International Organizations as Actors and Arenas in International Politics

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Nicolas Burmester

Hamburg, July 2019

Introduction

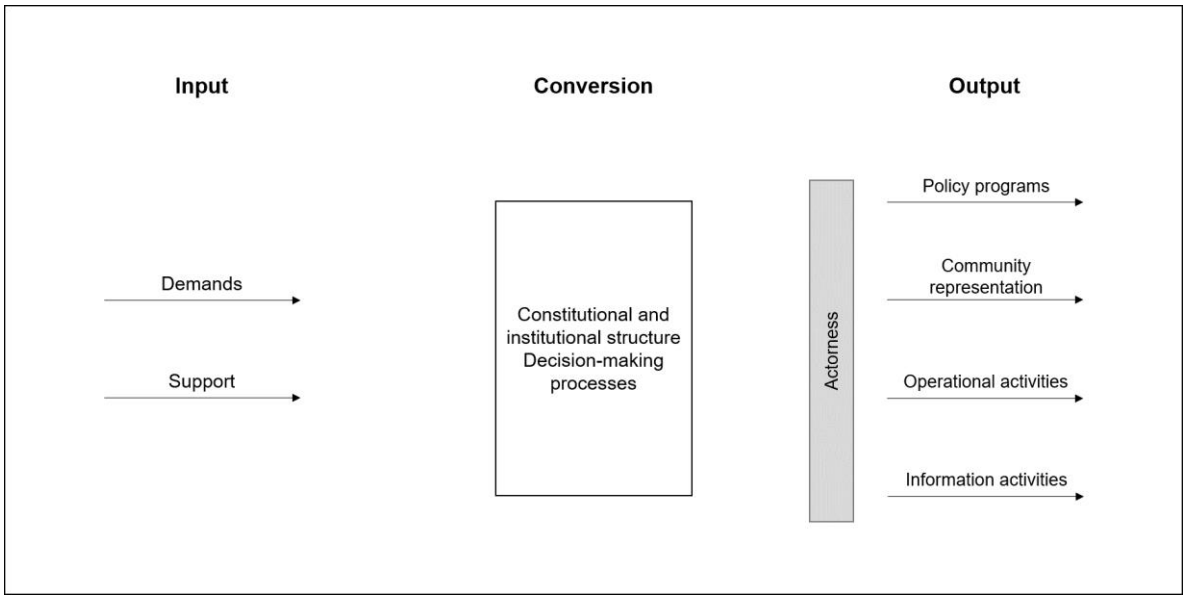
International organizations[1] have been a vital and omnipresent part of international politics since the end of the Second World War. They commonly debate, but do not always successfully deal with, international crises. The Eurocrisis has kept the European Union (EU) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (among others) on their toes for years. The global economic and financial crisis augmented the Group of 20 (G20) from a conference of finance ministers to a meeting between heads of state that eventually worked out a common response by the world's largest economies. On several occasions, both the United Nations (UN) and regional organizations like the African Union (AU) have dispatched peacekeeping forces to monitor violent conflicts. The Syrian refugee crisis prompted the member states of the United Nations, the EU, and subregional organizations such as the Visegrad Group to work out collective responses. Whether international organizations eventually take action on policy issues, politicians, observers, and the public certainly expect states to engage in these multilateral forums and, consequently, international organizations to tackle the issues on the international agenda. We have gotten used to problems beyond the nation state being solved in multilateral settings and global crises at least partly being governed by international organizations. Nowadays, it is virtually impossible to find an international policy field void of international organizations (e.g., Abbott & Snidal 1998; Archer 2001; Green 2008; Volgy et al. 2008; Rittberger et al. 2012; Reinalda 2013; Hurd 2014). In short, international organizations offer a wide range of political goods that contribute to global governance.

Not unlike states or other organized political systems, international organizations create a wide variety of outputs. Like states, non-governmental organizations, or multinational companies, international organizations *do* things in international politics. International organizations transform input by state and non-state actors into different types of output through their institutional and political structure (cf. Figure 1). Rittberger et al. (2012) argue that international organizations produce policy programs, operational activities, and

[1] International organizations and intergovernmental organizations are understood synonymously in this dissertation. The argument focuses on international organizations that states and state agencies establish and run. Thus, it does not take into account organizations that revolve around non-governmental actors. This is a deliberate choice to reduce complexity and not an analytical or normative judgement about the relevance and impact of non-governmental organizations, private actors, and individuals in international politics.

information activities. Policy programs are targeted at changing the behavior of international actors through implementation of rules and norms, regulation of relations among member states, third actors, or relations between an organization and its members (Rittberger et al. 2012: 120; Archer 2015: 137-141). Operational activities are linked to the implementation of policy programs. On a conceptual level, five types of operations can be distinguished: norm and rule specification, implementation, monitoring, adjudication, and enforcement of compliance (Rittberger et al. 2012: 123-131; Archer 2015: 144-148). Furthermore, international organizations generate, collect, and distribute information through reports, scientific services, or other publications (Rittberger et al. 2012: 132-135; Archer 2015: 148-149).

Figure 1: International organizations as political systems



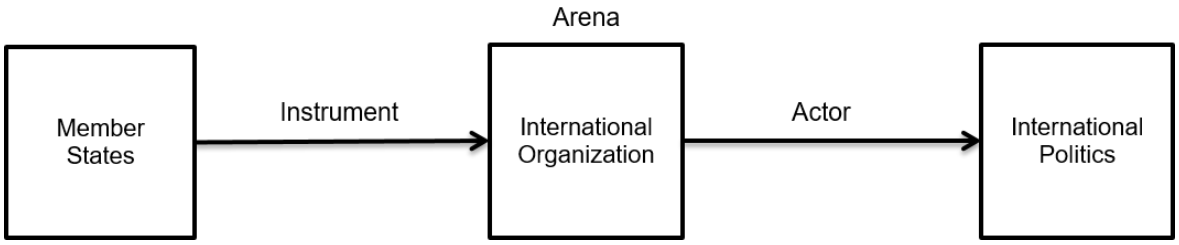
Notes: The figure amalgamates two figures by Rittberger et al. (2012: 72, 119). The fourth output dimension *community representation* is added based on the literature on actorness (e.g., Cosgrove & Twitchett 1970; Sjöstedt 1977; Jupille & Caporaso 1998; da Conceição-Heldt & Meunier 2014), regional organizations in international negotiations (e.g., Panke 2013a), and arguments on the aggregation function of international organizations (e.g., Abbott & Snidal 1998; Archer 2015).

Finally and adding to Rittberger et al. (2012: 72, 119), international organizations offer community representation in that they serve as a way to 'develop and express community norms and aspirations' (Abbott & Snidal 1998: 24) towards other actors. While community representation was initially used by Abbott and Snidal (1998) to describe representation by universal membership organizations such as the United Nations, this type of output takes into consideration that states commonly use international organizations to aggregate their individual voices into a common voice on international issues (Archer

2015: 137-138). Specifically, the literature on regional organizations in international negotiations has highlighted that states aim at increasing their bargaining leverage by working through regional organizations (e.g., Birnberg 2009; Panke 2013a, 2013b). In particular less powerful states rely on creating common positions with other states or at working through international organizations in order to improve their bargaining position in the international sphere (e.g., Neumann & Gstöhl 2006; Cooper & Shaw 2013). Hence, international organizations offer member states the possibility to transform their individual voices into a collective one.

Although it, in principle, crosscuts all four output types, this idea of community representation lies at the heart of the concept of actorness, which has been extensively discussed concerning regional and international organizations. Actorness is an analytical attempt to assess the ability of international organizations to develop a potential for collective action that exceeds the sum of the actions of the individual members. Initially developed for the study of the EU's status as a collective actor, actorness can be applied to international organizations more generally (Cosgrove & Twitchett 1970; Sjöstedt 1977; Jupille & Caporaso 1998; da Conceição-Heldt & Meunier 2014).

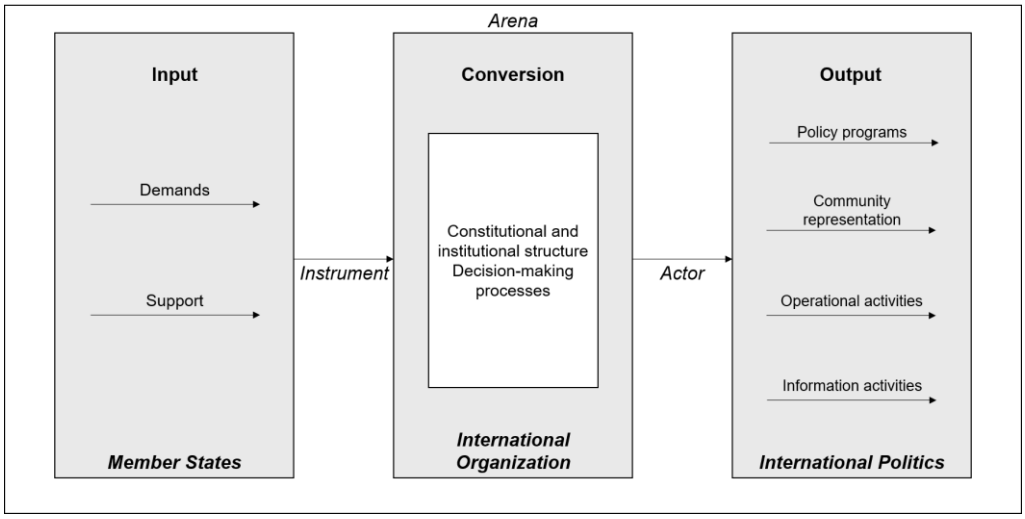
Figure 2: Three research perspectives on international organizations



This understanding of international organizations as political systems conjoins theoretical approaches to the study of international organizations. The specific International Relations (IR) literature on international organizations is often summarized using a heuristic tool that structures different theoretical schools and their respective views on the predominant role of international organizations. According to this heuristic, international organizations perform roles as instruments, arenas, or actors (cf. Figure 2), which links up to the understanding of international organizations as political systems converting inputs into outputs (cf. Figure 1). Mainly rooted in realist IR theory is the perspective that international organizations are instruments of state interest (e.g., Gilpin 1981; Mearsheimer 1994-1995). In realist theory, international organizations are not perceived as independent actors in relation to their member states but serve rather as tools for powerful states. In contrast, the neolib-

eral paradigm views international organizations as arenas for state cooperation and conflict, studying for example how the design of the organizations influences state interaction (e.g., Keohane 1984; Oye 1985; Stein 1990; Keohane & Martin 1995). International organizations are mostly seen as structures in which other actors engage in order to reach multilateral solutions for shared policy issues. Finally, approaches linked to constructivist thought started to take an interest in international organizations as independent actors of their own (e.g., Finnemore 1993; Barnett & Finnemore 2004; Oestreich 2011). Here, researchers are interested in analyzing how and to what extent international organizations might be able to influence the behavior of other international actors independent of their member states or change the behavior of their own members. Taken together, the three perspectives paint a comprehensive picture of approaches to international organizations' roles as instruments, arenas, and actors (e.g., Hurd 2014; Archer 2015).

Figure 3: Combined depiction of international organizations as political systems and the three perspectives on international organizations



The understanding of international organizations as political systems and the heuristic of international organizations as instruments, arenas, and actors are complementary in the sense that they simplify and structure approaches and research agendas concerning institutionalized international cooperation between states. Both draw attention to different research questions and analytical ambitions regarding the role and relevance of international organizations in international politics (Figure 3).

This dissertation project started out with the ambition to improve the theoretical and methodological tools for the study of international organizations' output, inquiring into their roles as arenas and actors. Yet the original intent to answer research questions about the broader areas of 'how and to which extent do international organizations have the ability to develop actorness?'

and 'how can we measure actorness?' was slowly supplemented with more fundamental questions concerning international organizations.

Confronted with an apparent surge in the relevance of informal forums such as BRICS and the G20 in the aftermath of the global economic and financial crisis as well as a general trend towards informal international forums and procedures (e.g., Daase 2009; Conzelmann 2012; Reh 2012; Freistein & Leininger 2016), the project encountered fundamental theoretical and conceptual issues when approaching these more informal forms of international cooperation. While recent research has acknowledged that international organizations might look very different than prototypical (formal) international organizations such as the United Nations (these divergent views are represented by, e.g., Vabulas & Snidal 2013; Rüland & Bechle 2010; Roger 2016), the literature seems to be in fundamental agreement about what international organizations are, how they are supposed to function, and what they are supposed to do. Yet puzzling empirical observations and inconsistencies about more 'non-formal' international entities, such as BRICS, required novel conceptual and theoretical tools to answer questions about how these entities can develop and perform actorness. An example was the establishment of the New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Agreement by the BRICS. Not only did their creation go against general expectations to what informal international forums were supposed to deliver (e.g., Pant 2013; Vabulas & Snidal 2013; Armijo & Roberts 2014), they also opened up more general questions about what international organizations are and whether it is meaningful to speak on the conceptual level about international organizations in the singular.

Most commonly, the literature has conceptualized international organizations as permanent bureaucratic structures that are based on a legally binding agreement of member states. The legal basis for the organization commonly defines the purposes and limits of the organization and delegates a certain degree of autonomy to the organizations' institutions and administrative apparatus (e.g., Abbott & Snidal 1998; Karns & Mingst 2010; Schechter 2010; Hurd 2011; Pease 2012; Rittberger et al. 2012; Buzan 2014; Davies & Woodward 2014; Archer 2015). Consequently, studies have separated international organizations concerning membership constellations (universal/limited, global/regional), inclusiveness (states only/non-state actors), purpose (task-specific/general purpose), authority and function (specialized/comprehensive) (e.g., Rittberger et al. 2012; Davies & Woodward 2014; Archer 2015; Lenz et al. 2015). Essentially, international organizations have been perceived as tantamount to *formal* international organizations (with some exceptions, cf. Rüland & Bechle 2010; Vabulas & Snidal 2013; Roger 2016). The dissertation

argues for separating international organizations along the dimensions of formalization and autonomy into three distinct types: formal, pseudoformal,[2] and informal international organizations. In the next section, I argue that this distinction offers theoretical and empirical insights into questions regarding the different usage of international organizations by states, the way international organizations function as arenas for state interaction, and specifically for the ability of international organizations to develop actorness in international politics. While we have a relatively broad and systematic knowledge base for the assessment of formal international organizations, informal and pseudoformal international organizations have mostly been neglected so far.

In six papers, the dissertation attempts to answer the project's initial research questions, 'how and to which extent do international organizations have the ability to develop actorness?' and 'how can we measure actorness?' The papers significantly improve methodological and theoretical tools for assessing cohesion of international organizations, a key precondition for actorness. Additionally, the dissertation offers insights into questions regarding informal international organizations and a conceptual starting point for the systematic analysis of pseudoformal international organizations. However, rather than providing definite conclusions and answers, the project has uncovered new questions and avenues for future research on international organizations. Ultimately, the dissertation aims to provide additional insights into two overarching research questions:

1. How can we conceptually grasp international organizations that veer from the norm of formal international organizations and explain how they function and what they do in international politics?
2. Once we have conceptually sorted international organizations, how can we assess whether or to what extent international organizations have the capacity to develop actorness in international politics?

[2] I choose the label *pseudoformal* because of the apparent resemblance of formal and pseudoformal organizations. Both types of international organization share the trait of an international bureaucratic body. Yet pseudoformal international organizations lack the legal personality and do not gain authority through formal delegation. A more detailed discussion is presented in the following chapter on the Conceptual Contribution: Refocus and Rethink International Organizations and the Summary of Paper A: Three Types of International Organizations: Theorizing the Actorness of Formal, Pseudoformal, and Informal International Organizations.

