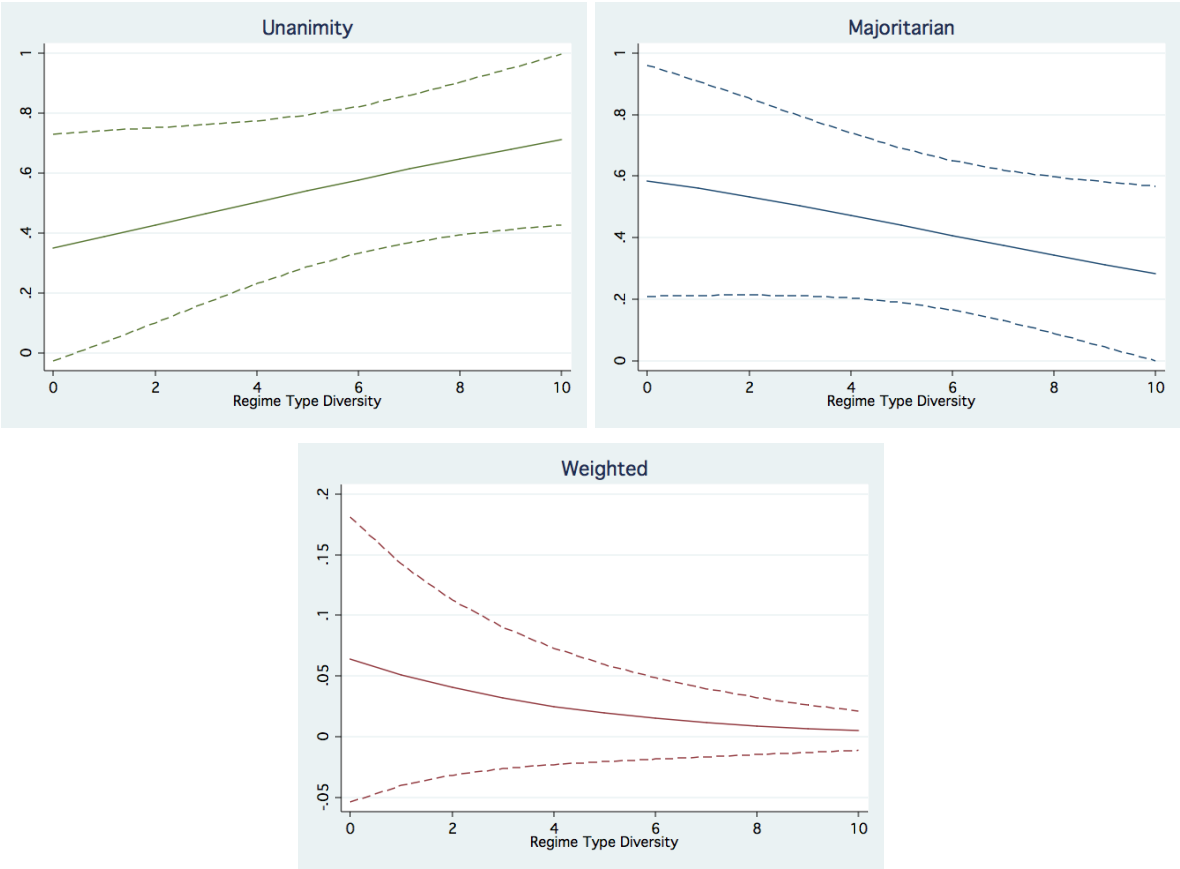


Figure 2: Predicted Probabilities of Each Voting Rule Being Selected Given Different Levels of Regime Type Diversity



IGOs. This effect is strongest in commodity organizations where major power membership raises the predicted probability that weighted voting will be selected by 0.39. These results lend some support to hypothesis W1, that major power membership makes weighted voting more likely.

Table 4: Change in Predicted Probabilities of Voting Rule Selection When at Least One Major Power becomes a Founding Member

Issue Area	Voting Rule		
	Unanimity	Majoritarian	Weighted
General	-0.32**	+0.13	+0.19
Other Economic	-0.31**	+0.18	+0.13*
Security	-0.24*	+0.24*	0
Commodity	-0.16*	-0.23*	+0.39**
Bank	-0.16*	-0.15	+0.31**

*All other variables set to their mean values; dummy variables set to their modes.
*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$; for changes in predicted probability.*

Regime type diversity exerts a statistically significant effect, at the 0.1 level, only in the full model and only in the case of weighted voting. This effect is illustrated graphically in Figure 2. The predicted probability curve for unanimity indicates that as regime type diversity increases, so does the likelihood that unanimity voting will be the rule of choice while, on the other hand, weighted voting is much less likely. This provides some moderate support for the argument that regime type diversity, used here as a proxy for diversity of preferences across member states, promotes unanimity voting procedures (U4).

