The international authority database

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Research Article

Abstract

International organizations (IOs) are perceived as increasingly important, yet also severely challenged actors in world politics. How authoritative are IOs, how do they exercise authority, and how has their authority evolved over time? The International Authority Database (IAD) offers a novel measure of IO authority built from several aspects of an IO's institutional design. We provide systematic data on how IOs exercise authority across seven policy functions, using a representative sample of 34 IOs, based on coding over 200 IO bodies, and covering the period 1920–2013. Empirical applications illustrate how the IAD advances our understanding of IOs in novel and important ways.

Policy Implications

- Whereas international organizations (IOs) are frequently criticized for not having enough bite, our data reveals that their authority has grown over time. This development might spark strong resistance against global governance, unless IO authority is sufficiently legitimated. Policy makers should therefore work towards increasing their legitimacy by establishing sufficiently robust mechanisms of accountability and transparency. Moreover, our data point policy makers to identify institutional features of IOs that are in particular need of legitimation.
- Our data further reveals that authority is unevenly distributed across IOs. Some organizations, such as the European Union, wield substantial influence over states; whereas others, such as the Bank for International Settlements, barely constrain state sovereignty. Policy makers should consider such varying levels of authority when determining which IO can effectively solve problems and which cannot. Policy makers should equally pay attention to the distribution of IO authority within a given issue area. If the IOs tasked to tackle an important issue such as climate change lack significant authority, the policy maker should work towards strengthening their institutional framework and policy mandate.
- We also find that IOs are less authoritative than their critics often suggest. The average IO exercises substantial authority only across a limited number of policy functions. IOs have the highest authority when they set policy agendas and settle disputes between states but, in most IOs, states remain largely in control over the organization and policy making. Policy makers that defend IOs should use this insight when confronted with exaggerated claims about the loss of popular sovereignty.
- To strengthen the implementation capacity of IOs, policy makers should strengthen the monitoring and enforcement authority of IOs. Among the functions we consider in our data, the monitoring and enforcement authority of IOs are relatively weakly institutionalized. However, both functions are important to ensure that adopted decisions are implemented by member states. Our data allow policy makers to identify IOs in which monitoring and enforcement provisions are weak.

1. Introducing a new dataset on international organization authority

A key demand in the debate surrounding the 2016 Brexit referendum was for the United Kingdom (UK) to 'take back control' from European Union (EU) institutions.[1] In 2018, United States (US) National Security Advisor, John Bolton, warned the International Criminal Court (ICC) against coming 'after us, Israel, or other US allies' in the Court's investigation of war crimes in Afghanistan (Bowcott et al., 2018). At the 2020 G20 summit, leaders pledged to strengthen the World Health Organization's (WHO) mandate in coordinating the international response to COVID-19 and asked the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to monitor the pandemic's impact on employment (Wagner, 2020). These episodes suggest that international organizations (IOs) are considered as influential actors in international politics constraining state sovereignty in various important ways. They also suggest that some IOs are contested (not least for they are considered too authoritative).

Both observations are supported by extant research on IOs. Scholars have argued that IOs not only help states realize mutually beneficial cooperation (Keohane, 1984) and

overcome violent conflict (Oneal and Russett, 2001), but that they have become increasingly 'powerful', 'independent', and 'authoritative' actors in their own right. IOs regulate an increasingly wide range of issues, intervene more deeply in the domestic affairs of their member states, and develop and diffuse international norms and rules (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004; Bradley and Kelley, 2008; Haftel and Thompson, 2006; Hawkins et al., 2006; Hooghe et al., 2017; Lake, 2007; Zürn et al., 2012). At the same time, recent research suggests that IOs have become contested (Bearce and Scott, 2019; Zürn, 2018), they experience popular backlash (Walter, 2019), and that states withdraw from them (von Borzyskowski and Vabulas, 2019). Both strands of research – those who argue that IOs have become more authoritative actors, and those who claim that IOs see their authority questioned – would benefit from a more complete understanding of how authoritative IOs are, how they exercise authority, and how their authority has evolved over time.

The aim of the dataset we present in this article – the International Authority Database (IAD) – is to contribute to such an understanding by offering novel data on IO authority.[2] We build on quantitative IO scholarship that has begun to systematically collect data, hence to shed light on various aspects relevant to the authority of IOs, including their organizational autonomy and independence (Haftel, 2013; Haftel and Hofmann, 2017; Haftel and Thompson, 2006), their capability and mandates (Boehmer et al., 2004; Haftel, 2007; Lundgren, 2016), the extent of delegation (Brown, 2010), their voting rules (Blake and Payton, 2015), their openness to civil society actors (Tallberg et al., 2013), or the extent of pooling and delegation in IOs' constitutional and administrative proceedings (Hooghe and Marks, 2015; Hooghe et al., 2017). These contributions have greatly improved our understanding of IOs. However, these studies either focus on specific subsets of IOs, such as regional and economic organizations, cover only particular aspects of IO authority (such as autonomy or independence of decision-making), or compare IOs at just one point in time.

The IAD advances the quantitative study of IOs by making two distinct contributions to the field. First, our data capture IO authority by focusing on how IOs exercise authority over states when designing and implementing substantive policies. Authority, in our view, denotes the recognized right to issue binding decisions and make competent judgments. We argue that this concept contains two dimensions – autonomy and bindingness (see also Abbott et al., 2000). For an IO to exercise authority it must act with a degree of autonomy (Abbott and Snidal, 1998; Haftel and Thompson, 2006). However, autonomy in itself does not constitute authority unless the decisions have effects on addressees, which we capture through the varying bindingness of IO rules and decisions (see also Bradley and Kelley, 2008). Using the product of autonomy and bindingness, we offer a novel and more complete single measure of authority.

Second, our data is the first to provide systematic comparative information about the exercise of IO authority across the full policy cycle, including agenda setting, rule making, monitoring, norm interpretation, enforcement, knowledge generation, and evaluation. The IAD contains data on how 34 IOs exercise authority across these seven policy functions, covering the period from 1919 until 2013. It could be of interest to both qualitative and quantitative IO scholars that may use our data to inform case selection or to examine why certain functions grow in authority over time across all IOs, while others do not. Moreover, because we have constructed our data in a modular way, it is possible to combine subsets of our data (e.g. monitoring and enforcement) and tailor them to individual research questions, thus generating different or more specific measures of IO authority.