Table 1: Overview of individual papers

#	Title	Status	Co-Author
A	Three Types of International Organizations: Theorizing the Actorness of Formal, Pseudoformal, and Informal International Organizations	Working Paper	
B	More Than Talking Clubs: Explaining the Creation of Hard Law by Informal International Organizations	Working Paper	
C	How to Study Foreign Policy Convergence? Methodological Problems and Theoretical Explanations	Working Paper	
D	The Unsolved Puzzle: Pacific Asia's Voting Cohesion in the United Nations General Assembly – A Response to Peter Ferdinand	BJPIR 2014, 16:4, 680-689	Michael Jankowski
E	Reassessing the European Union in the United Nations General Assembly	JEPP 2014, 21:10, 1491-1508	Michael Jankowski
F	One Voice or Different Choice? Vote Defection of EU Member States in the United Nations General Assembly	BJPIR 2018, 20:3, 652-673	Michael Jankowski

Contributions to the Field

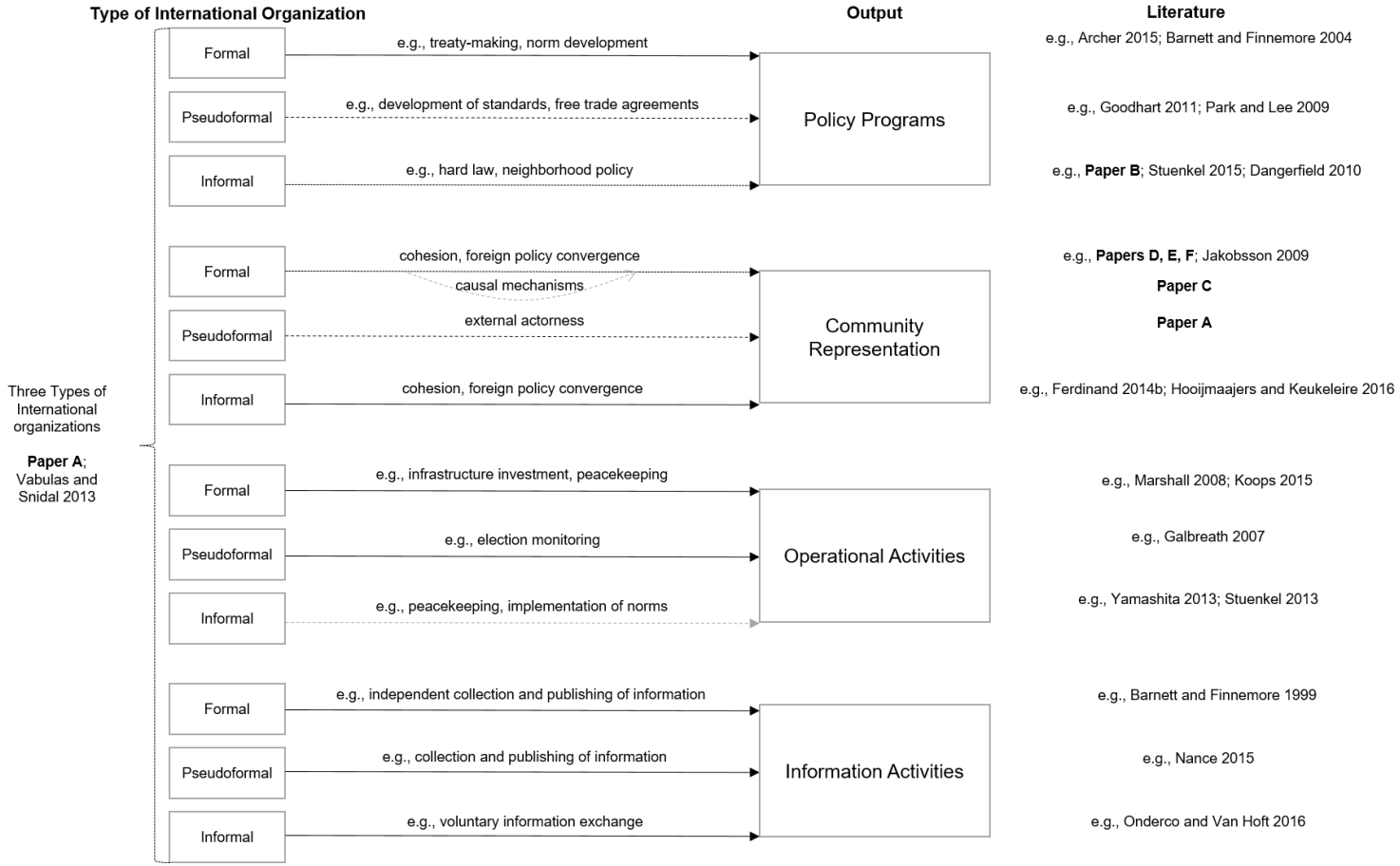
The dissertation makes three core contributions to research on international organizations. First, I offer an improved *conceptual* distinction of international organizations that allows for a theoretical and empirical separation of international organizations according to differences in the institutionalization. Expanding the distinction between formal and informal international organizations (Vabulas & Snidal 2013), I argue that pseudoformal international organizations form a third type of international organization. The three types can be expected to function distinctly as instruments, arenas, and actors. Accordingly, as their institutional structures differ, the three types are presumed to produce different outcomes.

Second, the dissertation offers extensive *methodological* arguments about the study of international organizations' actorness. Specifically, I propose innovative ways to study the cohesion between member states of international organizations. Cohesion is a key dimension of actorness, as it functions as a precondition for any joint action (Sjöstedt 1977; Jupille & Caporaso 1998; da Conceição-Heldt & Meunier 2014). As the literature has primarily focused on analyzing the cohesion of formal international organizations, specifically regional organizations such as the EU, three papers contribute mainly to this literature.

Third, the *empirical* parts of the dissertation expand our understanding of specific international organizations as arenas for state interaction. Here, the individual papers show how Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa used the informal international organization BRICS to negotiate the creation of the New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Agreement and how ASEAN as well as EU member states succeed (or fail) in speaking with a common voice in the arena of the UN General Assembly.

Overall, the dissertation contributes conceptually, methodologically, and empirically to the international organizations literature. Figure 4 summarizes the different contributions to the research field of international organizations. The dotted arrows indicate whether the papers contribute to the research field directly. Dashed arrows indicate the development of new avenues for research. Solid arrows depict aspects already studied in the literature. Grey arrows mark areas where the dissertation provides initial insights. The figure highlights that the project so far has scratched the surface concerning several research areas on international organizations. The conclusion of this summary highlights three promising areas for further research.

Figure 4: Project overview: international organizations as actors and arenas



Notes: The dotted arrows indicate direct contributions by the dissertation. Dashed arrows denote further avenues for research or initially theorized but empirically untested contributions. Solid arrows denote areas in which the literature on international organizations provides extended research. Grey arrows mark areas where the dissertation provides tentative insights, demanding further theorization and empirical analysis.

Conceptual Contribution: Refocus and Rethink International Organizations

As argued in the introduction, research on international organizations is overwhelmingly based on the assumption that international organizations can be equated with *formal* international organizations on a conceptual level. This assumption underlies theories, approaches, and heuristics on international organizations. Yet, there are two reasons why this focus on formal international organizations creates problems for the literature. On the one hand, if we say that international organizations equal formal international organizations, we face trouble on the conceptual and empirical level. Most commonly, international organizations are defined as active entities with an independent bureaucratic body that are established by treaty between three or more member states (Archer 2001: 33-34; Dingwerth et al. 2009; Karns & Mingst 2010; Schechter 2010; Pease 2012: 2; Church & McCaffrey 2013: 27; Rittberger et al. 2013: 21; Buzan 2014; da Conceição-Heldt et al. 2015: 9). This focus on formality creates the problem that researchers have primarily been focused on specific international entities and have excluded an increasing number of other entities from the analytical scope that work informally (Daase 2009; Vabulas & Snidal 2013). To give a prominent example, Koremenos et al.'s (2001) study of the rational design of international institutions only analyzes institutions based on formal international treaties.[3] Yet the study of international politics shows that other, non-formal international entities have successfully taken part in processes of global governance. This definitional tension is clear in textbooks on international organizations. When they describe international organizations dealing with the global economy, most textbooks also discuss the role of the Group of Seven/Eight (G7/8) and the Group of Twenty (G20), even though none of them bear any resemblance to the underlying definition of international organizations (e.g., Karns & Mingst 2010; Rittberger et al. 2012; Archer 2015). Hence, the literature commonly applies a narrow definition of international organizations that eliminates successful and relevant international entities from their analytical scope, while simultaneously acknowledging the need to address these entities.

On the other hand, the research on international organizations is closely related to the international institutions and international regimes literature. The international regimes literature analyzes 'sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors'

[3] The authors do not use a bureaucracy as a requirement but focus on formal treaties. Therefore, the authors speak about international institutions not organizations.

expectations converge in a given area of international relations' (Krasner 1983: 2). Though the term has been used disparately, ranging from a synonym for international organizations to a description of international relations as a whole (Stein 1983: 115), the common denominator is that international regimes are social institutions that structure relations between international actors in a specific policy field (Young 1983: 93; Hasenclever et al. 1997; Simmons & Martin 1998: 737). Studies of international regimes therefore cut across several actors and concepts when analyzing, for example, the international environmental regime (e.g., Dimitrov 2003) or the regime complex for climate change (e.g., Keohane & Victor 2011). In contrast to international organizations, however, regimes are not capable of functioning as actors (Rittberger et al. 2012: 5). The study of international regimes therefore incorporates a wide range of international actors that include international organizations as traditionally defined and other international entities. Yet the focus is not so much on organizations but rather on policy fields, thus significantly shifting the analytical focus away from organizations to international and inter-organizational politics.

Research on international institutions is closely linked to neoliberal IR theory, focusing on the determinants for state cooperation in international negotiations (e.g., Simmons & Martin 1998, 2002). While it is often used as an equivalent to formal international organizations or international treaties (e.g., Koremenos et al. 2001: 772), the concept of international institutions usually contains a wide range of phenomena related to the conduct of international politics (Duffield 2007; Rittberger et al. 2012: 5). Most commonly, international institutions are defined as sets of formal and informal rules that prescribe and restrict state behavior and shape expectations (Keohane 1989a: 163, 1989b: 3; Mearsheimer 1994-1995: 8; Jackson & Sørensen 2013: 110-111; Fioretos 2017: 3). This includes overarching norms that guide the conduct of state behavior, agreements between states, and intergovernmental organizations. The English School has introduced the helpful distinction between primary and secondary international institutions. The former describes rules and norms that fundamentally define the international society, and the latter refers to formal international organizations (Bull 1977; Buzan 2014). The concept of international institutions guides research on 'how […] international institutions matter for world politics' (Simmons & Martin 1998: 730). Thus, research is focused on the study of the institutional frameworks' influence on state behavior. Hence, formal rules are often in the analytical focus as states transparently agreed to adhere to their prescriptions and proscriptions. Consequently, formal international organizations with their treaty-based procedural and organizational rules are the empirical focal point for studies of international institutions. Still, the conceptual recognition that institutionalized

international cooperation is happening in variety of forms beyond the realm of formal international organizations can be considered one of the major analytical benefits of the concept of international institutions (Duffield 2007). The concept of international organizations has coexisted with international institutions and international regimes for several decades. All three concepts have found wide usage in the literature; sometimes seen as conceptual equivalents; sometimes treated as distinctly different phenomena.[4]

As a result, work on international organizations is often too narrow, focusing only on *formal* international organizations, while the international institutions and regime literature includes a wide range of phenomena that are substantially and theoretically different from international organizations. As entities such as the G20, the Visegrad Group, BRICS, or APEC do not adhere to the conceptual standards for classic definitions of international organizations (i.e., they are not 'formal'), the conceptual and theoretical way around is to grasp them as international institutions, international regimes, international forums, or under related concepts. As these concepts are linked to different theoretical expectations, said entities often remain undertheorized and, therefore, systematically understudied.

An example is the scholarly work on BRICS. Two monographs written on the organization contain little to no explicit theoretical discussion or theoretically linked arguments. Cooper (2016) thoroughly describes the establishment of the organization and important decisions such as the creation of the New Development Bank. Yet the book refrains from drawing comparisons to other organizations or nesting the observations in a theoretical framework. Similarly, Stuenkel (2015b) provides a thick collection of documents and events, drawing a historical account of the early years of cooperation among the BRICS countries. Comparisons with other (and strikingly similar) organizations such as IBSA remain insufficient (Stuenkel 2015b: 86-88), and explicit references to theory are only made superficially. The literature on the Group of 7/8 is similar in the sense that researchers often describe rather than explain observed behavior (e.g., Hajnal 1999; Dobson 2007). This is not to say that research on BRICS or G7/8 is without merit – quite the opposite. The

[4] Simmons and Martin end the conceptual discussion in their contribution on 'International Organizations and Institutions' to *The Sage Handbook of International Relations* as follows: 'we refer to institutions as sets of rules without drawing a distinction between institutions and regimes. While we recognize the distinction between institutions and organizations, many of our arguments apply to both. In the actual practice of research, the distinction between institutions and organizations is usually of secondary importance, unless the institution under study is especially informal' (2002: 194). Essentially, the authors argue for a pragmatic use of the concepts, treating them as inherently equivalent.

study of informal organizations is highly complicated and presents specific hurdles to researchers. Formal organizations leave a paper trail through their bureaucracies, but what empirical trails do organizations without administrations leave? The work by Cooper, Stuenkel, Dobson, and others paves the way for researchers who lack the access or endurance to study phenomena that can reasonably be expected to be set up with the aim to avoid public scrutiny (cf. below discussion on data; Vabulas & Snidal 2013: 202-203).

Nevertheless, research on these organizations should not end with thick descriptions but should aim to enhance our theoretical understanding of the phenomena, explain the causes and consequences of observed behavior, or give a perspective on how to interpret observed behavior. As a starting point, the development and application of strong causal or interpretative theories demands a clear statement about the case universe. If we want to argue about how (formal, informal and pseudoformal) international organizations (or regimes or institutions) matter for international politics, International Relations theory needs to be precise and specific about which claims we make for which types of international entities. The same is true for meaningful descriptions and comparisons.

The dissertation therefore builds on prior research on informal international politics and informal intergovernmental organizations. I propose a new typology that allows for a clear delimitation of international entities and simultaneously upholds prior definitions and arguments. The proposed typology does not so much render research on formal international organizations obsolete but rather opens up the debate for a discussion of other types of international organizations. Moreover, it allows sharper theories and research on formal international organizations by eliminating diverging cases from the case universe.

Using the concepts of centralization and independence introduced by Abbott and Snidal (1998) in an abductive research process, the dissertation argues that these two attributes constitute the 'formal' with international organizations. While this type covers a wide range of empirical cases, several cases remain unaccounted as they prove to be centralized but dependent (pseudoformal international organizations) or decentralized and dependent (informal international organizations). The theoretically possible fourth type (decentralized and independent international organizations) is empirically unobservable pointing towards a potential logical impossibility (the summary of Paper A discusses the typology in detail).

Figure 5: Typology of international organizations

	Centralization	**Decentralization**
Independence	Formal International Organizations	*Empirically empty*
Dependence	Pseudoformal International Organizations	Informal International Organizations

In general, adopting this typology makes it possible to separate causally different cases into distinct subpopulations. The dissertation argues that the three types of international organizations can be theorized to develop actorness in substantially different ways. Furthermore, differentiating the different types of international organizations makes it possible to explain their distinct functionalities and behaviors (e.g., Paper B: More than Talking Clubs: Explaining the Creation of Hard Law by Informal International Organizations).

A comparison of Figure 1 and Figure 4 shows that increasing the conceptual complexity not only accounts for more of the empirical complexity of international politics but also frames areas for new research. The field has mainly focused on formal international organizations so far. Informal international organizations have slowly emerged as a new field of study, exploring less formal or informal ways of organizing between states beyond the nation state. Organizations subsumed under the label pseudoformal international organizations have commonly been treated as formal international organizations. The label 'pseudoformal' should be understood as a placeholder term, trying to capture the fact that the organizations, through their bureaucracies, resemble formal international organizations, while being based on different legal arrangements. The dissertation has argued in the papers that these differences have profound consequences in the dimension of actorness. However, it is reasonable to expect differences in the way pseudoformal international organizations function as arenas of state interaction or as instruments of states as well.

Actorness of International Organizations: Improved Arguments on Cohesion as Precondition for International Organizations' Actorness

The second main contribution of the dissertation is the significant theoretical, empirical, and methodological expansion of arguments on the cohesion of international organizations. Cohesion is an essential dimension of community representation. The literature on actorness distinguishes between four linked

dimensions that constitute an organization's capacity for actorness: recognition, authority, autonomy, and cohesion. Recognition can be separated into *de facto* and *de jure* recognition, distinguishing practical acknowledgement of actorness by third actors and the official recognition of the actor in international law (Jupille & Caporaso 1998: 216; Gehring et al. 2013; da Conceição-Heldt & Meunier 2014: 965). Authority describes the organization's competence to act externally (Jupille & Caporaso 1998: 216-217; da Conceição-Heldt & Meunier 2014: 964-965). Autonomy refers to the entity's capacity to engage in international politics in a way that makes its actions distinct from and independent of its member states (Jupille & Caporaso 1998: 217-218; Delreux 2014: 1019). Cohesion refers to the organization's capability to speak to third parties with one voice or at least not with contradicting voices (Jupille & Caporaso 1998; Mattheis & Wunderlich 2017). Cohesion has been highlighted as potentially *the most* important determinant of actorness and, therefore, community representation (Jupille & Caporaso 1998: 226-227). Only if member states and the organs of an international organization speak jointly on a policy issue can an international organization develop actorness. Yet cohesion is not easily conceptualized or empirically analyzed. Papers C to F propose concepts and methodological tools to remedy these problems.

The dissertation tackles three main issues. First, the project argues that cohesion is the result of a combination of various processes. For example, two states may agree on an issue because they negotiated an agreement or because their political interests aligned perfectly irrespective of any cooperation or negotiation. While the result remains the same on the surface, the causal constellations and underlying political content are vastly different. Specifically, harmony and convergence need to be distinguished. Harmony describes a situation where states do not need to adjust their own policy preferences in order to achieve their common goals. Convergence is a situation in which states adjust their previously different policy preferences in order to attain commonly shared goals (Keohane 1984: 51-54). However, it is plausible that harmony has other causal explanations than convergence. While convergence should be linked to processes taking place in the context of international organizations, harmony can be causally unrelated to the membership in an international organization. Essentially, the argument claims that convergence can be the result of high causal complexity. Paper C identifies several causes that can produce, in conjunction or isolation, convergence through equifinal mechanisms. The dissertation does not resolve this issue but discusses the problem of observational equivalence for empirical research on cohesion.

Second, the dissertation suggests several ways to distinguish cohesion based on convergence from cohesion potentially produced by harmony. Essentially, we[5] recommend taking into account the context of the arena in which states aim to take joint action. We argue that the ability to achieve a common position matters most in instances when the policy issue is contested among and beyond the members of the group that commits to the overarching goal of collectively working for the interests of its members. We propose ways to study cohesion by taking the overall level of conflict into account and therefore highlight instances in which the ability to speak with one voice should matter most (Burmester & Jankowski 2014). When political issues are contested among actors in a political arena, the ability to overcome disagreement within a group determines the chance to reach a joint position on the issue and potentially sway the overall argument in one's favor (e.g., Stavridis & Pruett 1996; Strömvik 1998; Young & Rees 2005; Birnberg 2009; Jin & Hosli 2013; Panke 2013a).