Table 5: Change in Predicted Probabilities of Voting Rule Selection When an IGO's Mandate Covers a Specific Issue Area

Issue Area	Voting Rule		
	Unanimity	Majoritarian	Weighted
<i>Baseline Probability</i>			
General IGO	0.54	0.44	0.02
<i>Change in Probability</i>			
Other Economic	+0.25*	-0.24	-0.01*
Security	0.25	-0.23	0.02
Commodity	-0.37**	-0.15*	+0.52***
Bank	-0.37**	-0.26	+0.63***

*All other variables set to their mean values; dummy variables set to their modes.
*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$; for changes in predicted probability.*

When dummies for IGO issue area are included in the model we find that security IGOs are much less likely to display weighted voting procedures. In contrast, banks and commodity organizations are very likely to exhibit weighted procedures, and the effect is positive and significant at the .001 level. Table 5 shows the predicted probabilities for the selection of voting rules based on IGO issue area. The probability of selecting weighted voting when moving from the baseline, general IGO to commodity organization increases by 52 percent points. For bank, this increase is 63 percentage points (significant at the .01 level). Thus, arguments about the desire of major contributors to secure greater control and the willingness to cede this control receive strong support (W2). Furthermore, these organizations are very unlikely to select unanimity voting procedures.

The results for economic IGOs provide some limited support for the argument that leaders wish to preserve control over outcomes where economic issues are concerned. The coefficient for economic organizations dummy for majoritarian voting is negative and statistically significant at the 0.1 level; however, for weighted voting, the coefficient is not significant. The predicted probabilities in Table 5 indicate that the probability of selecting a unanimity voting rule for economic organizations is 25 percentage points higher than for general IGOs, which corroborates hypothesis U2. In the case of security organizations, we expected that unanimity would be preferred to both majoritarian and weighted voting procedures as states strive to preserve control over their own security. Hypothesis U1 receives strong support in the comparison of weighted and unanimity voting. The coefficient for majoritarian and weighted voting are negative and weighted voting is extremely unlikely to be selected as the voting rule for security organizations (significant at the .01 level). In Table 5, the predicted probabilities for security organizations do not yield strong results, which is in contrast to the results in Table 3. We believe this is because of the small number of observations for security organizations and the fact that none of the security IGOs in our data have weighted voting procedures.

We do not find any support for the argument that weighted voting is less likely when power diversity is low as the power diversity coefficients fail to achieve statistical significance in any of the models. However, we do find support for the argument that the Cold War superpowers did seek to block each other through the selection of unanimity voting rules. This result is most evident

in Table 6 which reports substantial increases in the predicted probabilities of unanimity voting being the rule of choice when both superpowers are founding members of an institution compared to when they are not. This increase is statistically significant at the .05 level for all types of IGOs except security organizations.

Table 6: Change in Predicted Probabilities of Voting Rule Selection When Cold War Rivalry is Present

Issue Area	Voting Rule		
	Unanimity	Majoritarian	Weighted
General	+0.41***	-0.39***	-0.02
Other Economic	+0.19**	-0.19**	-0.01
Security	+0.19	0.19	0
Commodity	+0.61**	-0.40**	-0.21
Bank	+0.61**	-0.13	-0.48**

All other variables set to their mean values; dummy variables set to their modes.

**** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$; for changes in predicted probability.*

The Cold War control variable shows that majoritarian and weighted voting procedures were less likely to be selected than the baseline alternative of unanimity during the Cold War. However, this effect is not statistically significant when we control for organizational issue area. This suggests that time period and the broader geopolitical context do not exert an effect on voting rule selection when we account for other explanatory factors. Taken as a whole these results indicate that the variation in voting rules is a function of several key factors including the presence of a major power, membership size, the type of organization, and the presence of superpower rivalry.

Conclusion

The study of international organizations and their design account for much of the recent literature in international relations; however, as Hafner-Burton et al. (2008) highlight, little is known about the broader processes of IGOs. In this paper, we argue that it is essential to understand how states try to organize power within IGOs and, further, how they balance this desire for influence with other goals: compliance, effective membership, and activism. We elect to focus on a broader set of IGOs including security, economic, commodity, banking, and multi-issue area organizations in order to draw general conclusions about the conditions under which we would expect states

to select a specific voting rule. This approach provides strong evidence that when states have particular preferences (e.g. control or compliance) the outcome of negotiations will yield a specific type of decision making mechanism.

Case analyses of IGOs have taken us far in understanding the process of institutional design as suggested by the rational design research program, yet, studies of organizations like the European Union and the World Trade Organization pose difficulties for generalization. We believe there is much to gain from coupling case-based analysis with broader empirical studies. Future research will bridge the gap between these two approaches by focusing in on individual concepts such as IGO activism and issues of effective membership and how they manifest themselves at the micro and macro levels.

While our analysis has focused on the initial negotiation of IGO design, we recognize that international organizations are involved in an evolutionary process; they take on new members, modify their rules and undertake new tasks. Scholars have only just begun to investigate the process of the renegotiation of international treaties (e.g. Koremenos 2005, Rosendorff & Milner 2001) and we believe that an informative future direction for the study of voting rules would be the investigation of the determinants of rule renegotiation and assessing the role of factors such as shifts in power within the organization, changes in the international political or economic environment, and a broadening of organizational issue scope.

Like the organizations they attempt to explain, the study of IGOs has evolved over time. From descriptions of international institutions and their functions to the coordinating role they fulfill and to the design of institutions as solutions to specific problems, IGO scholarship has become increasingly theoretical. This paper attempts to bridge the rich empiricism of early IO scholarship to recent theoretical contributions and we believe that we have shown there is much to be gained from uniting classical, legalistic approaches with new institutionalism.

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