Taken together, the IAD offers new data on the exercise of IO authority across organizations and over time. It will allow scholars to examine IO authority as an independent variable, explaining IO legitimacy, performance, contestation, or the withdrawal from IOs, for instance. Alternatively, our measure can be used to systematically examine whether and how IO features such as membership, preference distributions, or other independent variables (e.g. power differentials between states) affect the exercise of IO authority.

In the remainder of this article, we first present our concept of authority, unpacking it into its constitutive dimensions of autonomy and bindingness. We then explain our measurement approach and discuss sampling before we present some applications of the IAD, showing how our data can be used to examine important aspects of IO authority. We also compare our data with the Measuring International Authority (MIA) dataset (Hooghe et al., 2017) to both highlight how our data differs from MIA and identify complementarities that scholars can leverage in future research.

2. The exercise of IO authority

Our database centers on the concept of authority. There are many definitions of authority in both political philosophy and empirical social science, but all classical concepts (Blau, 1963; Friedman, 1990; Weber, 1968) have one thing in common: those who recognize authority defer their own judgment or choice without being necessarily forced or persuaded to do so (Arendt, 1970). An authority is recognized because it is considered as trustworthy to make the right decisions or interpretations. Authority is an important source of power and it can mean both having permission to do something and having the right to grant such permission (Raz, 1990).

Authority is usually associated with domestic institutions, such as governments, the police, or the courts. Yet, the concept of authority is applicable to political actors and institutions beyond the state, including IOs. IOs operate in a context in which sovereign states remain (the) dominant actors, commanding material resources exceeding those of IOs by far. Typically, states are not forced or coerced to join and obey IOs. Rather, IOs acquire authority through states' voluntary deference in line with Weber's (1968) sociological concept of authority. In our approach, authority can be observed when states recognize that an organization can make binding decisions and competent judgments to

further a common good. We thus operationalize the sociological concept of authority by looking at institutional features of IOs. States' principled recognition of IO authority expresses itself in two ways: in the creation of, accession to, and continued operation of IOs; and, in that states endow them with specific competences to perform a set of policy functions in their stead.

While we do not deny that informal rules and practices matter, our focus on institutional design and thus formal rules have at least two advantages (see Hooghe et al., 2017; Tallberg et al., 2013). First, unlike informal authority, formal authority is empirically observable through publicly available legal documents across a large set of IOs and can, as a result, be replicated. Second, informal rules and practices tend to bind states less than formal rules and practices do, especially in cases of conflicts of interest. Formal attributes constitute a baseline of international authority for states themselves and delimit their explicit recognition of IO authority.

2.1. Measuring IO authority

We understand IO authority as the grant of the right to make binding decisions and/or competent judgments that is expressed through the formal properties and attributes of an organization. In line with legalization theory (Abbott et al., 2000; Bradley and Kelley, 2008), we argue that IO authority is jointly constituted by two dimensions: by its autonomy and by the bindingness of its rules and decisions. Whereas we conceptualize and measure autonomy and bindingness as two distinct institutional dimensions, they both interact to determine an IO's authority. Prior research has prominently theorized this relationship. In a seminal contribution, Abbott et al. (2000) suggest that the legalization of international institutions depends on their delegation – states' transfer of competences to independent bodies – and their obligation – how much they legally commit states to international rules.[3] Similarly, Bradley and Kelley (2008) and Haftel and Thompson (2006) suggest that an international actors' autonomy or independence is insufficient to capture how much this actor can influence state behavior (through the legal effects of its rules). To be authoritative, therefore, an IO must both enjoy some degree of autonomous decision-making over states and must have the capacity to commit or bind the addressees of its rules and decisions to the agreed course of action (Zürn et al., 2012).

Scholars agree that IOs can only be authoritative if they enjoy some level of autonomy – understood as not being under the control of each of its member states (see e.g. Abbott and Snidal, 1998; Barnett and Finnemore, 2004; Haftel and Thompson, 2006; Hooghe et al., 2017). Secretariats, such as the European Commission, are examples of such IO bodies that are largely insulated from individual member states' preferences and influence and are therefore highly autonomous. But autonomy is not confined to secretariats and other independent bodies; it can extend to policy-making organs within the organization that are composed of a (s)elect subset of member states. Acting in the name of the institution, these bodies – typically an IO's governing body – may adopt decisions for some or all members of the organization. The United Nations (UN) Security Council is an example of such an IO body. Its 15 members adopted Resolution 1540 with majority vote, obliging all 193 UN member states to implement domestic legislation against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction without requiring the consent of the entire UN membership. We determine the autonomy of the Security Council by taking into account that it is a governing body acting on behalf of all UN member states and the decision-making rules within that body. We explain our coding of autonomy in more detail below.

However, IO autonomy is not sufficient for IO authority as independent bodies without bite might barely influence the behavior of their rule addressees. To fully capture IO authority, we therefore require an additional dimension: bindingness. Bindingness denotes the degree to which IO rules and decisions reduce the policy discretion of member states (Abbott et al., 2000; Bradley and Kelley, 2008; Cooper et al., 2008). An IO has different instruments at its disposal that are meant to commit member states to an agreed course of action. These instruments indicate acceptance of the right to impose costs on member states. For example, if policy decisions are only conditionally binding, the IO has less leeway to constrain state behavior compared to policy decisions that are directly binding. Relatedly, IOs that have the right to monitor state compliance with on-site inspections (e.g. IMF) limit state discretion more than IOs that are only entitled to collect and distribute states' compliance self-reports. When an IO possesses the recognized right to apply military sanctions (e.g. African Union), it can restrain member states' behavior more than when it is only allowed to redress noncompliance through calls for corrective action. Accordingly, to the extent that such instruments constrain state behavior, they determine the IO's (formal) capacity to bind its member states. An IO's bindingness can vary along a continuum, depending on the available instruments and the extent to which these limit state discretion. To measure bindingness, we code the relevant formal rules and instruments in treaties and related legal documents.

Because autonomy and bindingness in our concept jointly constitute authority, an IO has authority only if it enjoys a minimum level of organizational autonomy *and* if its rules and decisions can bind its member states (at least to some extent). For example, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has significant autonomy in developing recommendations for tackling climate change. Yet, these do not formally bind states. By contrast, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) decisions are highly binding on member states, but it needs the consensus of all states in order to reach a decision – it has very little autonomy. This suggests that autonomous IOs that cannot constrain their member states, or IOs that can adopt binding rules and policy output but have no autonomy, do not exercise authority over states. As a result, neither of the two dimensions is substitutable; both are necessary and jointly sufficient for IO authority (Goertz, 2006).[4] While being more conservative, our concept allows us to empirically distinguish IO authority

from other important design features, such as independence or autonomy.