Similar arguments have been made on a theoretical level in the study of party cohesion in the context of (sub)national parliaments. Here, researchers have used arguments based on Ozbudun's distinction between cohesion and discipline. Discipline is the ability of party leaders to 'enforce obedience', and cohesion refers to unity among party members (Ozbudun 1970: 305; also Hazan 2006).[6] The success of parties in parliaments is essentially based on their ability to discipline party members to form a consensus if divergent views persist among the members of the party or the party's members of parliament. We develop similar arguments from an International Relations debate and propose ways to improve our measurement of cohesion among collective actors in international arenas (i.e., regional and international organizations). The discussion in Papers D, E, and F as well as the methodological chapter in this summary recapitulate the arguments in detail.

Third, the dissertation offers three distinct empirical contributions to the literature. Paper D shows that ASEAN's voting cohesion in the United Nations General Assembly cannot be understood as a product of convergence. The evidence suggests that the cohesion among ASEAN member states is independent of the international organizations. Regional developments offer stronger explanations than developments within ASEAN. Paper E argues that actorness becomes visible under pressure. The dissertation shows that the European

[5] If the dissertation uses 'we' in the following, it refers to the joint work with Michael Jankowski in Papers D, E, and F.

[6] We have discussed the overlap between these different literatures in a conference paper presented at the ECPR General Conference in 2014 (Burmester and Jankowski 2014).

Union is the only regional organization that is able to increase their voting cohesion when issues are overall contested in the United Nations General Assembly. We argue for the plausibility that this is due the EU's unique ability to overcome diverging interests among the member states in order to form a unified voice in international settings. Finally, Paper F discusses obstacles to the creation of cohesion within the EU. By adopting a design developed for national parliaments (Sieberer 2010), we are able to identify three factors that potentially influence the EU's ability to speak with one voice. Firstly, we discuss the effect of national interests on different policy issues. Secondly, we argue about the effect of domestic factors on vote defection. Thirdly, we provide evidence for the effect of U.S. influence on the EU's ability to overcome diverging views among the member states. Taken together, the contributions deepen the understanding of international organizations' abilities and obstacles to form common positions in international arenas.

The dissertation offers improved conceptual and methodological tools to assess a key dimension of international organizations' actorness. Building on the extensive literature in this field (e.g., Lijphart 1963; Hurwitz 1976; Strömvik 1998; Young & Rees 2005; Rasch 2008; Birnberg 2009; Jakobsson 2009; Voeten 2013; Hooijmaaijers & Keukeleire 2016), the dissertation highlights the need to differentiate expectations to the ability of specific international organizations to develop cohesive positions and carefully assess the presented evidence.

Yet it is important to keep in mind that cohesion is only a fraction of the concept of actorness. For example, the extent to which a regional organization manages to vote together within the context of the UN General Assembly provides a strong indication on whether the regional organization has actorness within the General Assembly. However, it hardly gives the full picture of the regional organization's actorness within and beyond the General Assembly. Nevertheless, (voting) cohesion is, in my opinion, a crucial precondition for collective action beyond the nation state, even more so if international organizations cannot rely on an independent bureaucracy that acts on behalf of and as the organization (as argued in Paper A).

International Organizations as Arenas

As outlined in the introduction, international organizations have been analyzed from three distinct perspectives as instruments of states, as actors, and as arenas of state interaction. The dissertation also contributes to the latter perspective. Understood as arenas, international organizations are perceived as settings or institutional frameworks in which state interaction takes place. This research perspective highlights that structural factors shape the political space in which members negotiate political issues and convert their interests into policy outputs (e.g., Koremenos et al. 2001; Archer 2015).

The dissertation offers several contributions in this vein. First, the conceptual discussion highlights that the differences in formalization between the different types of international organizations creates distinct frameworks in which member states interact. While this typology has not explicitly been used in the literature, studies of individual international organizations have generally considered the institutional framework aspect. Several formal international organizations have been studied under this perspective with various focuses and topical interests (e.g., Bourantonis 2005 on the structural constraints for reforming the UN system; Vestergaard & Wade 2013 on quota reform in the World Bank; Nielson & Tierney 2003 on the problem of multiple agents in the World Bank governance structure). Moreover, researchers have analyzed different pseudoformal international organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (Galbreath 2007), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) (Beeson 2009), and the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS) (Goodhart 2011). Similarly, studies on informal international organizations have highlighted the structural bias towards flexibility and the non-binding character of procedures and decisions (e.g., Hajnal 1999; Dobson 2007; Stuenkel 2015a, 2015b).

The dissertation also takes on this perspective by looking at the institutional framework that the informal international organization BRICS offered its member states for the negotiations leading up to the creation of the New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Agreement (Paper A). Additionally, several papers analyze whether and to what extent the framework of (regional) international organizations allows the respective member states to formulate a regional voice in global negotiations taking place in the context of the United Nations General Assembly. Specifically, the papers offer arguments on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Paper D) and the EU (Papers E and F).

Second, the argument on informal international organizations highlights the relevance of the consensus principle, equal rights of the member states,

and the absence of an international bureaucracy as structuring factors for state interaction within these organizations. *Consensus principle* means that all included parties need to be in agreement on an item or course of action. It is hereby irrelevant what the consensus is based on, i.e., different interests might lead to the same position on an issue or procedure. Importantly, however, organizations enshrining the consensus principle need to build joint agreement among its members on any decision, because disagreement from one state will stall any process or decision (e.g., Tollison & Willett 1979; Koremenos et al. 2001; Haftel & Thompson 2006). Consequently, agreement is often reached on the lowest common denominator so that it benefits the members or at least does not contradict or infringe on their interests. From an institutional perspective, the consensus principle can be understood as a strong veto right. Actors can withdraw from discussions at any point or block talks or decisions if the outcome moves too far away from their own interests.

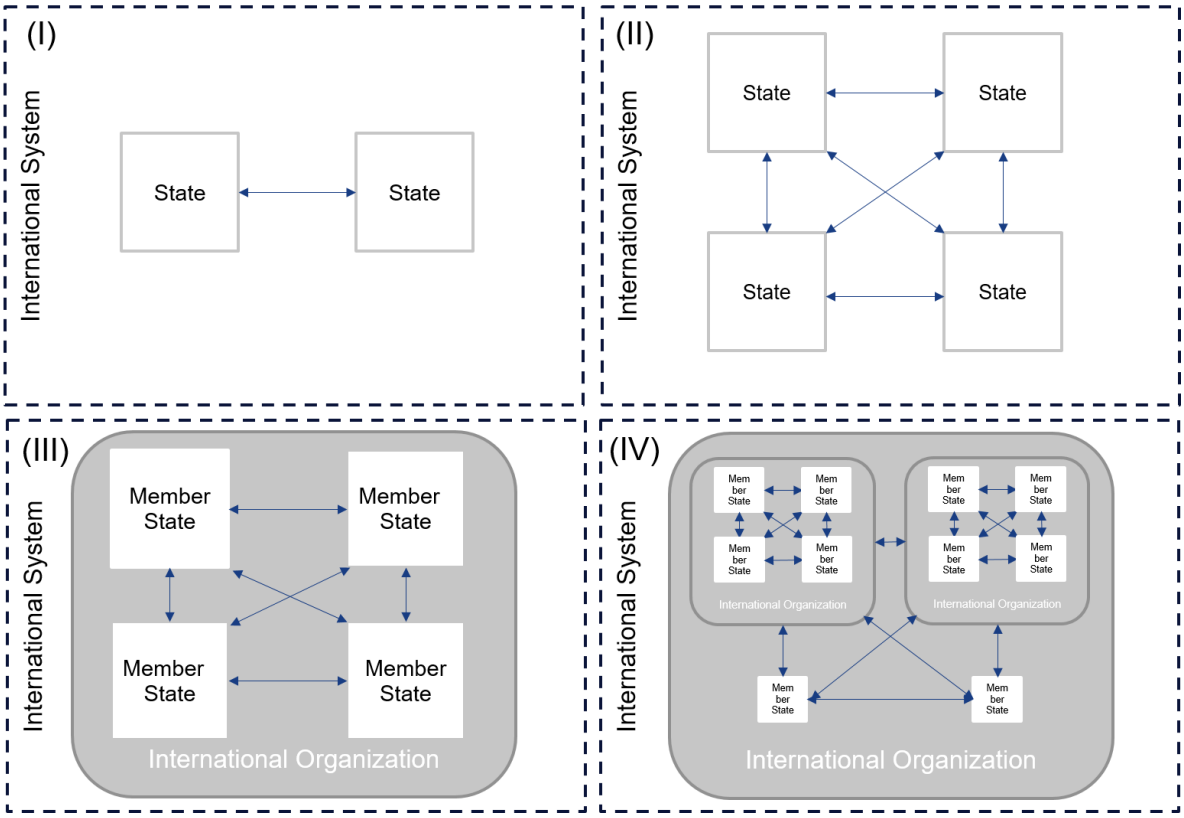
Sometimes, members of informal international organizations cannot agree on even the lowest common denominator. When the members cannot reach an agreement, the strength of the individual members vis-à-vis the organization becomes highly visible. An example is the G20 meeting in 2017, when the United States unilaterally blocked a joint statement on climate change and registered their disagreement in the leaders' declaration (G20 2017a, 2017b; New York Times 2017).

In informal international organizations, built on non-commitment and voluntariness, the consensus principle is a defining institutional characteristic. In formal international organizations, the consensus principle can be embedded as a formal decision-making rule or an informal procedural norm. Yet the consensus principle is at the core of informal international organizations. From membership to scheduling meetings, from agenda-setting to decision-making, no procedure or action within or by an informal international organization can be made against the interest of its individual member states (Vabulas & Snidal 2013). The dissertation has argued that this specific institutional set-up is the reason why informal international organizations overwhelmingly produce non-binding soft law in the form of declarations, statements, recommendations or similar documents. However, Paper B shows that on some limited occasions, informal international organizations have managed to agree on binding international agreements in the form of treaties (hard law). Under certain conditions, member states of informal international organizations can overcome the institutional bias of the consensus principle and other defining characters of informal international organizations (cf. below). The theoretical and empirical discussion of these rare cases shows the strong impact of consensus as the guiding principle of state interaction in informal international organizations.

While Paper B only highlights policy outcomes, the importance of the consensus principle for state interaction within the arena of informal international organizations can be shown in several other respects. To give an example, questions of membership show the working of the principle. In their initial definition of informal international organizations, Vabulas and Snidal (2013: 198-199) argue that members of informal international organizations are explicitly associated with the organization in contrast to formal membership in formal international organizations. Membership in informal international organizations is not codified in treaties or otherwise transparently documented. Instead, membership is based on 'mutual acknowledgement' based on different criteria (Vabulas & Snidal 2013: 199). However, this does not mean that membership in informal international organizations is changing rapidly or that 'explicit association' is in effect different from membership in formal international organizations. Rather, informal international organizations show a surprising consistency in their membership. The discussions about the accession of new members to, for example, BRICS, the Group of 7/8 or the Group of 20 show the reluctance of informal international organizations to include new member states. With no clear and explicit rules on how to join an informal international organization, all decisions on related issues fall in the hands of the member states. Consequently, the lack of comprehensibility and transparency is a core feature of the arena that informal international organizations represent for state interaction.

Third, in contrast to the arenas that informal international organizations offer, several studies in the dissertation look at state interactions within the context of the UN General Assembly. The UNGA is considered a consensus parliament, meaning that most decisions are taken without a vote and in agreement with all member states. Based on the UN Charter, decisions in the UN General Assembly are always non-binding unless they pertain to the internal structure of the UN itself (Peterson 2006, 2007). The UNGA as a consensus parliament enshrines the norm of consensual decisions but uses formalized voting and decision-making rules if a unanimous agreement cannot be reached. Papers D, E, and F show how states vote when a vote is demanded by a member state of the UN General Assembly or is required by the procedural rules of the UN charter.

Figure 6: International organizations as arenas in contrast to bilateral and multilateral diplomacy



Note: (I) bilateral diplomacy, (II) multilateral diplomacy, (III) member state interaction in an international organization, (IV) member state interaction in an international organization within the arena of an international organization (layered arenas)

Hence, these parts of the dissertation study situations of political conflict in the UN General Assembly. However, the specific interest is in layered arenas, i.e., settings in which organizations act within other organizations (cf. Figure 6, Panel IV). The papers show how states aim to achieve joint positions in (regional) international organizations in order to increase their leverage in the larger political arena of the UN General Assembly. Paper D casts doubt on the claim that the high level of voting cohesion among ASEAN member states is due to the organization. Rather, the evidence presented in the paper indicates that political processes within the Southeast Asian region are responsible for the increase and stable level of voting cohesion. Paper E asks which regional organizations are able to speak in unison on contested resolutions in the UN General Assembly and shows that the EU is the only regional organization to do so on a consistent basis. Additionally, Paper F offers an argument on the obstacles that hinder the most visible regional organization in the UN General Assembly, the EU, from reaching joint positions. Taken together, the papers paint a dense picture of how state interaction in the arena of their respective

regional organization allows them to find strength in numbers in the UN General Assembly. With this, the papers add to the literature on UN voting and EU voting cohesion by qualifying previous results and uncovering new evidence (e.g., Hurwitz 1975, 1976; Stavridis & Pruett 1996; Strömvik 1998; Johansson-Nogués 2004; Young & Rees 2005; Ojanen 2006; Rasch 2008; Birnberg 2009; Jakobsson 2009; Jin & Hosli 2013; Voeten 2013).

Still, the dissertation necessarily opens new questions for inquiry. The conclusion outlines the fields of research that in my opinion follow from the presented findings. I would argue that three avenues are specifically promising. First, opening up the conceptual space paves the way for comparative research designs comparing within and between the three types of international organizations. Second, the dissertation has left aside the questions under which conditions and for what reasons states decide to create one type of international organization over another. The theoretical approaches have so far focused on explaining the creation of or the differences among formal international organizations (e.g., Abbott & Snidal 1998; Koremenos et al. 2001). Third, building on the theoretical and methodological advances in the thesis, studies of international organizations' actorness should focus on questions of causality, specifically when studying voting cohesion. After discussing the methodology and summarizing the individual papers of the dissertation, the conclusion returns to these three possible lines of inquiry.

Methodology and Research Design

The dissertation makes productive use of two different research methodologies as well as a broad toolkit of methods. Approaching the research topic from different methodological angles was deemed necessary, as the individual research questions and interests demanded adequate theoretical and methodological treatment. The choice of methodological approaches was inspired by the initial research interest and the development of the research questions. The two methodologies can be described using the coarse-grained distinction between qualitative and quantitative approaches (King et al. 1994; Mahoney & Goertz 2006; Goertz & Mahoney 2012; Rohlfing 2012), but should better be labelled variance-based and case-based approaches (Beach & Pedersen 2016).[7] As multi-method research faces the challenge of different epistemological and ontological assumptions, this section aims at tackling these issues head-on by marking the substantial differences in the traditions.

Epistemology

While not exclusively linked to specific modes of inquiry, variance-based research ideal-typically follows a deductive logic, and case-based studies generally ascribe to an abductive logic of inquiry.[8] Abductive research processes start with the identification of puzzling empirical findings and ultimately aim

[7] This view by Beach, Pedersen, and others on social science research methodology is far from the consensus. Authors like John Gerring have prominently taken a different stance on what case studies are and how researchers should ideally conduct them. Taking on a 'positivist' approach to case studies (Gerring 2017: xxi) and following the original argument by King, Keohane, and Verba (1994), Gerring argues for example that case studies use a co-variational understanding of causality based on difference-making evidence, similar to quantitative studies Gerring 2004, 2012). Defending the merit and value of case study research in the 'increasingly hard disciplines' of political science and sociology (Gerring 2017: xx), Gerring (2004; 2017) proposes strategies for case study researchers that are complementary and consistent with large-N studies. It becomes apparent from the discussion in this section of the report that I position myself in the camp of Goertz, Mahoney, Beach, and Pedersen.

[8] When I mention case studies and case-based research in the context of this dissertation, I am solely referring to causal case studies and not interpretivist research. The purpose of the case-study designs in the dissertation is therefore to uncover causal constellations and mechanisms and not to inquire into the meaning of a given phenomenon.

at the revision and improvement of theory to construct plausible explanations for this specific puzzle (Day & Kincaid 1994; Jackson 2011; Tavory & Timmermans 2014). Initially rooted in empirical observations, abductive researchers engage in a back-and-forth between empirics and theory. These iterations between the empirical observations and potential explanations are summarized by Timmerans and Tavory (2012: 170) as an 'inferential creative process of producing new hypotheses and theories based on surprising research evidence', in which researchers are 'led away from old to new theoretical insights'. This approach to science is commonly linked to case-based research as scholars in this paradigm aim to build theories that best explain the details of the specific case or set of cases.

The dissertation utilizes an abductive approach in three of the six papers. To give an example of the use of abduction within the context of this dissertation, Paper A started from the general observation that certain international entities proved hard to grasp and therefore to explain with the existing theoretical International Relations toolkit. Specifically, cooperation within BRICS or the G7/8 is highly elusive to established concepts such as (formal) international organizations, international regimes, or international institutions. Both BRICS and G7/8 are institutionalized in the sense of having a well-established web of practices and norms underlying the cooperation, while simultaneously showing little signs of formalization. Vabulas and Snidal's (2013) conceptual argument allowed them to make an initial sorting of the organization into a cluster of what they call 'informal intergovernmental organizations'. Yet upon closer empirical inspection, some of the organizations that the authors initially classified in the same category showed striking dissimilarities to the ideal-typical description of 'informal intergovernmental organizations'. Rather than displaying institutionalization without formalization or legalization, organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS), or the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) are indeed institutionalized and formalized without simultaneously being legalized. Hence, after reworking existing conceptual tools, I introduce a more fine-grained distinction between formal, pseudoformal, and informal international organizations, adapting the arguments by Vabulas and Snidal (2013) and Abbott and Snidal (1998). These categories have allowed me to develop the typological theory explaining differences in actorness between the three types. By starting out from an empirical anomaly, Paper A revises existing theories and concepts to provide a more fitting theoretical tool for empirical analyses of these entities.