2.2. The exercise of IO authority across policy functions

How do IOs exercise authority across important policy functions that they are tasked to perform? Because we are interested in how IOs exercise authority over their member states rather than in aspects of policy making within IOs, we concentrate on institutional processes by which IOs initiate, debate, adopt, implement, adjudicate, and evaluate substantive policies. For each policy function, we briefly discuss their autonomy and bindingness, which we analyze based on institutional rules.

Agenda setting denotes the stage where policies are included or excluded for subsequent decision-making. Autonomy is high when the proposal and negotiation of agenda items involve not only states, but also the IO secretariat and non-state third parties (e.g. other IOs). Bindingness, in turn, depends on how easily – in terms of decision-making rules – the agenda can be modified by each individual state (Tsebelis, 2002). Should it be more demanding to change agenda items than to propose them, the costs of changing them – and hence political bindingness – increase for each individual state.

Rule making comprises the procedures to set substantive rules and policies. An IO's rule-making autonomy is high if each individual state's control over decisions or interpretations is weak (Blake and Payton, 2015). The legal bindingness of the adopted policy instruments – ranging from mere advice to unconditionally legally binding decisions – determines the bindingness of rule making.

Monitoring is the collection of information on member state compliance and performance. Monitoring autonomy is highest when dedicated international bodies (e.g. secretariats) exclusively monitor compliance and performance. The bindingness of monitoring depends on the intrusiveness of an IO's right to access, collect, process, and evaluate compliance-relevant information, such as through on-site inspections (Brown, 2010; Dai, 2002). Such monitoring instruments limit state discretion to varying degrees by curtailing their options to selectively decide on the provision of compliance-relevant information.

Norm interpretation is the act of passing judgments in order to solve conflicts of interest and disagreements on facts and the meaning of norms. The less the initiation and decision process is confined to member states – such as when international courts adjudicate norm conflicts – the higher the IOs' norm interpretation autonomy (Alter, 2014). The bindingness of norm interpretation depends on the extent to which judgments and interpretations are binding and on the ease of appeal against them.

Enforcement refers to the imposition of costs on non-compliant state parties (Downs et al., 1996; Fearon, 1998). Enforcement autonomy is high when international bodies impose sanctions and when the decision on sanctions is removed from member state control. The types of sanctions available to IOs determine the bindingness of enforcement.

IOs generate knowledge when they collect, categorize, and process information on substantive problems they are meant to govern. The less IOs rely on input by states and the more they can independently develop knowledge generating practices (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004), the more their autonomy grows. The output of this function binds states more when the results of *knowledge generation* enter policy agendas as standing items and when they are widely disseminated, thereby affecting public debates.

Finally, *evaluation* denotes the review of internal operations and procedures with regard to their suitability for achieving the policy aims of IOs. Autonomy is high, when evaluators are appointed by the IO rather than by states as this enhances their standing as neutral and trustworthy sources of expertise. The findings of evaluation processes bind states to the extent that they produce recommendations for intra-institutional change that enter the policy agendas of IOs.

3. Coding and aggregation

In this section, we discuss the coding of the autonomy and bindingness dimensions of authority, illustrate our coding for one policy function – rule making – in more detail, briefly explain how we aggregate authority at the policy function and IO level, and present our sample selection. A more technical exposition is given in Supplementary Material Appendix S1.

3.1. Coding

To determine autonomy and bindingness per policy function, IO, and year, we developed a comprehensive and detailed coding instrument that features more than 100 items and that is required to capture the exercise of IO authority in adequate detail and validity. We apply this instrument to several hundred IO bodies of the 34 IOs, coding more than 1,000 individual legal documents. As these legal documents assign policy functions to IO bodies and specify each body's mandate and competences, they allow us to identify, for example, which specific body is tasked to monitor compliance or adjudicate disputes between states.

To code an IO's autonomy, we focus on the adoption process of decisions, actions, and policies to ask who makes the decision (type of IO body) and how they are made (voting rule). We distinguish three types of IO bodies: (1) Assemblies that comprise the entire membership; (2) governing bodies that represent a subset of members; and (3) independent organs, such as IO secretariats, standing courts, or parliaments. To capture how decisions are made within these bodies, we code three types of voting rules: (1) unanimity; (2) qualified majority; and (3) simple majority voting. To arrive at a single autonomy score, we cross-tabulate the categories of IO body type and voting rule and obtain nine potential combinations. We rank each of these combinations as indicated in Table 1. The ranking is based on the following rule: the less each member state is able to fully control IO decisions and interpretations, the higher IO autonomy is,

Table 1. Cross-tabulation and rank ordering of IO body type and voting rule

	Unanimity	Qualified majority	Simple majority
Assembly	1	2	3
Governing body	4	5	6
Independent body	7	8	9

and vice versa. For example, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit – the IO's assembly – adopts decisions by unanimity (voting rule), giving each ASEAN member full control (and a de facto veto right) over decisions. IO autonomy is therefore extremely low.[5] By contrast, the IMF's Executive Board – the IO's governing body – adopts most policies per qualified majority. The IMF's autonomy is higher than ASEAN's, as a subset of states decides on behalf of all other member states with a decision rule that does not require each state's consent.

Turning to bindingness as the second dimension of IO authority, we determine the extent to which adopted policies or judgments can limit state discretion. For two of our seven functions – rule making and norm interpretation – we identify the extent to which the adopted policies and judgments are binding, differentiating between non-binding, conditionally binding, and directly binding. For the remaining policy functions – agenda setting, monitoring, knowledge generation, enforcement, and evaluation – we code the bindingness of the different instruments the IO is entitled to impose upon its member states (e.g. membership suspension, economic sanctions, unannounced on-site monitoring, routine and regular monitoring, and expert knowledge as standing item in policy agendas).