In a similar vein, Paper B initially started out from the observation that BRICS managed to agree on two multilateral treaties in 2014. These treaties directly challenged the skeptical arguments by pundits and academics who

confidently expected BRICS to remain a talking shop of likeminded but politically and economically vastly different countries (e.g., Armijo 2007; Christensen et al. 2010; Skak 2013; Modi 2014). This position is best summarized by Pant, who concluded in his article 'The BRICS Fallacy' that '[a]s a result, BRICS will remain an artificial construct – merely an acronym coined by an investment banking analyst – for quite some time to come' (Pant 2013: 103). In essence, large parts of the literature on BRICS never expected that the countries would ever manage to produce any tangible outcomes in the near future. From a different angle, the emerging literature on informalization and informal international organizations did not expect informal international organizations to produce binding outcomes either (Daase 2009; Rüland & Bechle 2010; Vabulas & Snidal 2013; Roger 2016). On the contrary, as states have deliberately set up informal international organizations to function as flexible forums, the establishment of the New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Agreement by BRICS contradicted the theoretical expectations. In an effort to find a plausible explanation for the creation of both multilateral treaties, I examined whether other informal international organizations had also managed to produce hard law in the past. Out of the 69 informal international organizations, four organizations agreed in seven instances on binding treaties. In a back-and-forth between these cases and the theory, Paper B then developed a plausible theoretical explanation, which was subsequently applied to the case of the establishment of the New Development Bank in detail. With this, Paper B provides two contributions to the literature on abduction. First, the paper offers an application and open discussion of abduction as a logic of inquiry. Second, Paper B illustrates the productive back-and-forth between empirics and theory that is at the core of abductive research projects. Similar to Papers A and B, Paper D also has an empirical starting point yet develops a revised research design that allows for the reevaluation of the empirical evidence instead of a best possible theoretical explanation.

Papers C, E and F ascribe to a deductive approach. Contrary to abductive approaches, deductive research aims at deducing testable hypotheses from theoretical considerations, which are then confronted with empirical observations. In contrast to abductive research, which largely focuses on producing best possible explanations for empirical cases, deductive studies intend to reach conclusions on theoretical statements (Jackson 2011: 81-83). Paper E represents a straightforward example of this approach. Linking up to previous research on voting cohesion of regional organizations in the United Nations General Assembly, Paper E expands the theoretical statement that regional organizations with a higher level of political and economic integration should also have stronger capacities for speaking with one voice on international is-

sues. This hypothesis has been confronted with contradicting and puzzling evidence from several studies (e.g., Rasch 2008; Panke 2013a; Ferdinand 2014a). Our argument starts from the conjecture that the higher the level of conflict in the United Nations General Assembly, the lower the voting cohesion among regional organizations' member states. The analysis reveals that the European Union shows the opposite relationship in that the member states manage to increase their voting cohesion with increasing levels of conflict in the General Assembly. Hence, Paper E offers supporting evidence for the initial hypothesis that deeply integrated organizations (i.e., the EU) should also have a stronger capacity for joint action in the international sphere, by focusing on instances when actorness is put to the test. Paper C differs from Papers E and F in that the focus is on developing rather than testing the theoretical arguments. However, all three papers start from a theoretical angle aiming at producing the tools or providing the evidence for reaching conclusions on the conjectures.

Table 2: Overview research mode of inquiry, methods and data

Paper	Mode of Inquiry	Method	Outcome/ Dependent Variable	Data
A	Abductive	Typological Theory	-	Primary and secondary sources on pseudoformal and informal international organizations
B	Abductive	Comparative and Single Case Study	Creation of hard law by informal international organizations	Interviews, primary and secondary sources
C	Deductive	Logical Reasoning	Foreign policy convergence	Informed by empirical research
D	Abductive	Descriptive Statistics	Voting cohesion (ASEAN), truncated continuous DV (0,1)	UN General Assembly voting data
E	Deductive	Fractional logit regression	Voting cohesion (EU), truncated continuous DV (0,1)	UN General Assembly voting data
F	Deductive	Mixed-effects logistic regression	Vote defection, dichotomous DV	UN General Assembly voting data, Parliament and government composition database (ParlGov), own codings

Understanding of Causality and Causal Arguments

Two different understandings of causality form the basis for parts of the dissertation. Specifically, Goertz and Mahoney (2012) and Beach and Pedersen (2016) have argued that variance-based and case-based research methods align with distinctive ontological assumptions about causality. Essentially, these differences boil down to positions on whether causality is probabilistic or deterministic and whether causal relationships are symmetric or asymmetric in nature. It is important to discuss these two ontological positions transparently as the duality creates substantial tensions in mixed- and multi-methods research such as in this dissertation. Research combining different methods often produces causal claims that are not easily compatible on an ontological level. If we want to translate claims from one paradigm to another, we need to be aware of the underlying understandings of causality to provide reliable inferences.

Causal determinism rejects the notion that phenomena in individual cases come down to randomness. Rather, followers of this ontological positon are convinced that things happen for a reason, meaning that the outcome in a given case is due to specific sets of causes. Something happened in a specific way and it happened for a reason. A specific empirical outcome can only have one causal explanation. In contrast, causal probabilism assumes that the world contains a certain amount of 'inherent randomness' (Beach & Pedersen 2016: 20), which is rooted in the tremendous causal complexity of the social world. Researchers ascribing to this ontological position argue that a change in the values of the independent variable(s) tends to affect the probability of the values of the dependent variable across multiple cases. The arguments focus on trends and average effects of variables on the outcome – statements that reflect the probabilistic assumptions. When we argue about average effects, we inherently buy this probabilistic notion (e.g., Eells 1991). Hence, deterministic causal theories link up to *set theory*, making arguments about the necessity or sufficiency of causes for an outcome in a specific set of cases. Scholars following a probabilistic understanding of causality make claims about trends in an immensely causally complex social world. Therefore, researchers of the two traditions look for traces of causality on different levels. While case-based researchers aim at showing how causal power is transferred from the cause to the outcome in the specific case, variance-based researchers try to provide evidence for average effects of the theorized causes across a population of cases (King et al. 1994; Brady 2008; Goertz & Mahoney 2012: 51-61; Beach & Pedersen 2016: 19-24).

Yet the perspectives also differ regarding their understanding of whether causal relationships are symmetric or asymmetric. Causal symmetry means that researchers assume that changes in the values on their independent variable(s) lead to changes in the values of the dependent variable, i.e. a high value on the independent variable causes high values on the dependent variable and vice versa. In contrast, asymmetric causal claims assume that the causes of the occurrence of an outcome are substantially different for the causes of non-occurrence of the outcome. Proposing an asymmetric causal argument about the relationship between a (set of) cause(s) and an outcome means that no argument is presented about the causes of another outcome or the absence of the outcome (Goertz & Mahoney 2012: 64-73; Beach & Pedersen 2016: 24-26).

Table 3: Causal arguments

	Asymmetric deterministic		**Symmetric probabilistic**
Paper A	Typological theory	**Paper D**	↑integration → ↑cohesion
Paper B	Only if: narrow scope ∧ excludable good ∧ blocked outlet ⇒ hard law	**Paper E**	↑overall conflict → ↓cohesion
Paper C	Expected material gains ∧∨ expected social gains ∧∨ introduction of new normative arguments ∧∨ introduction of expertise ⇒ M ⇒ foreign policy convergence	**Paper F**	↓socialization + issues + ↓government attitude towards EU integration + UNSC membership + ¬council presidency + US deviation*US importance → ↑vote defection

Notes: ∧ denotes the logical modifier AND, ∨ denotes OR, ⇒ denotes a deterministic causal statement, M denotes causal mechanism, ↑ denotes an increase in a variable, ↓ denotes a decrease in a variable, * denotes interaction effects, ¬ denotes negation, + denotes the addition of a variable, → denotes a probabilistic causal statement

Table 3 gives an overview of the ontological positions in the six papers. Papers A, B, and C make asymmetric deterministic causal claims. Paper A develops a typological theory to explain how three distinct types of international organizations differ in their ability for actorness in international politics. Paper B aims at explaining under which conditions informal international organizations are able to produce hard law (outcome). I argue that three conditions have to be present for the outcome to occur. Finally, Paper C explicitly argues about the consequences of our methodological choices in the research on foreign policy convergence. The paper develops an asymmetric deterministic causal argument explaining how member states of international organizations can converge in their foreign policy preferences.

In contrast, Papers D, E, and F work with symmetric probabilistic causal arguments. Paper D argues that the deeper the integration among member

states of a regional organization, the higher the voting cohesion of these member states. Paper E tests the argument that member states of international organizations tend to vote less cohesively the higher the overall level of conflict. Paper F reasons that the probability for vote defection changes depending on the values of a number of independent variables.

Following one of the ontological positions naturally comes at the price of certain limitations in the focus of the research. Papers A, B, and C do deliberately not provide any arguments on phenomena that are closely linked to the examined outcomes. For example, Paper C highlights the causal complexity of foreign policy convergence and explicitly separates this outcome from other dynamic constellations of voting. The presented explanation for foreign policy convergence is therefore not suited to explain instances of foreign policy divergence.[9] By contrast, Papers D, E, and F provide arguments about trends across a large population of cases and are therefore not suited to explain the outcome of individual cases. While we use illustrative examples of the observed trends in Paper E (Burmester & Jankowski 2014: 1503-1505), the paper does not claim to explain the voting behavior of EU member states on specific resolutions. Hence, the two methodologies come with each their limitations. Papers A, B, and C tell us a lot about a little; the other three a little about a lot.

Methods

Because of the ontological choices, the papers apply different methods, which align with the underlying understandings of causation. The project uses a diverse set of tools to examine the different research questions that reflect the state of the art in the respective paradigms (cf. Table 2). The subsequent section discusses these choices, data, and potential limitations.

Paper A builds a new typology of international organizations and develops a causal typological theory[10] in order to explain why the three types of international organizations act distinctly in international politics. As an initial step, typological theories build on typologies that allow an exhaustive and exclusive classification of the cases of the phenomena. Typological theories then develop causal relationships between causes and outcomes or independent and dependent variables, building separate causal expectations for the individual types of the typology (George & Bennett 2005: 235-239). According to Elman,

[9] Brazys and Dukalskis (2017) make a symmetric probabilistic causal argument for dynamic voting patterns.

[10] The methodological literature often refers to typological theories as *explanatory typologies*. See, e.g., Elman (2005), Collier et al. (2012), or Møller and Skaaning (2015).

typological theories shift the focus from asking 'What constitutes this type?' to 'If my theory is correct, what do I expect to see?' (Elman 2005: 298) and hence focus on the causally relevant implications of the types for an outcome. Expanding research on formal and informal international organizations, Paper A provides an initial attempt to survey the field of international organizations and offers an argument on the causal relevance of the different types. As an illustration, Paper A inquires which consequences the differences in formalization of the three types of international organizations have across the four dimensions of international actorness: recognition, authority, autonomy, and cohesion (cf. Figure 2 in Paper A).

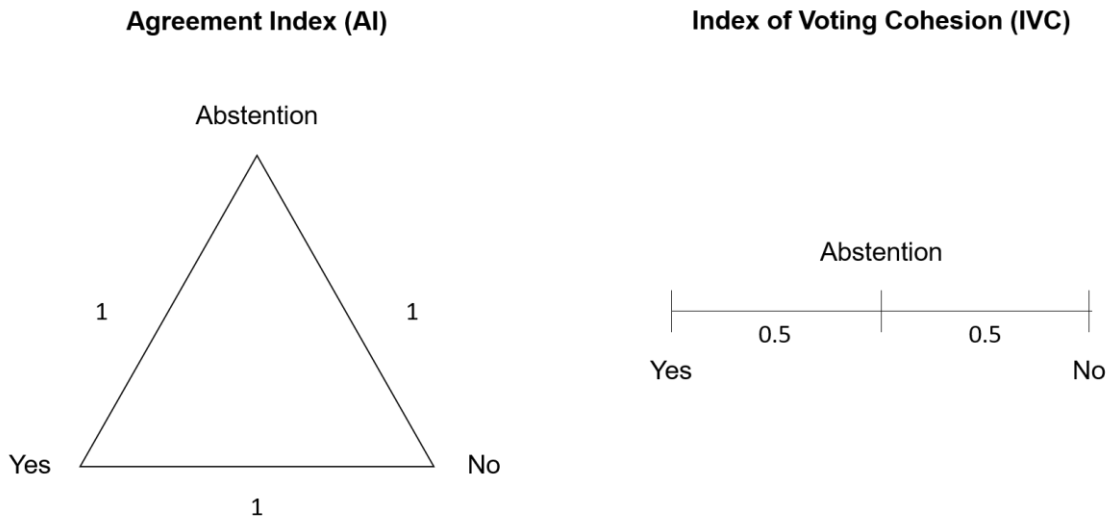
Paper B aims at explaining under which conditions informal international organizations manage to agree on hard law. To explain this specific outcome theoretically and cases of the relationship empirically, the paper develops a design to accommodate the asymmetric and deterministic causal argument. The paper identifies seven cases of the outcome and uses a comparative case study design to show the distribution of causes across the cases. The findings indicate that the developed theoretical explanation holds for the seven cases. To offer a stronger argument for the plausibility of the explanation, the paper presents a single case study of the creation of the New Development Bank by BRICS in order to provide within-case evidence linking the causal constellation to the outcome. As indicated in the discussion on epistemology and causality above, the comparative and within-case studies build on the latest developments in the field of causal case study methods (Rohlfing 2012; Beach & Pedersen 2013, 2016).

Similarly, Paper C is rooted in the case-based paradigm, yet takes a starting point in the unsolved problem of observational equivalence in studies of foreign policy convergence among member states of international organizations. The paper offers a theoretical argument for why researchers should separate different processes behind changes in foreign policy preferences as observationally equivalent outcomes have different theoretical implications. An example is preexisting harmony about a policy issue among states and the consensus on an issue that is the product of cooperative policy discussions, which both result in a cohesive stance on the issue. The paper then develops a deterministic causal explanation for foreign policy convergence, i.e., an instance where one or more states willfully change their foreign policy position to be in accordance with the policy position of the group. In order to provide the basis for making stronger causal inferences, the paper proposes minimalistic causal mechanisms (Beach & Pedersen 2016: 75-79) that explain how the causes transfer their causal power to produce the outcome. This discussion offers a considerable contribution to the ongoing debate about multi- or mixed-methods social science research (Berg-Schlosser 2012; Rohlfing & Starke 2013;

Schneider & Rohlfing 2013). By highlighting the substantial problems in combining statistical and case study approaches, from a methodological and a conceptual standpoint, the paper offers a note of caution for integrated multi-method or mixed-method research (as advocated by, e.g., Seawright 2016 or Lieberman 2005). While multi-method research offers promising avenues for social science research, causal arguments and empirical evidence need elaborate translation before being transferable or compatible.

Papers D, E, and F use different quantitative techniques to inquire into the voting cohesion of different international organizations. Taken together, the three papers make four significant contributions to the quantitative literature on voting cohesion that also go beyond the setting of the UN General Assembly. First, Papers D and E discuss the underlying assumptions of different prevalent measures of voting cohesion. We are able to show that the widely used Agreement Index (AI) by Hix et al. (2005, 2007) and the Index of Voting Cohesion (IVC), initially developed by Lijphart (1963), are based on different weightings of abstentions. In essence, the Agreement Index assumes that the ideological distances between a 'Yes'-vote and a 'No'-vote is equal to the distance between a 'Yes' or 'No'-vote and an abstention. In effect, the Agreement Index is just a rescaling of the majority size in a legislative assembly. In contrast, Lijphart (1963) argues that abstentions take the middle ground between a 'Yes'-vote and a 'No'. Casting a 'divided vote', i.e., a 'Yes'- and a 'No'-vote, should be considered as having substantially different political connotations than a 'solidarity vote', i.e., a 'Yes'- or 'No'-vote and an abstention (Lijphart 1963: 906). Figure 7 illustrates the underlying assumptions behind the two measures of voting cohesion.

Figure 7: Assumptions about the ideological distance between voting options in measures of voting cohesion



Second, we present a new computational method for the Index of Voting Cohesion (IVC) in Paper E. The IVC was initially developed to measure voting cohesion between dyads and was only applicable to groups through more complicated mathematical operations. The new formula is easily applicable to groups irrespective of size as long as the overall distribution of votes is known. The revised formula therefore functions as a generalized version of the original IVC formula (Burmester & Jankowski 2014: 1497).

Third, we offer simple, but significant improvements to research designs that produce stronger correlational evidence. We specifically address this in Paper D and discuss how small adjustments allow us to draw stronger inferences even from descriptive statistical analyses.

Finally, we conduct two state-of-the-art regression analyses of the severely skewed and truncated voting data in the UN General Assembly. Paper E uses a fractional logit regression that is suitable for measuring the effects of our independent variables on the truncated dependent variable measuring voting cohesion. Paper F applies a mixed-effects logistic regression to our binary dependent variable, measuring vote defection of member states from the EU majority position. This technique allows us to move to the level of the individual member states instead of analyzing aggregated voting cohesion scores. We are therefore able to offer new insights through disaggregation.

Data

Given the application of different methods, a variety of data sources builds the foundation of the dissertation. In the context of the dissertation, I relied on existing datasets, partially recoded and reworked previously published data sources, conducted interviews, and worked extensively with primary and secondary sources. Table 2 gives an overview of the data used for the individual papers, and the following sections zoom in on three specific data sources.