The coding of a specific policy function may further clarify our approach. To code the rule-making authority of an IO, we again start with the autonomy dimension of rule making.[6] We check whether an IO's foundational legal texts contain any rule-making procedures at all. If it does not, we assign the code 'not included in agreement'. Otherwise, we record all the policy instruments available to an IO. Next, we identify the IO body type that adopts each policy instrument. For instance, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Conference of member states adopts *Conventions*, while the FAO's Executive Committee adopts *Supplementary Agreements*. Our codes for IO body type of the FAO thus are 'assembly' for *Conventions*, and 'governing body' for *Supplementary Agreements*. We further assign the code 'independent organ involved' to non-state bodies, such as secretariats, if they partake in governing bodies' adoption of policy instruments with more than just administrative support (e.g. policy assessments and own proposals). Having coded the policy instruments for each IO body, we subsequently code voting rules. For instance, the FAO assembly adopts *Conventions* with 'qualified majority'. The Executive Committee passes *Supplementary Agreements* with 'qualified majority'. In the final step of our coding of autonomy, we combine the scores on IO body type and voting rule according to the scheme in Table 1.

We then code the bindingness dimension of rule making. To measure the bindingness of rule making, we assess the extent of bindingness of each policy instrument. If the foundational legal texts do not stipulate any binding instrument, we assign the code 'no binding instrument' (value 0). Otherwise, we check whether the policy instrument is conditionally binding (value 1) or directly binding (value 2). For instance, FAO *Conventions* and *Supplementary Agreements* are conditionally binding because state ratification is required. Policy instruments put the highest legal constraints on states if they are directly binding (e.g. UN Security Council Chapter VII resolutions).

3.2. Aggregation

Once we have coded and scored the autonomy and bindingness dimensions for each of the seven policy functions, we compute authority scores at the policy function level and sum up the values for the overall authority of an IO. At the policy function level, we rescale the scores of autonomy and bindingness to range between 0 and 1, respectively. Because autonomy and bindingness jointly constitute authority, the aggregation rule should translate this relationship into a single score. Formally, authority is the product of autonomy and bindingness. We therefore calculate function-level authority scores with the geometric mean as it is well suited to aggregate autonomy and bindingness according to our concept.[7] We obtain an overall authority score per function by picking the IO body with the highest authority score. We choose to use the highest score because we are interested in the maximum degree of competences and rights that states are willing to grant to the IO.[8] Finally, we take the sum of all seven function-level scores per IO to arrive at the overall authority per IO and year. We rescale that value to range between 0 and 1.[9]

3.3. Sample selection

Collecting detailed, comprehensive data on the exercise of authority across IOs, across policy functions, and over time requires an in-depth coding of a large number of legal documents. We therefore used stratified random sampling to draw a geographically and thematically representative sample of IOs, resulting in 34 IOs that we coded annually from the year in which it was created until the year 2013. Overall, we coded several hundred IO bodies and more than 1,000 legal documents. A brief description of our sample selection is in order.[10]

We follow the approach of the 'Transnational Access to IOs' project (Sommerer and Tallberg, 2017; Tallberg et al., 2013) and use their population list of IOs as the population from which we sample. We use the selection rules by Sommerer and Tallberg (2017) because they unambiguously identify the criteria organizations require to exercise

authority in the first place. Accordingly, IOs: (1) must be intergovernmental and independent; (2) must have at least three member states; and (3) must be active as of 2012. Furthermore: (4) IOs with predecessors count as one organization (e.g. European Community and the EU). Criteria 1 and 2 ensure that IOs are formal entities created by states through a legal act (e.g. treaty) and that states are the main actors explicitly granting authority to IOs and thereby recognizing them. Moreover, the independence criterion (1) is particularly relevant to us, because it makes sure that an IO's policy-making competences are not determined by other IOs, which also excludes emanations – IOs created by other IOs – from our IO population. Criterion 3 confines our population to those IOs that are active in that they hold regular meetings, which is a precondition for exercising authority. Applying these criteria results in a population of 174 IOs.

Having defined the relevant population of IOs, we categorize each IO into different strata. The purpose of the stratification is to obtain a representative sample of IOs, minimizing potential bias. We stratify on issue area and region, because prior research has demonstrated their importance in explaining the creation and design of IOs (Börzel, 2016; Hooghe et al., 2016; Keohane and Nye, 1977; Koremenos et al., 2001; Tallberg et al., 2013). We define four broad issue areas (economy, human rights and culture, security, and multi-issue) and five regions, following the UN's classification of world regions (Africa, Americas, Asia, Europe, World). We assign each of the 174 IOs to one of the resulting 20 region–issue combinations and sample 20 per cent through stratified random sampling. This results in our final sample of 34 IOs. Our sample is representative both of the regional and issue area distribution of IOs in our population. It is also of manageable size to code IO authority in detail.

Table 2 shows the target number of IOs required to obtain a representative sample (column T) and the number of actually sampled IOs (column S) for each stratum.[11] Some of our strata deliberately contain better-known IOs, such as the IMF or ASEAN, as these are particularly relevant for IO scholarship. To give an example, our sampling target for European multi-issue IOs is just one IO. Relying solely on pure chance, this could have resulted in the selection of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS). However, to better capture relevant authority patterns in Europe, we would have picked the EU instead. This approach may overrepresent prominent IOs in some strata. However, while we know that region and issue area affect the distribution and design of IOs, whether prominent IOs exercise more authority is an open empirical question. In Appendix S1, we provide systematic evidence showing that our sample is unbiased with respect to important predictors of IOs' institutional design. Specifically, computing sampling weights for geography, issue area, and IO prominence, we demonstrate that bias with respect to these predictors is not an issue in our sample (see Table SI.9 in the Appendix S1). In other words, our sample is representative of the distribution of IOs in our population. We list the sampled IOs in Table SI.7.

4. Applications of the IAD

To illustrate how the IAD advances the study of IO authority, we: (1) highlight how we use our single measure to compare the distribution of authority within and across IOs; (2) examine the exercise of authority over policy functions and its temporal dynamics; and (3) contrast our data with a similar large-N project on IO authority, the MIA project by Hooghe et al. (2017).

4.1. Authority across IOs

The IAD single authority measure allows us to directly compare and rank the overall authority of IOs.

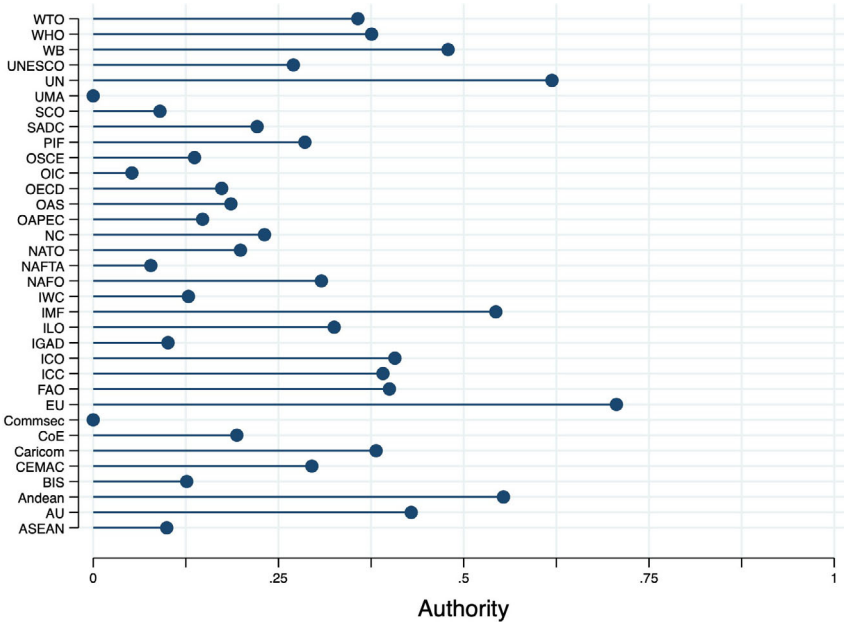
Figure 1 displays the authority score of 34 IOs in the year 2010. The sample mean of authority (0.27; standard deviation of 0.18) shows that the exercise of authority is meaningful but limited. By including both dimensions – autonomy and bindingness – authority seems to be more moderately developed than expected.[12] At the same time, there is considerable variation across IOs with the EU (0.70), the UN (0.62), the Andean Community (0.55), and the IMF (0.54) scoring high on authority (however, none of the IOs in our sample reaches the theoretically possible maximum value of 1).[13] By contrast, some organizations, such as the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) or the Commonwealth Secretariat (Commsec), have an authority score of zero, indicating the lack of either autonomous and/or binding policy making across all functions.

Still other organizations score low on authority because they rely on rather consensus-oriented decision rules and

Table 2. Sampling targets

	Economy		Human rights		Security		Multi-issue		Total	
	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S
Africa	4	4	1	1	0	0	1	1	6	6
Americas	3	3	1	1	0	0	1	1	5	5
Asia	2	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	4	4
Europe	2	2	2	2	0	0	1	1	5	5
World	8	8	4	4	1	1	1	1	14	14
Total	19	19	8	8	2	2	5	5	34	34

Figure 1. Distribution of authority across IOs (in 2010).



only transfer competences to very specific functions. ASEAN (e.g. modestly authoritative norm interpretation), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO; e.g. modest agenda-setting authority), or the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC; e.g. modestly authoritative norm interpretation) rate low on the aggregate authority score (see also Jetschke and Katada, 2016). Interestingly, in addition to the EU, two other regional organizations, the Andean Community and the African Union (AU), score relatively high on authority, supporting scholarship that highlights the importance of these organizations for regional governance in the Global South (Risse, 2016).

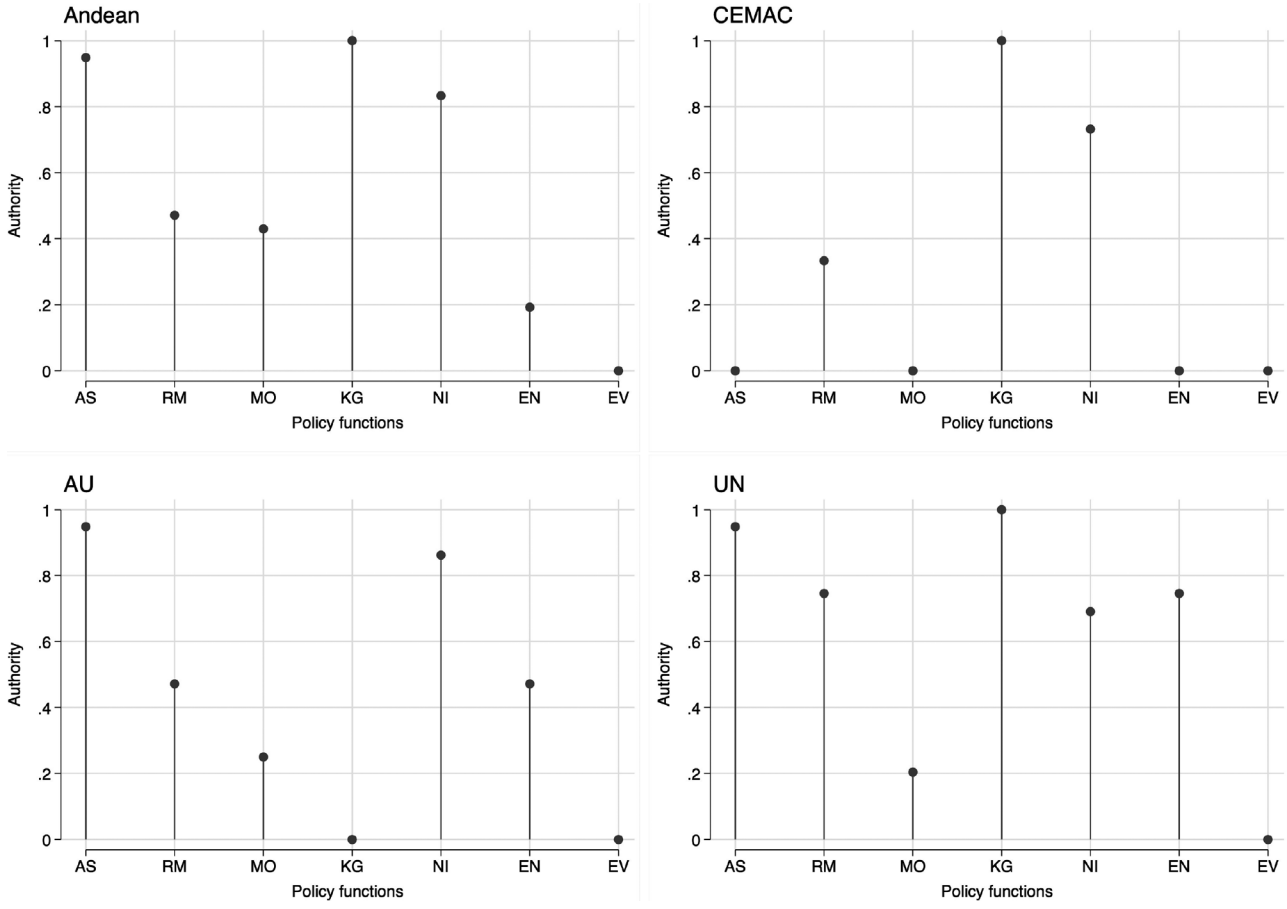
The authority of IOs considerably varies across issue areas, too. The security IOs in our sample (NATO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe [OSCE], and SCO) fall into the lowest quarter of the distribution (25th percentile), whereas two commodity and/or resource management IOs (the International Coffee Organization [ICO], and the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization [NAFO]) display authority scores well above the median (0.25). This suggests that states are more reluctant to delegate authority to alliance or disarmament organizations than to IOs that regulate commodities, reflecting partially the distinction between high and low politics (Keohane and Nye, 1977).