Data on Pseudoformal and Informal International Organizations

As discussed above, the data collection process on informal international organizations was a crucial part of the abductive research agenda that eventually led to the development of the distinction between formal, pseudoformal, and informal international organizations. Taking a starting point in the research by Vabulas and Snidal (2013), I systematically analyzed primary and secondary sources on the formalization of more than 100 international organizations. In the process, I was able to eliminate several organizations from the initial classification by Vabulas and Snidal (2013) and discovered that a third group resembled neither informal nor formal international organizations. Extensive

theorization and empirical inquiry into these organizations led to the establishment of the new type of pseudoformal international organizations.

By expanding and refining Vabulas and Snidal's population and cross-referencing their findings with other studies on informal international organizations (Daase 2009; Rüland & Bechle 2010; Roger 2015, 2016), I gradually added and eliminated organizations from the two categories of informal and pseudoformal international organizations. The appendix to Paper A provides an empirical overview over the 69 informal and 27 pseudoformal international organizations that were identified in this process and contains a more detailed record of the procedure, potential biases in the case universes, and the differences from the classifications by Vabulas and Snidal (2013) and Roger (2016).

Additionally, short interviews were conducted via email and phone regarding cooperation in some informal organizations such as the Visegrad Group and the Human Security Network. Combined with the interviews with government officials working within BRICS cooperation, this data made it possible to develop a clearer understanding of the functioning and organizational aspects of informal international organizations, which in turn helped to strengthen the theorization of the phenomenon.

Furthermore, the population of informal international organizations was used to establish a case universe for informal international organizations that managed to produce hard law as an outcome of negotiations. This required extensive document analysis of declarations and statements by the informal international organization. Informal international organizations have produced hard law in only seven instances. However, these organizations have agreed on hundreds of policy outputs that then take on the form of soft law, i.e., legally non-binding agreements between the member states.

Interview Data[11]

During a research stay at the Institute for International Relations of the University of São Paulo (USP-IRI), Brazil, I conducted several semi-structured expert interviews at various ministries and government agencies in Brasilia, and phone interviews with Chinese government officials and employees of the New Development Bank. The goal of these interviews was twofold. First, the interviews aimed at gaining insight into the workings of an informal international organization, primarily to understand how national bureaucrats across different agencies and ministries run an international organization in the ab-

[11] Oticon Fonden provided financial support for the conduct of the interviews.

sence of an international bureaucracy. Second, the interviews specifically targeted actors involved in the negotiations on the New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Agreement.

The core focus of the interview was to gather information on political events and reconstruct important aspects of political actions (Beach & Pedersen 2013: 134-136). Hence, as an initial step, the first interview partners were identified based on their involvement in the negotiations of the agreements, their role in BRICS cooperation and position in the Brazilian executive branch. With the assistance of researchers at University of São Paulo and the University of Brasilia, initial interviews were scheduled in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Central Bank. Following a non-probability sampling approach to the interviews, further interviewees were identified using snowball sampling (Tansey 2007: 770). At the end of every interview, the interviewees were asked for contacts to persons of interest and names that came up during the interview.

The limited access to government officials of all five countries involved in the negotiations substantially complicated the study of BRICS and the negotiations of the two treaties. The initial intention was to conduct interviews with representatives of all involved parties, yet this soon proved futile. Several interview requests received no reply from the Indian, Chinese, and Russian ministries, while interview requests to South African government officials were accepted at first but later refused by superior government officials. My research stay in Brazil and contacts from Brazilian academics opened the path for interviews in Brasilia that subsequently opened up for interviews with a Chinese official and a vice president of the New Development Bank. As a result, the interview data offers only additional empirical insight into the negotiations from a Brazilian perspective, which, however, was carefully triangulated with existing primary and secondary sources. During interviews, I encountered stories of strong tensions between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, and the Central Bank. Even though interviewees reported personal animosities and conflict about competencies, key information about the negotiation process remained constant and was corroborated in interviews with Chinese and NDB officials. Hence, the content of the interviews should be evaluated as credible. Still, the missing interview access means that the presented interview data might contain a systematic bias towards a Brazilian interpretation of the negotiations.

Ideally, additional interviews should have been conducted with Indian, Russian, South African, and Chinese government officials to make the empirical basis stronger. Given the problems with access to government officials, specifically in the closed political systems of Russia and China, two strategies should be employed to increase the chances of gaining access. First, it seems

imperative to identify gatekeepers in the governments who can help arrange further interviews. Second, based on the experience of the field trip to Brasilia, interviews should either be arranged while being in respective capitals or in combination with longer research trips. This would allow for follow-ups on interviews and making the best use of the snowball sampling technique.

Prior to the interviews, the interviewees received a rough outline of questions and topics for the interview. The appendix provides a sample interview guide for the semi-structured interviews regarding the negotiations of the New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Agreement (Appendix 1: Sample Interview Guide). In addition, the interviewees received a Confidentiality Agreement in advance (Appendix 2: Confidentiality Agreement). Following ethical standards in the social sciences, the content of the interviews is treated as confidential. The interviewees were guaranteed that information would only be used for research purposes and any references would be anonymized. Furthermore, the interviewees were asked to indicate whether the interview could be quoted directly, indirectly or only treated as background information in academic publications. All references made in the papers received consent by the interviewees.

UN Voting Data

The studies of the cohesion dimension of actorness have been conducted in the context of the UN General Assembly. Ever since the establishment of the UN, researchers have used voting to analyze the General Assembly as a parliament or to study the different voting blocs and dimensions of conflict in the General Assembly (e.g., Ball 1951; Lijphart 1963; Alker 1964; Alker & Russett 1965; Russett 1966; Newcombe et al. 1970; Holloway 1990; Holloway & Tomlinson 1995; Voeten 2000). As discussed in Papers D, E, and F, a large literature utilizes UNGA voting data to analyze states' foreign policy preferences (e.g., Meyers 1966; Volgy et al. 2003; Hug & Wegmann 2013; Brazys & Panke 2015). Additionally, the UNGA is often used as a forum for analyzing international organizations' actorness as states position themselves on a wide range of policy issue on an annual basis (e.g., Hurwitz 1975; Strömvik 1998; Luif 2003; Johansson-Nogués 2004; Young & Rees 2005; Rasch 2008; Birnberg 2009; Jakobsson 2009; Jin & Hosli 2013; Costa-Buranelli 2014; Ferdinand 2014a, 2014b; Hooijmaaijers & Keukeleire 2016).

Voting in the UN General Assembly takes place in the form of roll-call votes. The UN records the voting decisions by the member states and makes them publicly available, offering researchers a rather unique view into state behavior in the international sphere. This makes UN data a highly valuable

source for large-N analyses of international politics. Researchers of international politics commonly face the intransparencies inherent to international diplomacy. Additionally, the UN General Assembly is a unique forum as all 193 states are asked to position themselves on policy issues ranging from human rights to international conflict. This combination of a transparent and decade-long voting record in an international organization with universal membership is rather unique.

Already in the 1980s, a research consortium published the first version of a UN voting dataset (Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research 1982), which was subsequently extended and updated by various research teams. While the core information on the voting decisions remained constant across these datasets, later versions of the data only included adopted resolutions; previously, all votes irrespective of acceptance or rejection were recorded. Also the dataset stopped recording votes on amendments. In the papers, we use version 18 of the dataset by Voeten (2013), which contains information about the voting choices of the individual member states, about the resolution (resolution ID, name) and about the topic to which the resolution pertains. In the original dataset, some coding lacks consistency with the categories. For example, resolutions with 'development of nuclear arms' in their title are coded both in the categories 'nuclear proliferation' and '(economic) development'. The origin of these errors is probably the use of a topic model for coding the resolutions. The resolutions were recoded by hand in a double blind coding so that every resolution in our dataset is coded with only one topic (e.g., in the case above 'nuclear proliferation'). The recoding also removed other obvious coding errors.

Four notes of caution need to be made on the UNGA voting data. First, while the UN General Assembly covers a wide range of international issues, the UN Security Council and other UN bodies work on several important and controversial issues that do not find their way to the General Assembly's agenda. Hence, the UNGA voting data comprises various issue areas but also systematically ignores others. Via the egalitarian voting system, the Global South has considerable veto and agenda-setting power in the General Assembly, barring some topics from appearing on the agenda while focusing on other issues that the Global North would rather not discuss. The agenda is therefore far from universal, though still remarkably broad. Second, UN General Assembly resolutions are mostly non-binding instruments. While they might develop strong normative implications for international actors, the General Assembly cannot force states to follow its decisions. Only resolutions pertaining to the internal workings of the UN are binding. Third, among all resolutions adopted in the Assembly, only a small share are decided by a vote. The General Assem-

bly has increasingly developed into a consensus parliament that often produces watered-down drafts with little potential for political conflict as they reflect the lowest possible denominator. Additionally, a considerable amount of drafts reappear on the agenda every year with only minor changes and give states little reason to change political preferences (Peterson 2006; Gareis & Varwick 2007; Peterson 2007). Fourth, it is often taken as a given that members of a given international organization aim at achieving a single voice in the UN General Assembly. This claim underlying a wide range of contributions remains commonly unaddressed. An explicit discussion of why we should expect that certain states aim to develop cohesive positions or why they should converge in their preferences in the UN General Assembly would increase the plausibility of the presented evidence that is drawn from the UN voting data. Overall, research using UN voting data should be careful not to overestimate the weight of the empirical evidence and refrain from making wide-ranging inferences beyond the confines of the General Assembly.

Summaries of the Papers

Paper A: Three Types of International Organizations: Theorizing the Actorness of Formal, Pseudoformal, and Informal International Organizations

Paper A provides the overarching conceptual backbone of this dissertation. I offer a refined definition of international organizations that accounts for the different types of international organizations that take part in global governance, building on and not breaking with existing research on (formal) international organizations. Furthermore, the paper demonstrates that this conceptual differentiation allows for theorization of relevant questions regarding different functions and roles of international organizations. By acknowledging the differences in formalization between the three types, we are able to develop theoretical tools that allow us to systematically study how formal, pseudoformal, and informal international organizations engage differently in international politics.

The paper argues for separating international organizations into three distinct types: formal (independent centralized) international organizations, pseudoformal (dependent centralized) international organizations, and informal (dependent decentralized) international organizations. I claim that the ideal-typical distinction of international organizations according to their (in)dependence from their member states and the (de)centralization of their (international) bureaucracy allows for a more precise description of their working and, most importantly, for the development of new theoretical tools for the analysis of international organizations in international politics. This typology is different from previous attempts as it moves the focus from the scope of membership and policy area (e.g., Rittberger et al. 2012) to the functionality of the organizations.

More specifically, the paper makes three arguments. First, it presents a typology of international organizations that identifies three distinct types along the two dimensions of formalization, namely dependence/independence and centralization/decentralization. Second, I argue that the new typology is not a theoretical exercise, but instead allows us to better understand and explain how international organizations function, act and are used differently. Hence, I claim that the different types have causal consequences for the functioning and impact of international organizations. The paper presents a causal

explanatory typological theory that shows how the differences in formalization produce distinct possibilities for international organizations to assume actorness in international politics. Third, the study presents an updated empirical overview of the universe of cases of pseudoformal and informal international organizations. Around one hundred informal and pseudoformal international organizations have participated in global governance over the last decades.

The paper discusses the conceptual developments in International Relations research on international organizations in detail. Most research defines international organizations as synonymous with formal international organizations. Several researchers have previously criticized that this focus on formality overlooks contemporary trends of informality that can be observed in international politics in general and in international organizations specifically. To account empirically for and to allow theoretically informed analyses of this informality, Vabulas and Snidal (2013) have introduced the concept of informal intergovernmental organizations. However, this concept is mainly constructed as a negative definition of formal international organizations and overlooks a third type of international organizations.

Table 4: Three types of international organizations

	Formal (Independent Centralized) International Organizations	**Pseudoformal (Dependent Centralized) International Organizations**	**Informal (Dependent Decentralized) International Organizations**
(1) Ongoing Activity	Institutionalized patterns of continuous cooperation		
(2) Membership	Three or more member states		
(3) Legal Basis	Based on legally binding treaty	Based on legally non-binding agreement or no agreement	No treaty basis, but clear framework of practices
(4) Physical Existence	Administered by independent bureaucracy with legal personality	Administered by bureaucracy without legal personality	Administered by member states
Examples	United Nations, World Bank, IMF, ASEAN, EU	APEC, Basel Committee on Banking Supervision, Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), OSCE, International Commission for the Hydrology of the Rhine Basin (CHR)	G7/8, G20, BRICS, Human Security Network, IBSA, ASEAN+3, Visegrad Group

Hence, I suggest defining international organizations as continuous and institutionalized patterns of cooperation between three or more member states, which can further be distinguished by two dimensions of formalization. First, the dependence or independence of the organization from its member states. Second, the centralization or decentralization of its administrative apparatus. Based on these dimensions, we can distinguish three distinct types of international organizations: formal (independent centralized), pseudoformal (dependent centralized), and informal (dependent decentralized). Despite a common definitional core, the three types are marked by differences (see Table 4). It is my claim that these differences have causal consequences for how the organizations function as arenas for state interactions, how states can use international organizations as instruments to further their interests, and how the organizations can act within global governance in their own right. Furthermore, I argue that a potential fourth type can be discarded, as we cannot observe any international organization that is both independent from its member states and possesses a decentralized administration.

By developing an explanatory typological theory, the paper demonstrates that the three types have different potentials and abilities to develop actorness in international politics. Building on the concept of actorness initially developed in studies of the European Union, four interlinked dimensions constitute actorness: recognition, cohesion, authority, and autonomy (Cosgrove & Twitchett 1970; Sjöstedt 1977; Jupille & Caporaso 1998).

Figure 8 displays the typological theory and highlights how the different manifestations of the causal attributes for informal, pseudoformal, and formal international organizations lead to distinct characteristics in the four dimensions of actorness.

The discussion in the paper emphasizes that cohesion can be considered as the core dimension for the actorness of pseudoformal and informal international organizations. In essence, these types of organizations are dependent on cohesion among the member states if they want to exercise authority in a policy question. For informal international organizations, cohesion (or to be more precise the preexistence of harmony) is not only a precondition for authority but also for recognition by others. As informal international organizations lack a visible international bureaucracy that can represent the organization independently of the member states, a unified voice constitutes their visibility.

Figure 8: Typological causal theory of international organizations' actorness

		Actorness			
		Recognition	**Cohesion**	**Authority**	**Autonomy**
Formal International Organizations	**Independent & Centralization**	Legally recognized entity, co-constitution with other FIOs	Not necessary for recognition due to independent bureaucracy	Defined by treaty; creation, monitoring, and enforcement of rules	Legally independent agents from member states, bureaucracy creates and pools information
Pseudoformal International Organizations	**Dependence & Centralization**	Limited de jure recognition, dependent bureaucracy as visible entity	Necessary condition for autonomy and authority	Based on voluntary consensus of member states and targeted third actors; allows the creation and monitoring of norms	Delegated action, bureaucracy creates and pools information
Informal International Organizations	**Dependence & Decentralization**	Dependent on internal cohesion and on acceptance of continuous action by third actors	Necessary condition for recognition, authority, and autonomy	Only on harmonious issues, dependent on voluntary consensus of member states and recognition by third actors	Action through member states

Paper B: More than Talking Clubs: Explaining the Creation of Hard Law by Informal International Organizations

Paper B sets out to modify existing theoretical expectations to informal international organizations. So far, informal international organizations have been perceived as flexible forums that facilitate the creation of non-binding solutions to policy problems. States create this type of international organizations because of a functional need for high flexibility, low commitments, and state autonomy (Vabulas & Snidal 2013; Roger 2015, 2016). As a result, informal international organizations are expected to operate as 'talking shops', in which states can float ideas and find solutions to policy problems that cannot easily be solved in more formal settings. We can observe that states generally choose to generate soft law and other forms of legally non-binding agreements in informal international organizations. However, some informal international organizations have successfully established legally binding agreements (hard law). These cases not only challenge the prevailing theoretical expectations, they also highlight that informal international organizations can contradict their functional purpose in certain contexts. How can we explain these puzzling cases? Under which conditions were these organizations able to overcome their structural bias, which favors the creation of flexible and non-binding solutions, and agreed on the generation of legally binding instruments?

The paper makes three key contributions. First, it demonstrates that informal international organizations have successfully created hard law on at least seven occasions. This empirical finding challenges the prevailing theoretical expectations that perceive informal international organizations as mere talking shops. Second, by using an abductive approach, I propose a theoretical explanation for these cases. Member states of informal international organizations can create hard law under three conditions. Legally binding agreements become an option if the member states have no other outlets for their policy goals or if other actors block these forums. Additionally, the member states need to contain the scope of the negotiation and aim at creating an excludable good through the agreement. I argue that these conditions are necessary but insufficient, meaning that whenever informal international organizations agree on the creation of hard law, the three conditions need to be present. Third, the paper presents the argument in a case study of the establishment of the New Development Bank by BRICS in 2014.

Vabulas and Snidal (2013) claim that states engage in informal international organizations because of the anticipated functional benefits of this form

of international organization. Structurally, these organizations are established to provide for high flexibility while guaranteeing ongoing cooperation. Due to the absence of an international bureaucracy, the organizations lack the monitoring capabilities to enforce binding agreements and commitments on the member states. Instead, the loose structure allows states to discuss policy issues unrestricted of procedural rules and strictly defined purposes, making informal international organizations a highly flexible instrument for states to engage in lasting but non-committal multilateral diplomacy. As such, informal international organizations function as talking shops, where states can discuss a wide array of issues and establish common ground for solving policy problems. Yet as informal international organizations are intended to avoid binding commitments, strong collective oversight, or any form of a centralized capacity (Vabulas & Snidal 2013: 210-211), they are not expected to create legally binding but rather nonobligatory outcomes (Vabulas & Snidal 2013: 194-195). In short, if states intentionally set up talking shops, they should not agree on establishing instruments that create binding commitments, collective oversight, or centralized capacities in these settings.

The theoretical expectations generally coincide with the empirical patterns. Informal international organizations function mainly as forums where states can discuss policy outside the restrictive corset of formalized procedural rules that govern formal international organizations. As a result, states overwhelmingly produce tacit agreements and soft law in this setting (Daase 2009; Rüland & Bechle 2010; Vabulas & Snidal 2013). Contrary to theoretical expectations and the general empirical pattern, member states of informal international organizations have agreed on the establishment of hard law in seven cases (cf. Table 5). These multilateral agreements either have created binding commitments under international law or established new formal international organizations.

Table 5: Cases of hard law produced by informal international organizations

Informal International Organization	(1) Alternative Outlets Blocked or Unavailable	(2) Narrow Scope	(3) Club Good	(Outcome) Hard Law
BRICS	Governance structure blocked in World Bank	Organization for funding infrastructure projects	Loans available to member states, membership restricted to BRICS, veto structure	BRICS New Development Bank (2014)*
BRICS	IMF governance structure	Currency swap agreement	Only accessible to members of the swap agreements	BRICS Contingent Reserve Agreement (2014)**
Visegrad Group (V4)	No access to EU institutions	Financing of projects to promote V4 cooperation	Funding only for V4 citizens or projects with V4 relevance	International Visegrad Fund (2000)*
Visegrad Group (V4)	Absence of regional Patent Institute in Eastern Europe	Technical cooperation	Reduced rates for patents from V4 countries in comparison to European Patent Institute	Visegrad Patent Institute (2015)*
Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG)	Lack of political consensus in Pacific Islands Forum to establish FTA	Reduction of trade barriers	Preferential trade agreement between MSG member states	Free Trade Agreement (1993)**
ASEAN+3	Absence of regional swap arrangements, US resistance to Asian monetary fund	Currency swap agreement	Only accessible to members of the swap agreements	Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization (CMIM, 2010)**
ASEAN+3	No IMF independent surveillance of macroeconomic developments in ASEAN+3	Transforming the surveillance unit from company to international organization	Providing services, technical consulting, and monitoring to CMIM members	ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO, 2016)*

Annotations: * denotes a treaty establishing a formal international organization. ** denotes a multilateral treaty among the member states.

Using an abductive approach, I argue that three conditions explain in conjunction why states have created hard law in these cases. First, states commonly use informal international organizations to discuss policy solutions that are subsequently implemented in existing international regimes or formal international organizations (Benvenisti & Downs 2007; Daase 2009; Drezner 2009; Morse & Keohane 2014; Búrca 2016). Still, this strategy is only valid if the member states of the informal international organization have enough influence in these international bodies. If these outlets are blocked, the creation of hard law within the context of the informal organization becomes a viable option, if the agreement fulfils two additional conditions. Second, the scope of the negotiation needs to be narrow. Due to the structural set-up of informal international organizations, linking issues across different negotiations or policy areas is expected to be detrimental to reaching a binding agreement. The structure of informal international organizations enshrines the consensus principle, which allows members to veto any discussion or decision. This in turn means that states can walk away from negotiations or even the organization at any time, without having to fear organizational retaliation due to the absence of organizational capacities. Focusing the negotiation on a single issue allows the member states to hold the complexity low, contain the costs of reaching a solution, and focus on issues with overlapping preferences (Tollison & Willett 1979: 447-448; Young 1991; Davis 2004: 156). Finally, informal international organizations will only produce hard law that provides exclusive benefits to its members. As these organizations are created with the purpose of using minimal resources and creating limtied obligations for states, the multilateral agreements or international organizations that are established by treaty between the members of informal international organizations need to withhold the benefits from third states. If the states agree to allocate resources to the implementation and monitoring of a treaty, these agreements need to offer immediate gains to the signatory states (Buchanan 1965; Olson 1965; Cornes & Sandler 1996: 9-10; Sandler & Tschirhart 1997). Taken together, the three conditions form a necessary conjunction that helps to explain why the member states of informal international organizations were able to establish legally binding agreements.

Paper B applies the argument to the case study of the establishment of the New Development Bank by BRICS in 2014. Based on interview data, primary and secondary sources, I argue that the creation of an international development bank became an option for the BRICS countries because the existing governance structure and dominance of the West blocked reforms of the World Bank that might have addressed the needs of the five countries for large-scale infrastructure investment. By keeping the negotiation contained

and separate from the parallel ongoing discussions on a currency swap agreement, the countries negotiated the outlines for a development bank that not only limited membership and lending primarily to the five countries, but also enshrined specific rights to the countries in case of a possible enlargement of membership.

Paper C: How to Study Foreign Policy Convergence? Methodological Problems and Theoretical Explanations

Paper C outlines major methodological and theoretical issues related to studying foreign policy convergence. The paper links to the discussion on international organizations' actorness by focusing on how to investigate the cohesion among member states or, more specifically, how to assess whether the states' preferences converge due to their membership in the organization. Actorness consists of four interlinked dimensions: authority, autonomy, recognition, and cohesion (e.g., Sjöstedt 1977; Jupille & Caporaso 1998; da Conceição-Heldt & Meunier 2014). Cohesion is hereby of key importance for developing actorness as the establishment or preexistence of a joint position on a policy issue can be seen as a precondition for developing any form of collective action in the first place. Foreign policy convergence is thereby the process in which member states increase their cohesion by developing common preferences on international issues.

In the context of this debate,[12] Paper C provides three contributions. First, I argue that observational equivalence is a major issue for quantitative and qualitative studies of foreign policy convergence. Essentially, two processes can lead to states adopting the same position on a policy issue: Their preferences can be in harmony, making any further coordination unnecessary, or states might have different preferences at the start, which then are altered through a cooperative process.[13] Both processes result in states acting in unison. Yet while the creation of cohesion demands a political process, harmonious preferences do not induce political conflict. By not separating these different phenomena, studies risk creating causally heterogeneous populations and thereby weakening causal inferences. Second, I suggest that case study designs can tackle the observational equivalence problem head-on. By supplementing cross-case studies with within-case evidence of interstate ac-

[12] Furthermore, the core argument on observational equivalence is in general transferrable to the study of legislative bodies and party unity (cf. Ozbudun 1970; Bowler et al. 1999; Hazan 2006; Owens 2006). Here, the debate concerns whether party unity is due to cohesion among MPs or induced through the discipline enforced by the party or faction leadership. Therefore, studies face similar issues in identifying situations where unity was created by discipline or unity, resulting in two causally different phenomena.

[13] A third possibility is that states converge on a joint position without engaging in a cooperative process. This could for example be the result of domestic changes.

tivities, we are able to build stronger causal inferences of foreign policy convergence. Third, the paper develops a theoretical explanation of foreign policy convergence among member states of international organizations. The model argues that expected material gains, expected social gains, or ideational causes can plausibly account for foreign policy convergence. However, the causes are not mutually exclusive and, in some instances, linked via equifinal mechanisms to the outcome. Hence, causal complexity is a major challenge to case studies of foreign policy convergence. In order to deal with this complexity, the paper exemplifies how we can use scope conditions to reduce the empirical scope of case studies.

Table 6: Example of observational equivalence

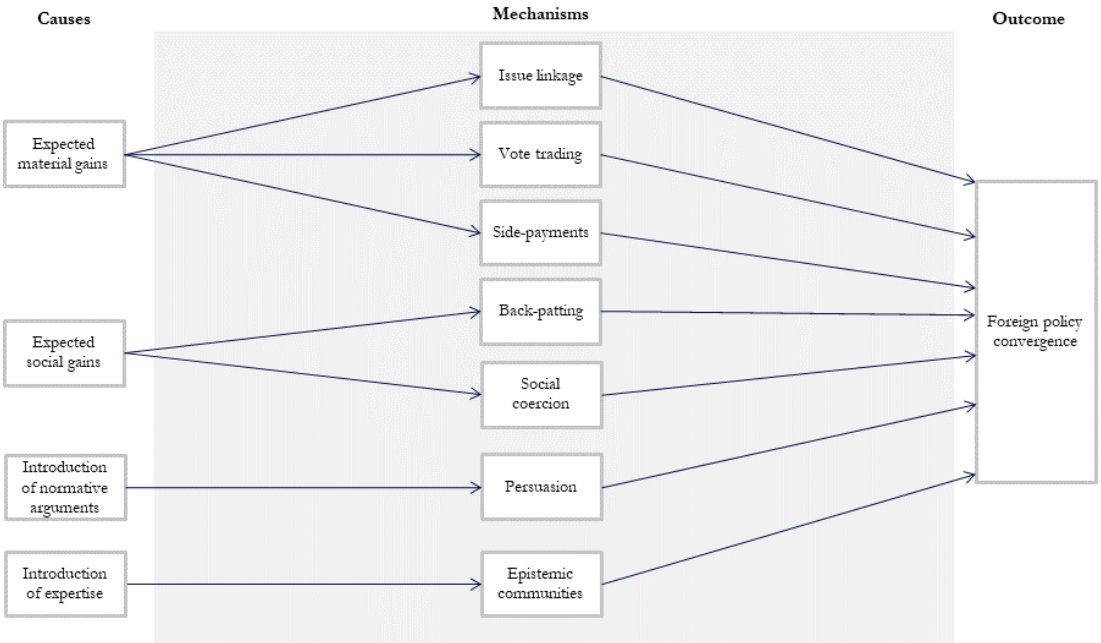
	Dyad X		**Dyad Y**	
	State A	State B	State C	State D
$T1_0$	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
$T1_1$	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
$T2_0$	No	No	No	Yes
$T2_1$	No	No	No	No
$T3_0$	Abstention	Abstention	Yes	No
$T3_1$	Abstention	Abstention	Abstention	Abstention
Voting cohesion score	**1**		**1**	

The argument takes a starting point in the existing literature on foreign policy convergence. Particularly in quantitative studies, foreign policy convergence is equated with increases in voting cohesion. Voting cohesion measures the overlap in voting choices within a given group. Yet by merely looking at voting results, these studies are unable to discern whether the outcome was generated through cooperation between the member states within the context of the international organization or whether the voting similarity was due to preexisting harmony. The outcomes of both processes leave identical correlational evidence, yet the process leading to the outcomes are markedly different. Table 6 exemplifies this argument with two hypothetical state dyads. Even though cross-case studies have tried to ameliorate the problem of observational equivalence, the research designs have so far been unable to distinguish observations of harmony (Dyad X) from observations of cooperation (Dyad Y). Furthermore, these studies have failed to provide compelling causal evidence that the measured voting cohesion was due to cooperation among the member states. In essence, studies have relied on theoretical arguments to substantiate

correlational findings instead of providing evidence of the underlying causal processes.

Consequently, I argue for conducting case studies of foreign policy convergence in order to substantiate the insights from cross-case studies with empirical evidence of the causal processes that lead states to speak with one voice. Therefore, foreign policy convergence is conceptualized as a dynamic process, in which one or more states willfully change their foreign policy position in order to be in accordance with the position of other group members. I argue that expected material gains, expected social gains, the introduction of normative arguments or expertise can plausibly explain the convergence of foreign policies among member states of an international organization. In theory, these causes can work in isolation or conjunction to produce the outcome. This means that researchers are confronted with high causal complexity that demands diverse evidence to test the different explanations. However, case studies not only face causal complexity through multiple and potentially nonexclusive causes; we have to assume that equifinal mechanisms might link some causes to the outcome. Figure 9 summarizes the argument. To cope with the causal complexity, the paper suggests developing context-specific scope conditions that allow for a reduced empirical focus.

Figure 9: Causes and mechanisms of foreign policy convergence



Paper D: The Unsolved Puzzle: Pacific Asia's Voting Cohesion in the United Nations General Assembly: A Response to Peter Ferdinand (co-authored with Michael Jankowski)[14]

Paper D represents an initial attempt to create stronger research designs for the study of cohesion. Linking up to the problem of observational equivalence as discussed in Paper C, we present contradicting evidence to the claim that regional integration ought to be the cause of increased cohesion among ASEAN member states in the UN General Assembly. Written as a response article to Ferdinand (2014a), 'Foreign Policy Convergence in Pacific Asia: The Evidence from Voting in the UN General Assembly', Paper D proposes four basic improvements to research designs of quantitative studies of voting cohesion in the United Nations General Assembly. By looking at the case of ASEAN's voting cohesion, we demonstrate that this improved design produces stronger and more nuanced pattern evidence. Empirically, Paper D presents evidence that directly contradicts inferences drawn in Ferdinand (2014a). While framed as a correction to a specific argument, the presented criticism is transferrable to other studies of UN General Assembly voting.

In the original article, Ferdinand (2014a) uses UN General Assembly votes from 1974 to 2008 to analyze the voting convergence and divergence among Pacific Asian states. Particularly, the author argues that ASEAN's voting cohesion is on average higher than that of the European Union. This finding directly contradicts the expectation that deeper integration of regional organization leads to a stronger ability to act collectively in international forums. We argue that these conclusions are not tenable because of four issues in the design of the study.

First, we argue for adjusting the period of analysis to incorporate both the full period in which the organization in question existed and the years leading up to its foundation. This adjustment allows for testing two counterfactual arguments. Firstly, we can assess whether the creation of the organization had an initial impact on the voting cohesion among its member states. The foundation of the organization gives states the possibility to engage more frequently, which allows for socialization and active coordination. Secondly, we can assess the impact of membership enlargements, which directly links up to the second suggested research design improvement.

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[14] Published 2014 in *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 16:4, 680-689.

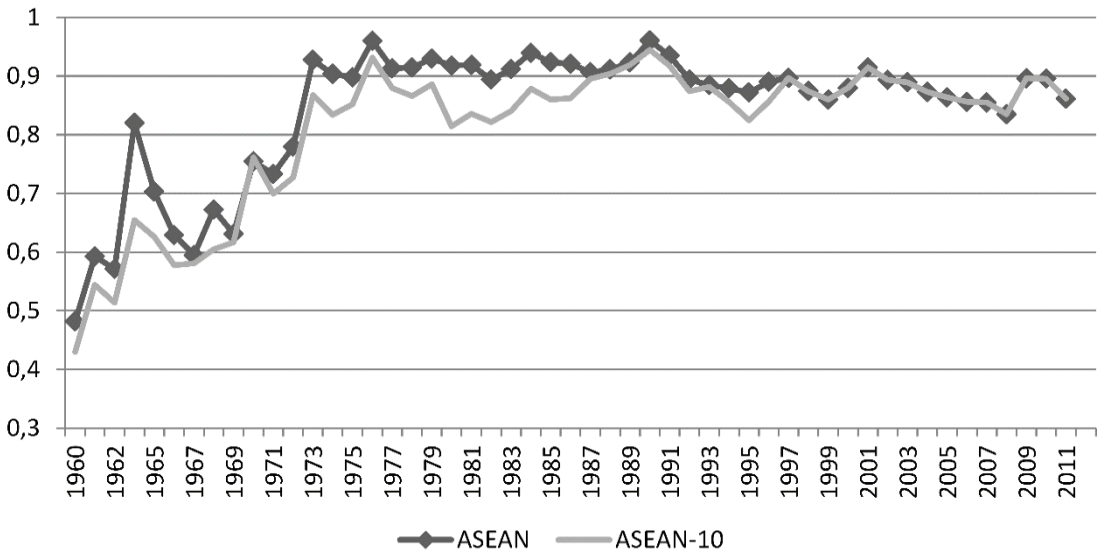
Second, we advocate for controlling for membership in the organization for several reasons. If we include states in our computation of voting cohesion scores even though they are not members of the organization at that point in time, we introduce systematic errors in our results. As we theoretically expect that processes within the frame of international organizations lead to foreign policy convergence, including non-members in the computation will distort the evidence. Furthermore, if we include member states in the analysis according to their actual accession, we can test whether the membership coincided with changes in the new member states' voting patterns.

Third, we recommend using regression analyses or, at a bare minimum, time series analyses. The original article presents arithmetic means for two observational periods (1974-1990 and 1991-2008) as a basis to draw conclusions (Ferdinand 2014a: 667, 669, 671). We argue that the compression of several hundred votes in two mean values conceals relevant information. Using a more detailed analysis with time series or regression models enables studies to uncover trends in voting cohesion and, consequently, produce more adequate pattern evidence to test theoretical expectations.

Finally, Paper D argues for the exclusion of unanimous and highly consensual votes from the analysis. By including every vote in the analysis, we unnecessarily inflate the voting cohesion scores of the analyzed units and base our conclusions on votes where agreement was widespread in the General Assembly irrespective of vote coordination among members or regional organizations. Paper E significantly expands this idea and develops a suitable comparative design.

Implementing these four basic improvements, Paper D presents pattern evidence that makes it doubtful that the creation of ASEAN caused an increase in voting cohesion among its member states. As Figure 10 shows, the voting cohesion among ASEAN states increased significantly before the organization's foundation in 1967, and while the voting scores increased among the initial five members in the subsequent years, we can observe a parallel trend when we include the future members in the computation (ASEAN-10). We propose that the creation of ASEAN might have had an indirect effect on voting cohesion among its member states by stabilizing the region as a whole and thereby reducing conflict among Southeast Asian states. Additionally, our analysis makes it highly doubtful that the creation of the ASEAN contact point in 1976 and the associated 'regular consultations between them no doubt explain the high degree of GA [General Assembly] voting cohesion' (Ferdinand 2014a: 668). On the contrary, our analysis shows that voting cohesion increased considerably before ASEAN's first significant step towards deeper integration in 1976. Rather, the voting cohesion has been on a slight downtrend ever since.