Not only does IO authority vary across IOs, but it also does so within them across different policy functions. Figure 2 compares the distribution of function-level authority scores of four IOs. The upper half of Figure 2 shows two economic IOs from two different world regions: the Andean Community (Latin America) and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC; Africa). The bottom half of Figure 2 displays two multi-issue IOs from two different regions: the AU and the UN.

Figure 2 allows us to compare not only the ranking of functions within IOs (from most authoritative to least), but also the distribution of individual function-level authority scores. In both the Andean Community and CEMAC, knowledge generation scores highest in authority. As specialized IOs, the secretariats and specialized bodies of both organizations produce relevant information, data, and studies on the substantive problems they are meant to govern. This knowledge, in turn, informs the setting of policies and rules as evidenced by similarly high scores of both organizations on rule making. Likewise, norm interpretation authority is high, as both organizations have standing courts that settle disputes among member states and interpret rules and procedures with binding force (Helfer et al., 2009). Thus, the profile of both IOs in terms of the ranking of functions is similar. When comparing individual function scores, however, there are notable differences between Andean and CEMAC in that the latter has no monitoring and enforcement authority, while the Andean Community is equipped with relatively autonomous and politically binding monitoring and enforcement functions. This variation in function-level authority of IOs operating in the same issue raises interesting questions about its possible drivers.

The bottom part of Figure 2 shows that the rank order of policy functions of the AU and the UN are similar, while the UN achieves higher function-level scores. Indeed, with the exception of knowledge generation, all function-level scores correlate positively. Both IOs score high on agenda-setting authority, reflecting that their respective secretariats substantively partake in shaping their policy agendas. The UN possesses strong rule-making competences through directly binding Chapter VII resolutions, for example, and the AU achieves above-average scores on rule making (the rule-

Figure 2. Within IO variation in policy function authority.



making mean is 0.32, see Table 3), as its Executive Council can adopt regulations that are directly binding for AU member states.

Because both organizations have an explicit mandate to maintain international (the UN) or regional (the AU) peace and security, they also score high on enforcement and norm interpretation authority (at least one standard deviation above the mean of enforcement or norm interpretation). Again, these patterns raise interesting questions as to whether the convergence in both IOs' function-level authority is driven by the similarity of their mandates or processes of diffusion (Börzel, 2016; Jetschke and Lenz, 2013). The detailed information we provide on function-level authority, here within IOs, can help scholars develop explanations and empirical tests for these patterns. It can also be used to inform case selection in qualitative studies.

Table 3. Distribution of authority across IO policy functions

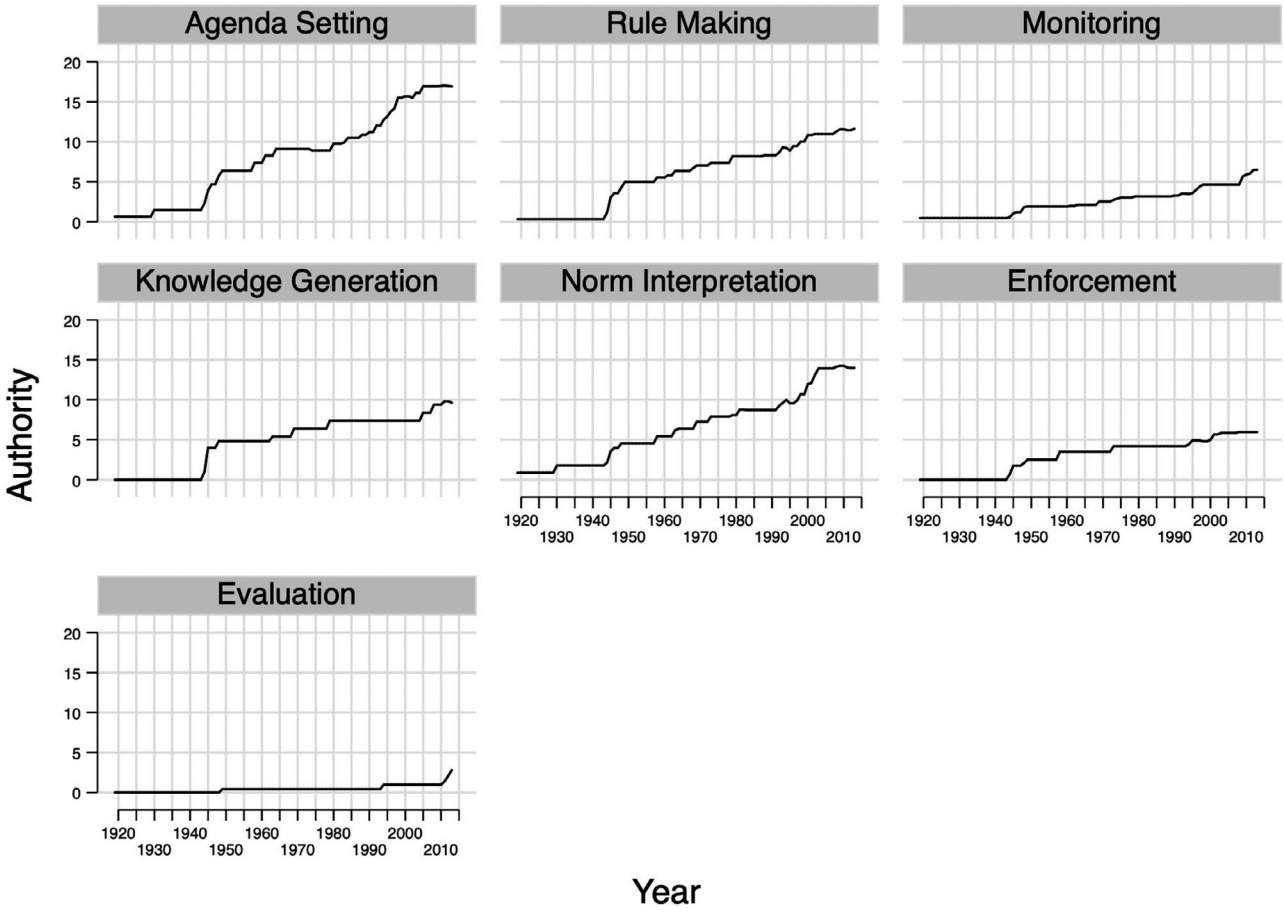
	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Agenda setting	0.45	0.40	0.00	1.00
Rule making	0.32	0.30	0.00	0.94
Monitoring	0.14	0.17	0.00	1.00
Norm interpretation	0.37	0.35	0.00	1.00
Enforcement	0.17	0.28	0.00	1.00
Knowledge generation	0.27	0.43	0.00	1.00
Evaluation	0.02	0.10	0.00	0.71