Figure 10: Voting cohesion of ASEAN and ASEAN-10 in the UNGA (Agreement Index)



Paper E: Reassessing the European Union in the United Nations General Assembly (co-authored with Michael Jankowski)[15]

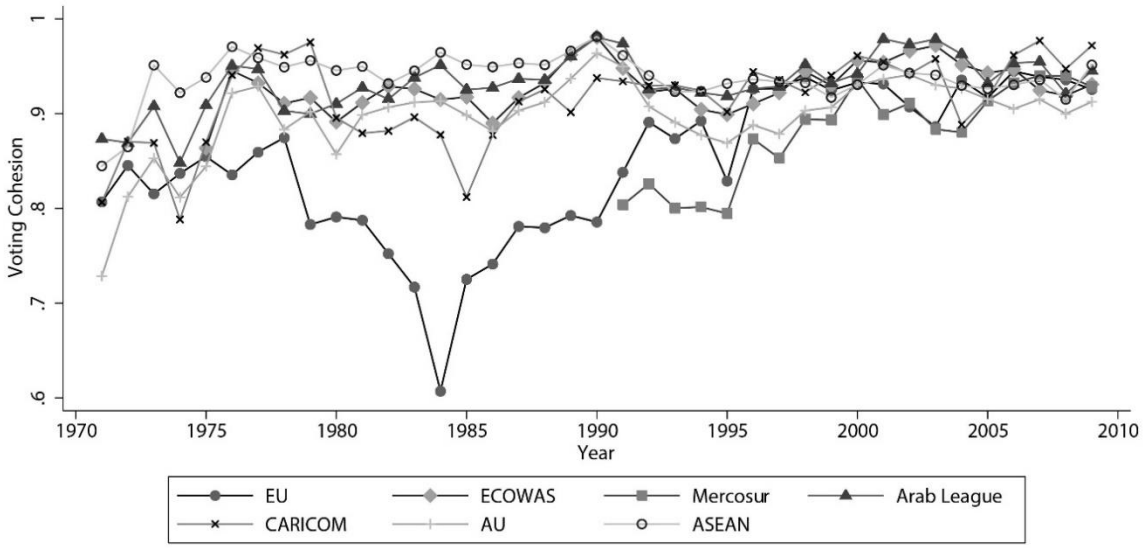
Paper E argues that the capacity for actorness of international organizations becomes visible in conflictual situations. We show that among selected regional organizations, European Union member states have the unique ability to act cohesively in contested votes in the United Nations General Assembly. Our research modifies previous findings that have highlighted that the European Union on average displays low voting cohesion scores compared with other regional organizations. This observation has posed a puzzle to researchers as the European Union is expected to have the strongest ability among all regional organizations to act with a single voice in international politics, due to the overall deep political and economic integration. By significantly improving measures of voting cohesion and developing a sophisticated research design, Paper E provides missing pieces to solve this puzzle.

Specifically, we make three contributions in the article. First, we discuss two frequently used measures of voting cohesion and outline their underlying assumption about the weighting of abstentions. The article proposes a more general version of Lijphart's Index of Voting Cohesion (IVC; Lijphart 1963) as the standard measure for voting cohesion in the UN General Assembly and other parliaments with three voting options. Second, we explicitly analyze voting cohesion of regional organizations in a comparative design. This consolidates two strands of studies on UN General Assembly voting that focus solely on either the European Union's actorness or the puzzling finding about the comparatively low voting cohesion among European Union member states without analyzing this puzzle in depth. Third, we offer an initial methodological solution to the problem that quantitative studies of UN General Assembly voting have failed so to produce strong evidence to substantiate claims that high voting cohesion among members of an organization is due to successful coordination processes. In essence, as the General Assembly is a consensus parliament, large majorities accept most votes. This leaves the problem that we are unable to discern whether member states of a regional organization have been able to vote in unison on a resolution because of preceding cooperative processes or whether unrelated factors explain this cohesion. We argue that by taking the overall level of conflict on a vote into account, we can construct stronger correlational evidence for the actorness of regional organizations.

[15] Published 2014 in *Journal of European Public Policy*, 21:10, 1491-1508.

Several studies have analyzed the voting cohesion of the European Union and other regional organizations in the UN General Assembly. Voting cohesion scores hereby serve as a shorthand for foreign policy preferences as they denote the level of agreement among a certain number of states on individual issues. Consequently, these scores are used as indicators for convergence or divergence of member states' preferences. The literature on European Union voting cohesion reveals that the members have been increasingly able to speak with one voice in the General Assembly, specifically since the implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (e.g., Strömvik 1998; Birnberg 2009; Jakobsson 2009). Other studies have shown that the European Union achieves relatively low average voting cohesion scores compared with different regional organizations such as ASEAN or ECOWAS (e.g., Rasch 2008; Jin & Hosli 2013; Panke 2013a). Figure 11 reproduces these findings and displays that European Union members for a long time were relatively unsuccessful in developing common positions on UN General Assembly resolutions but have managed to increase voting cohesion since the mid-1980s.

Figure 11: Average voting cohesion of selected regional organizations in the UNGA since 1970

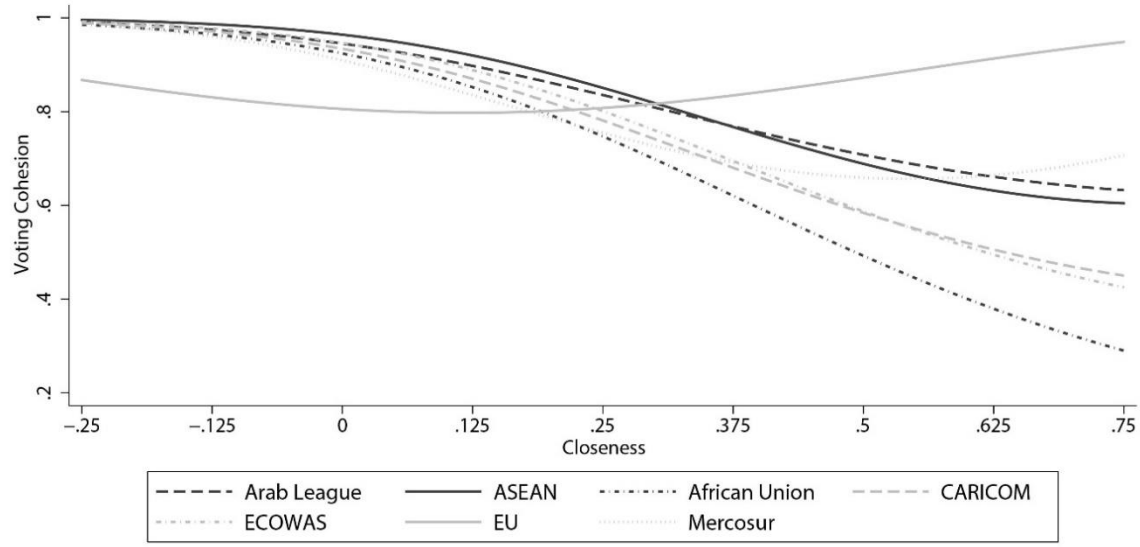


Instead of relying on descriptive analyses of voting cohesion, we propose multivariate regression analyses to shed light on the puzzle. Our dependent variable thus measures the voting cohesion of each regional organization on a given vote. The fractional logit regression model[16] includes variables that control for time, the topic of the resolution, the size of the regional organization,

[16] We use a fractional logit model because our dependent variable 'voting cohesion' is a proportion with 0 and 1 (perfect discord or cohesion) as the natural endpoints.

and the voting position of the United States on a resolution. Additionally, we include variables that control for the level of conflict in the UN General Assembly. Given what we know about the UN General Assembly as a consensus parliament (e.g., Marín-Bosch 1987, 1998; Voeten 2000; Peterson 2006), we argue that actorness should become particularly visible in conflictual ballots. While it is unsurprising that regional organizations manage to vote united on resolutions that are widely uncontested among the UN membership, the capacity for actorness is put to the test if a resolution is disputed.[17] If the regional organizations' voting patterns are unrelated to our explanatory factors, we can expect that the probability for discord increases with the overall level of conflict in the General Assembly. Hence, by controlling for the level of conflict, we can test if member states are able to speak with one voice even if the resolution creates polarization in the Assembly.

Figure 12: Marginal effects of closeness in the UNGA and regional organizations' voting cohesion



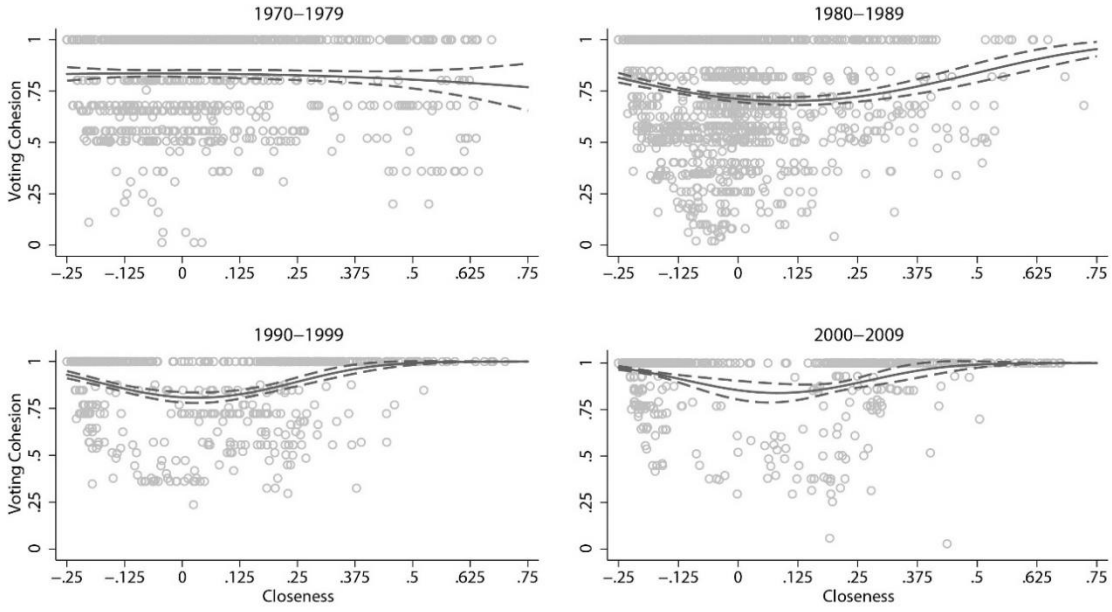
Note: The closeness variable is centered around its arithmetic mean (0.25).

The regression model computes odds ratios, which are notoriously hard to interpret. We therefore rely on marginal effects for the interpretation of our regression results (cf. Figure 12 and Figure 13).

[17] This links up to the suggestion about the exclusion of nearly unanimous votes developed in Paper D. As the argument was tinkered for univariate or bivariate descriptive analyses of voting cohesion scores, the exclusion of these uncontested votes is still a feasible way to deal with the issue. In multivariate analyses, the inclusion of a control variable for the level of conflict in the General Assembly is better suited than the elimination of observations at a specified cut-off point.

The key finding of our analysis is that the voting cohesion of most regional organizations erodes as expected, if the overall level of conflict in the General Assembly increases. Only the European Union manages to increase its voting cohesion in contested votes, displaying unity on controversial resolutions. Figure 12 displays the marginal effects of the closeness variable on the voting cohesion for the seven regional organizations that we included in the analysis. As the European Union is unique compared to the other regional organizations, we analyze the voting cohesion of the European Union in further detail. Among other things, we are able to show that the European Union developed the ability to speak with one voice on contested issues in the 1980s (Figure 13). This coincides with the intensification of foreign policy coordination among European Union member states following the Dublin Report in 1975, which was further advanced in the late 1980s (Commission of the European Communities 1975; European Union 1987). In our opinion, this lends further plausibility to the claim that the capacity for actorness is dependent on an organization's capability to engage member states into cooperative processes with the aim to converge their policy preferences. While one voice is easily achievable for international organizations if member states have harmonious preferences on an issue, developing cohesion on polarizing issues is the result of a political process among the member states. Therefore, we can better approximate the international organizations' capacity for external actorness if we incorporate the overall political conflict on a resolution.

Figure 13: Predictive margins of the closeness variable in the UN General Assembly and the European Union's voting cohesion



Paper F: One Voice or Different Choice?: Vote Defection of European Union Member States in the United Nations General Assembly (co-authored with Michael Jankowski)[18]

Paper F sets out to explain vote defection of European Union member states on resolutions in the United Nations General Assembly. Vote defection describes instances where the European Union does not speak with one voice on an issue, but one or more states vote differently than the majority of European Union member states. The article provides three key contributions to the existing literature. First, we offer a workaround to the observational equivalence problem of voting cohesion studies in the UN General Assembly, as established in Paper C. By analyzing instances of disagreement, we circumvent the issue of not being able to distinguish between 'true' and 'false' observations of cohesion in large-N research designs. Second, Paper F shifts the focus from the cohesion of the group to the role of individual member states. Our analysis offers additional insights into the European Union's capacity for actorness in the UN General Assembly by revealing that not only France and the United Kingdom, but also a number of smaller states defect frequently from the European Union majority position. Third, we argue that by studying vote defection, we are able to offer insights into the obstacles for European Union actorness in the UN General Assembly. Our statistical analysis shows that different preferences on issue areas, US influence, governments' attitudes towards EU integration, and the duration of membership serve as the main predictors for the probability of vote defection by EU member states.

According to several studies, the European Union's voting cohesion in the UN General Assembly has been increasing over the past decades (e.g., Strömvik 1998; Young & Rees 2005; Birnberg 2009; Jakobsson 2009; Jin & Hosli 2013). However, these analyses rely on voting cohesion scores that aggregate the vote choices of all European Union member states into one single value. Consequently, the analytical focus is not on the individual member states, even though researchers continuously highlight that the member states' interests remain the key obstacle to a common European stance (e.g., Maes 1979: 81; Smith 2008: 10). Paper F remedies this by taking the voting decisions of individual member states as units of observation. Specifically, we analyze whether member states defected from the majority voting position of

[18] Published 2018 in *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 20:3: 652-673.

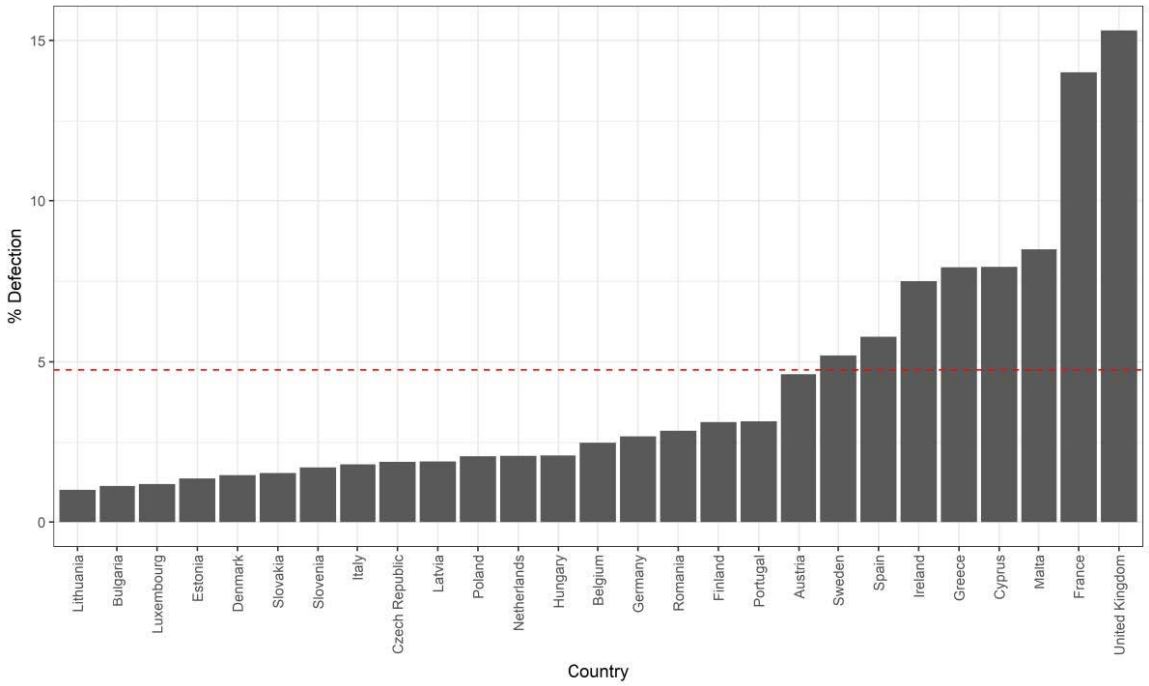
the European Union. The majority position is defined as the voting position that received the most votes among EU member states on a given ballot.

We develop a theoretical argument that takes potential explanatory factors on multiple levels into account. The first set of factors concerns agenda effects. We argue that member states are likely to have differing preferences regarding the various issue areas discussed in the UN General Assembly. Specifically, we hypothesize a higher probability for deviating voting behavior on resolutions regarding nuclear disarmament and decolonization and lower probabilities for resolutions concerning human rights and the Middle East conflict. Furthermore, permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council take on a special position in the UN system, which potentially introduces an additional rationale for EU member states to diverge from a common EU position in the General Assembly. Second, three factors on the domestic and European level are theorized to affect vote defection. We expect that governments with positive attitudes towards EU integration should value EU cohesion in international negotiations more than governments with negative attitudes towards EU integration. Additionally, we assume that holding the Council Presidency, which was responsible for steering the coordination in New York before 2009, should diminish the probability for vote defection. The Council President was usually the only state speaking on behalf of the EU in the UN General Assembly, and we can therefore assume that the incumbent had an incentive to act in line with the other European states. Lastly, we assume that member states have increasingly engrained the norms surrounding the common foreign policy. Hence, we hypothesize that the longer the membership, the lower the probability for vote defection. With the third set of factors, we try to catch potential explanatory factors from the structure of the international system. We focus here on the US because of its special role in the international sphere and the State Department's attempts to influence the position of European allies on resolutions in the UN. We expect that the US is actively trying to lobby for its positions and that EU member states can find shelter with the US if they want to vote against the EU majority. Furthermore, we assume that this should be even more the case if the US marks a resolution as important.

Figure 14 displays the average vote defection of all EU member states. On average, close to 5% of all votes cast by member states deviate from the majority position. The figure shows that not only the United Kingdom and France but also a number of smaller EU member states frequently break rank with the other EU states. More specifically, France and the United Kingdom mainly deviate from the EU majority on resolutions pertaining decolonization and

arms, while they show similar defection rates to other member states concerning other topics.[19]

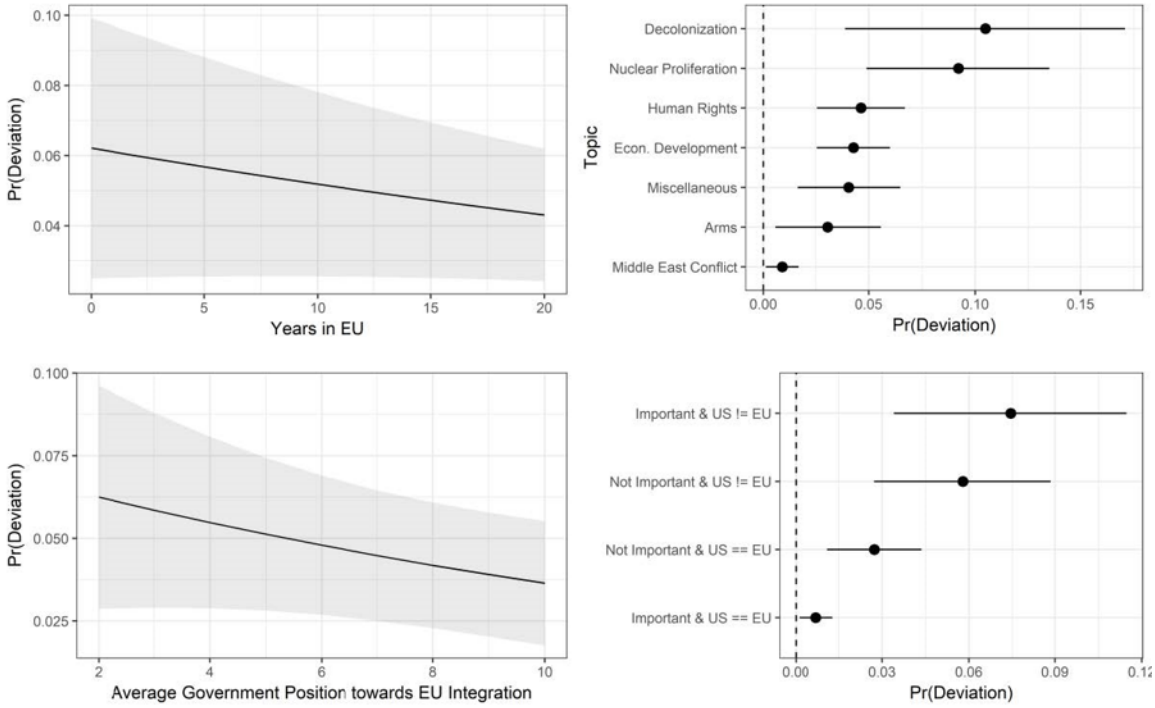
Figure 14: Average vote defection by member states, 1991-2011



Using a mixed-effects logistic regression analysis with a dichotomous measure of vote defection from the EU majority as our dependent variable, we test our hypothesized relationships. While we find no significant effects for the variables measuring UN Security Council membership and Council Presidency, we find evidence for our other expected relationships. As shown in Figure 15, the longer a state is member of the EU, the lower the probability of casting a deviating vote (top left panel). Our findings regarding issue effects reveal that the probability of vote defection increases if a resolution concerns decolonization or nuclear disarmament (top right panel). The effect sizes for these variables are considerable, which suggests that national preferences are a major obstacle to EU actorness. Although the government position on EU integration displays the expected effect, the predicted marginal effect is quite small (bottom left panel). Finally, the probability of vote defection increases if the vote is important to the US and the US position is different from the majority position of the EU. In contrast, the probability of vote defection is lowest if the EU majority and the US agree on a vote of importance to the US.

[19] See Figure 2 in Paper F for a more detailed illustration of the average vote defection by member states on the seven issue areas: arms, decolonization, economic development, human rights, Middle East conflict, nuclear proliferation, and miscellaneous.

Figure 15: Predicted probability of vote defection by EU member states based on years of EU membership, topics, government position on EU integration, and US position and importance of a vote



To supplement the findings from the overall model analyzing the probability of vote defection by EU member states, we ran logistic regressions for each member state and included an additional variable measuring the proportion of vote deviation among the EU states. Most interestingly, our results show that France and the UK have a high probability of deviating in isolation, while the smaller EU member states tend to defect from the EU position in conjunction with other members (cf. Figure 5 in Paper F). This finding is not surprising per se, as we would expect more powerful states to be heard in international debates even if they do not have the backing of a group, while smaller states need to increase their leverage in order to find voice in the international arena (e.g., Martin 1992; Panke 2013a). However, Germany shows behavioral patterns comparable to those of smaller EU states, even though it is an increasingly important international player.

Paper F highlights several obstacles to the EU's aim to speak with one voice in the UN General Assembly. Our analysis shows that national preferences and the influence of the US serve as strong predictors of vote defection. As cohesion is an important precondition for an organization's ability to act in international politics, these findings point towards relevant research questions concerning the ability of international organizations to overcome national preferences or external interference in order to achieve actorness.

Conclusion

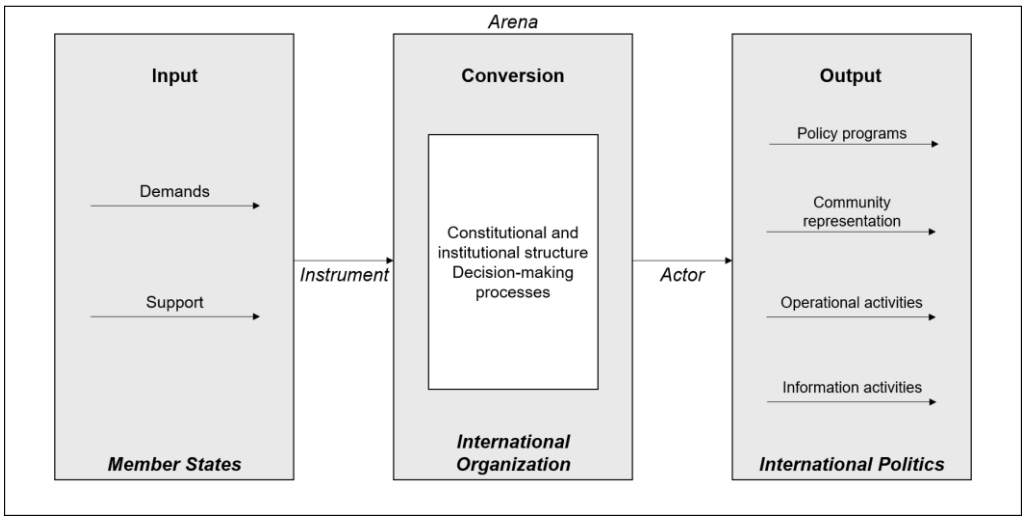
The dissertation set out to answer two overarching research questions. First, the work aimed at providing a conceptual tool to grasp international organizations that differ from formal international organizations and shed light on how these international organizations function and act distinctly in international politics. Second, the papers aimed at improving the tools international relations scholarship has for assessing whether and to what extent international organizations are able to develop actorness in international politics. With these goals in mind, the dissertation has mainly treated international organizations as arenas and actors (cf. Figure 16). The report and the papers have argued for distinguishing three types of international organizations: formal, pseudoformal, and informal international organizations. The individual manuscripts and the report have also offered arguments on how to study actorness.

The purpose of the conclusion is not to summarize the results and contributions once more. As is the case with probably all (social science) research, new knowledge, answers to initial research questions and additional insights spark a series of new questions. Instead of concluding on the achievements of this thesis, this chapter attempts to highlight the questions emerging from my research and outline areas that, to the best of my knowledge, have not been sufficiently studied so far. In the following, I want to highlight three areas for further research.

First, starting out from the conceptual distinction between formal, pseudoformal, and formal international organizations, the dissertation proposes to conduct systematic research on pseudoformal and informal international organizations. Here, two questions seem highly pertinent. For one thing, research could concentrate on pseudoformal international organizations. The introduction of this concept has so far been met with great skepticism, and the dissertation has unfortunately not produced ample systematic evidence for the benefit of overhauling established definitions and concepts in the field. While the same is true, although to a lesser extent, for informal international organizations, the introduction of pseudoformal international organizations can be perceived as an unnecessary increase in conceptual complexity without theoretical and empirical benefit. While this dissertation believes the opposite, a thorough investigation of the claims made in Paper A might lend credibility to the proposed typology or render it useless. A discussion of the differences in formalization between international organizations should enhance our general understanding of international organizations as a form of institutionalized cooperation between states. For another, informal

international organizations offer potential for additional research. As with pseudoformal international organizations, more research should focus on individual organizations and draw comparisons among the three types of international organizations. In continuation of Paper B, additional case studies should be conducted on the other cases of the creation of hard law by informal international organizations. Furthermore, conducting interviews with Brazilian government officials has highlighted that the bureaucratic and organizational aspects of informal international organizations deserve attention. Through which mechanisms and procedures do informal international organizations guarantee their functional capability in the absence of an international bureaucracy, or, to put it differently, how is an informal international organization organized without an organization?

Figure 16: Combined depiction of international organizations as political systems and the three perspectives on international organizations



Second, the dissertation has not addressed the research perspective of international organizations as instrument of states. Yet it is plausible to assume that three types of international organizations have been created for different reasons. Given that states make deliberate decisions on the purpose of international organizations, we should assume that formal, pseudoformal, and informal international organizations serve different functions than their member states. Based on the predominant conceptual toolkit, research has so far focused on explaining the creation of formal international organizations or differences between formal international organizations (e.g., Abbott & Snidal 1998; Koremenos et al. 2001; Rittberger et al. 2012). Vabulas and Snidal (2013) have already successfully shown that contrasting formal and informal international organizations sharpens functionalistic explanations for the creation of international organizations.

Third, the dissertation has advanced arguments and methodologies for studying actorness of international organizations, specifically cohesion among member states. The papers in this dissertation contribute, however, to a general 'Mount Everest Syndrome' (Keohane 1969) when it comes to the study of cohesion. Researchers interested in international organizations' actorness often use the readily available voting data from the United Nations General Assembly to test arguments about actorness, convergence and cohesion. While these parts of the dissertation focus on causal questions, they only offer workarounds to the outlined problem with observational equivalence and the lack of (mechanistic) evidence for the assumed causal explanations. Paper C proposes arguments for conducting case studies to shed light on the level where causation plays out, but does not include an empirical study of the arguments. Finally, the dissertation has not left the relatively accessible and transparent playing field of the United Nations General Assembly. Research on actorness has in general examined different arenas of member state interaction (e.g., da Conceição-Heldt & Meunier 2014; Delreux 2014). Yet particularly the quantitative literature in this field has continuously focused on the UN General Assembly. Additional datasets or different research designs should move beyond this (layered) arena and aim at increasing the external validity of the theoretical arguments and claims.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Sample Interview Guide

AARHUS
UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Interview Topics

Dear Mr./Mrs,

Please find below a tentative outline for the interview. I would like to cover the following topics and use these points as a general guideline for a talk.

Role and Function in regard to BRICS

- What were your tasks in the context of BRICS cooperation?
- Within the context of the IMF, other informal groups like the G-Groups play an important role as well. How would you describe BRICS cooperation in comparison to cooperation in the G20 or to state interaction within the setting of the IMF?

Agreements on NDB and CRA

- At the Fortaleza Summit, BRICS members signed the agreements on the CRA and the NDB. What were the reasons that BRICS started to negotiate these agreements? Where and when did the idea emerge to create these two treaties?
- How was the timeline of the negotiations? What were crucial propositions and meetings in the process?
- What were Country X's interests in the negotiation and in the establishment of the two treaties?

Institutional set-up of BRICS

- What are the reasons that BRICS was never established on the basis of an agreement or a treaty that defines the institutional set-up, membership, etc.?
- What are the benefits in the informal structure of BRICS for their members?

As mentioned in my email, the interview will be conducted anonymously and only be used for my research purposes. Please find attached a Confidentiality Agreement. I would kindly ask you to either scan a signed copy of the Agreement or indicate via email which options you would agree to before or after the interview.

With kind regards

Nicolas Burmester
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Department of Political Science and Government

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Appendix 2: Confidentiality Agreement

AARHUS
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SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Date: 23.3.2017

Confidentiality Agreement

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the interview. The information given and the discussions during the interview represent confidential information. In the case that the interview will be referenced in an academic publication, the interview and the information given will be anonymized.

By signing the agreement, the interviewee agrees that the information given in the interview can be

- ☐ quoted directly in academic publications,
- ☐ referred to indirectly in academic publications,
- ☐ used as background information, but not be quoted or referred to in academic publications;

Furthermore, the interviewee agrees that the interview can be documented

- ☐ as an audio recording,
- ☐ by taking notes;

The interviewer guarantees that the interviewee will be asked for consent of quotations and references before publication via email. Additionally, the interviewer assures that neither the documentation of the interview nor the content of the interview will be passed on to third parties other than co-authors, the PhD assessment committee and the ethics board without the consent of the interviewee.

N. Burmester

Nicolas Burmester
PhD Student

(Signature interviewee)

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English Summary

The dissertation advances the understanding of international organizations in the field of International Relations regarding two research areas. First, how can we conceptually grasp international organizations that veer from the norm of formal international organizations and explain how they function and what they do in international politics? Second, once we have conceptually sorted international organizations, how can we assess whether or to what extent they have the capacity to develop actorness in international politics? The report and the six individual papers significantly improve conceptual, methodological and theoretical tools for studying international organizations and international organizations' actorness.

The dissertation makes three core contributions to research on international organizations. First, it offers an improved conceptual distinction of international organizations that allows for a theoretical and empirical distinction between international organizations according to differences in the institutionalization. Expanding the distinction between formal and informal international organizations, the dissertation argues that pseudoformal international organizations form a third type of international organization. The three types can be expected to function distinctly as instruments, arenas, and actors. Accordingly, as their institutional structures differ, the three types are presumed to produce different outcomes.

Second, using case-based and variance-based research designs, the dissertation offers extensive methodological arguments about the study of international organizations' actorness. Specifically, the dissertation proposes innovative ways to study the cohesion between member states of international organizations. Cohesion is a key dimension of actorness, as it functions as a precondition for any joint action. As the literature has primarily focused on analyzing the cohesion of formal international organizations, specifically regional organizations such as the EU, three papers contribute mainly to this literature.

Third, the empirical parts of the dissertation expand our understanding of specific international organizations as arenas for state interaction. Here, the individual papers show how Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa used the informal international organization BRICS to negotiate the creation of the New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Agreement and how ASEAN as well as EU member states succeed (or fail) in speaking with a common voice in the arena of the UN General Assembly.

Dansk Resumé

Denne afhandling fremmer forståelsen af internationale organisationer inden for international politik (IP) på to forskningsområder. Hvordan kan vi konceptuelt forstå internationale organisationer, der afviger strukturelt fra formelle internationale organisationer, og forklare, hvordan disse organisationer fungerer og agerer i international politik? Derudover spørger afhandlingen, hvordan vi, når vi har opdelt internationale organisationer konceptuelt, kan vurdere, om eller i hvilket omfang internationale organisationer har kapacitet til at udvikle aktørhed i international politik? Rapporten og de seks individuelle artikler forbedrer konceptuelle, metodologiske og teoretiske redskaber til at studere internationale organisationer og internationale organisationers aktørhed væsentligt.

Afhandlingen yder tre centrale bidrag til forskning i internationale organisationer. For det første en forbedret konceptuel sondring mellem internationale organisationer, der gør det muligt at sondre teoretisk og empirisk mellem internationale organisationer i henhold til forskelle i institutionaliseringen. Afhandlingen udvider sondringen mellem formelle og uformelle internationale organisationer og argumenterer for en tredje type, nemlig pseudoformelle internationale organisationer. Disse tre typer kan forventes at fungere distinkt som instrumenter, arenaer og aktører. Da deres institutionelle strukturer er forskellige, formodes de tre typer at producere forskellige outputs.

For det andet bruger afhandlingen vidtgående case-baserede og variansbaserede forskningsdesign, der fremmer metodologiske argumenter om undersøgelsen af internationale organisationers aktørhed. Specifikt foreslår afhandlingen innovative måder at studere sammenhængskraft mellem medlemsstater af internationale organisationer på. Sammenhængskraft er en vigtig dimension af aktørhed, da det fungerer som en forudsætning for enhver fælles handling. Da litteraturen primært har fokuseret på at analysere sammenhængskraften mellem medlemsstater af formelle internationale organisationer, specielt regionale organisationer som EU, bidrager tre af artiklerne primært til denne litteratur.

For det tredje udvider de empiriske dele af afhandlingen vores forståelse af specifikke internationale organisationer som arenaer for statsinteraktion. Her viser de enkelte artikler, hvordan Brasilien, Rusland, Indien, Kina og Sydafrika har brugt den uformelle internationale organisation BRICS til at forhandle om oprettelsen af New Development Bank og Contingent Reserve Agreement, og hvordan såvel ASEAN- som EU-lande lykkes (eller mislykkes) i at tale med en fælles stemme i FN's generalforsamling.