4.2. Authority across policy functions

How do IOs exercise authority, and have there been any significant changes over time? To examine these questions, we report the average authority per policy function across all IOs and years, and then show how these functions have evolved over time. Table 3 contains descriptive statistics for each of the seven policy functions, and Figure 3 plots the cumulative sum of authority per function over time.

Our data show that there is considerable variation in IO authority across policy functions as well as over time. The agenda-setting average across all IOs in our sample scores highest, suggesting that IOs exercise the highest level of authority when policies are initiated. Moreover, Figure 3 shows that agenda setting has considerably grown over

Figure 3. Cumulative sum of authority per function and over time (1920–2013).



time, indicating that international bodies, including IO secretariats, have expanded their influence over the structure and contents of policy agendas in IOs. This is consistent with research on agenda-setting powers of the EU (Pollack, 1997), but it also suggests that IO secretariats more generally exercise substantial and growing influence over IOs' policy agendas.

The interpretation of norms – comprising both the settlement of disputes and treaty interpretation – ranks second, resonating with recent accounts on the increased importance of international courts (Alter, 2014). International courts and expert bodies, such as the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Dispute Settlement Body, exemplify the substantial growth in norm interpretation authority of IOs that correlates with the growing quality and density of international obligations (see Figure 3). Rule making scores relatively high in terms of authority as well. By 2013, the cumulative rule-making authority of IOs had reached the third highest value of all functions. This trend seems to be driven by the expansion of (simple) majority voting within most IO governing bodies and by more binding policy decisions (Blake and Payton, 2015).

Together, initiating, adopting, and adjudicating policies and rules are the most authoritative functions IOs perform. As shown in Figure 3, these three functions have also considerably grown over time when compared to the other functions.

The authority of IOs to generate knowledge, in turn, achieves a medium authority score, demonstrating that states are only partially willing to endow IOs with authoritative epistemic tasks. At the same time, knowledge generation has risen in authority over time, suggesting a modest increase in IOs autonomously collecting data on substantive issues, processing it, and using it to develop policy proposals. This pattern speaks to the growing engagement of IOs in authoritative epistemic practices (Doshi et al., 2019).

By contrast, our data show (perhaps not unexpectedly) that states are far more reluctant to delegate monitoring and enforcement authority to IOs that verify compliance and that have the right to impose costs in cases of rule violations (Abbott and Snidal, 2000; Downs et al., 1996). Somewhat surprisingly, states seem to be even more reluctant to delegate monitoring authority than enforcement authority to the IOs in our sample. The comparatively low means of both functions also reflect a weak growth pattern of monitoring and enforcement authority over time.

Finally, the evaluation function scores lowest in authority, and its limited growth trajectory in Figure 3 shows that

evaluation provisions have barely been institutionalized in past decades. Although scholars point out that it is increasingly common for IOs to have internal evaluation mechanisms (Gutner and Thompson, 2010), our data show that states control these mechanisms and are reluctant to authorize IOs to evaluate themselves.

The policy function averages reported in Table 3, however, do not reflect the considerable variation in authority that exists across IOs. As indicated by relatively large standard deviations, there are some IOs with extremely low degrees of authority per function, and some that attain the maximum score. For example, in 2010, the Bank for International Settlements had no rule-making authority. By contrast, in the same year, the North Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) scored 1 on knowledge generation.

Overall, the application of our data reveals three main patterns in the exercise of IO authority. First, on average, IO authority is significant, but it is more limited than often suggested in the qualitative and quantitative IO scholarship. Second, there is considerable variation both across and within IOs. Some organizations exercise very high levels of authority, and a few have no authority at all. Third, as indicated by the temporal dynamis of IO policy functions, IO authority has grown over time. Furthermore, we observe remarkable variation across function-level authority even within IOs that have similar mandates.

4.3. Contrasting the IAD with MIA

Hooghe et al. (2017) have recently presented an important dataset on the authority of IOs (MIA). We share MIA's ambitions and goals in that we code institutional design features to produce measures of formal IO authority. At the same time, our approach and data differ from MIA in important ways.

First, while MIA assesses bindingness in some decision areas, including policy making and budgetary allocation (Hooghe et al., 2017), its main goal is to measure the extent of autonomy, either via pooling or delegation. By contrast, and due to our concept of authority, we code both autonomy and bindingness for each of the seven policy functions to identify the extent to which IOs escape the control of each of its member states and limit state discretion over the (entire) policy cycle. To combine these two dimensions, we use the geometric mean instead of the arithmetic one. Our single aggregate score of IO authority is based on the average of the product (geometric mean) of autonomy and bindingness, reflecting the mutual non-substitutability of both dimensions of authority.

Second, the decision areas – MIA's equivalent to IAD policy functions – differ across the two projects. The decision areas in MIA capture important aspects of an IO's internal governance, such as budget allocation, treaty revision, membership rules, or financial compliance, with the exception of policy making that focuses on the adoption of rules.[14] The IAD's main focus, by contrast, is on the functions that capture the external dimension of IO authority because IOs target and regulate state behavior by designing, setting, monitoring, enforcing, adjudicating, and reviewing substantive policies.

These differences affect the degree of authority each dataset assigns to IOs. To illustrate, Table 4 ranks the IOs that overlap in both datasets for the year 2010 ($N = 33$) from high to low authority based on the IAD's score (first column). The third column represents the rank of the respective IO according to MIA's delegation variable. The last column shows how each IO ranks according to MIA's pooling score. As shown in the table, there are notable differences in IO authority between both datasets that we explain further below.

The MIA project looks at authority relationships concerning an IO's internal operation to influence, for instance, the administrative selection of development projects in the World Bank.[15] Because the World Bank's internal budget allocation is controlled by member states, its internal autonomy is relatively low, explaining its mid-rank position on MIA's delegation and pooling scores. In contrast, our focus is on the external authority of the Bank (and the IMF) in terms of

Table 4. Ranking of IOs according to the IAD authority measure and MIA indicators

Authority	IO	Delegation	Pooling
1	EU	1	21
2	UN	19	7
3	Andean	6	22
4	IMF	12	18
5	WB	13	11
6	AU	11	5
7	FAO	21	4
8	ICC	7	12
9	Caricom	10	15
10	WHO	22	2
11	WTO	4	6
12	ILO	2	9
13	NAFO	25	23
14	CEMAC	3	20
15	PIF	14	17
16	UNESCO	26	1
17	NC	30	30
18	SADC	8	19
19	NATO	28	32
20	CoE	5	8
21	OAS	17	10
22	OECD	27	29
23	OAPEC	20	24
24	OSCE	23	26
25	IWC	31	14
26	BIS	9	3
27	IGAD	32	27
28	ASEAN	16	28
29	SCO	29	25
30	NAFTA	18	31
31	OIC	33	13
32	UMA	24	33
33	Commsec	15	16

its core policies and their effect on member states. This leads to different evaluations. Specifically, the IAD takes into account that the Bank's – and the IMF's – loan agreements are typically negotiated and adopted in governing councils and come with significant strings attached for borrowing countries. Moreover, the conditionality criteria as well as the corresponding compliance monitoring authority constrain member states in important ways. As a result, two of the Bretton Woods Institutions rank among the most authoritative IOs in the IAD. The fact that the two projects focus on different policy functions also explains the differences in the ranking of the UN and the FAO, for example. According to the IAD, the UN is the second most authoritative IO, whereas it ranks 7th (pooling) and 19th (delegation) in MIA. Again, these differences result from a different perspective on sanctioning procedures and mandates of IOs. Whereas MIA codes whether an IO can punish member states in financial arrears, the IAD identifies the extent to which IOs have enforcement authority if member states violate substantive obligations or binding policy decisions. Given that the UN can impose sanctions (e.g. when members violate UN Chapter VII resolutions), it ranks high on IAD authority. The FAO ranks higher in authority in our dataset for yet another reason. We measure the extent to which IOs are authorized to generate knowledge, while a similar function does not exist in the MIA data. The FAO produces expert knowledge on agriculture and related subjects and incorporates it into its policies. The FAO further accepts non-state organizations as members (e.g. the EU) that enjoy agenda proposal rights driving up the organization's agenda-setting authority. As a result, the FAO's authority scores higher in the IAD than it does in MIA.

In summary, MIA and the IAD represent two distinct measures, each focusing on different yet complementary aspects of IO authority, offering scholars new systematic evidence on IOs. The choice of the database will mainly depend on the research question. Moreover, the two databases can be used in combination. To give just two brief examples, researchers could combine MIA's information on financial decision making with the IAD monitoring function to assess not only the monitoring competences of IOs but also their financial independence. Alternatively, they could examine the influence of IO secretariats by combining IAD information on their agenda setting and knowledge generation authority with MIA data on how the Secretary-General is selected and removed from office.

5. Conclusions

The aim of this paper has been to contribute to the growing systematic research on IOs by introducing a new dataset on their authority: the IAD. Building on an understanding that authority is more than autonomy, but that it also requires IOs to have some capacity to issue binding decisions and judgments, we provide a single score of an IO's overall authority and how they exercise authority across seven key policy functions. The cross-section time-series data we offer can be used by scholars as dependent variables to help explain why states choose to equip IOs with more or less authority. Alternatively, our data can be used as independent variables to help explain important outcomes in world politics associated with IO authority, such as their performance in terms of conflict prevention, their legitimacy, or their politicization. That way, our data helps to advance our knowledge of IOs, allowing scholars to analyze their relevance, functions, and effects in world politics.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in Harvard Dataverse at https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/VA6RQV

Notes

1. We would like to thank for valuable comments and substantive conceptual discussion Autumn Lockwood Payton and Matthias Ecker-Ehrhardt. We also thank the editors of Global Policy and two anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback and suggestions. Finally, we thank our research assistants Rebecca Majewski, Xaver Keller, Corinna Kohl, Eylem Kanol, Alexander Meier, Bettine Josties, Sascha Riaz, and Senem Tepe.
2. The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in Harvard Dataverse at https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/VA6RQV
3. Rule precision is the third factor that influences legalization.
4. If an IO scores zero on either or both of the two dimensions, the IO has no authority according to our understanding of the concept. A highly autonomous IO whose decisions and policies are not binding upon states at all would have no authority. The same holds for an IO that generates highly binding policy output but is fully dependent on the consensus of all member states. In this case, the organization does not enjoy any autonomy. By contrast, an IO enjoys authority if not all member states can veto decision making and policy implementation and if the policy output is – at least to some extent – binding.
5. Autonomy scores zero when a function is not institutionalized in the legal texts. We assign an autonomy value of 1 when the assembly adopts rules with unanimity *and* when changing that decision requires unanimity as well. For example, the European Council adopts the Union's budget with unanimity decision; changes to the budget require consensus among the Council members.
6. In the supplemental material, we further illustrate our coding using the monitoring function.
7. The supplemental material explains the geometric mean procedure in more detail and provides examples of aggregation.
8. Typically, the functions we consider are performed by one IO body only. In the case that the same function is exercised by more than one body, choosing the maximum is closer to our theoretical concept.
9. We do not weigh functions, since we consider that they equally contribute to authority. Of course, any user of our data can choose to use weights.
10. The supplemental material details the entire procedure.
11. Table SI.8 contains the percentage distributions of IOs in the population and our sample.
12. Haftel and Thompson (2006) come to similar conclusions in their analysis of the independence of 30 Regional Integration Arrangements. By contrast, Hooghe et al. (2019) are more optimistic with respect to IO authority and its growth over time.
13. The average authority across time and IOs is 0.24 with a standard deviation of 0.18. The between-IO variation in authority is 0.17 and the within-IO variation is 0.057. The total *N* of our cross-section

time-series data is 1694 with 34 IOs and an average temporal span of 49 years.

14. See Appendix S1 for an overview of non-overlapping and overlapping functions across MIA and IAD.
15. We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this example.

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Supporting Information

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

Appendix S1. The International Authority Database.

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