Domestic Politics and Participation in International Organizations:
How US Legislators Affect IO Funding[1]

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Abstract

How does legislative politics affect US funding of international organizations (IOs)? Many theories of international cooperation delineate that domestic legislators have preferences about foreign policy, including the extent to which their states should participate in IOs. One way in which US legislators may implement their preferences for IO participation is through their "power of the purse." Do domestic legislators influence US participation in IOs by varying IO funding in line with their support for (or opposition to) multilateralism? To date, empirical analyses of how domestic politics affects US participation in IOs have been limited to single IOs (e.g. United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund) or preferential trade agreements rather than engaging in cross-IO theories and analyses. We argue that legislative politics shapes US funding of IOs, specifically through the political orientation of Congress and the relevant congressional subcommittee chair, i.e. the chair of the "State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs" (SFOPS) subcommittee. This advances our understanding of the drivers of participation in IOs beyond a unitary state-based (or executive-only) model. We argue that subcommittee chairs with more liberal political orientations (i.e. Democrats or those with more left-leaning ideology) are more likely to increase IO funding because they are more likely to have pro-internationalism preferences. In contrast, subcommittee chairs with more conservative political orientations (i.e. Republicans or those with more right-leaning ideology) should be more likely to reduce IO funding. We test this by leveraging a novel dataset of three decades of US funding (1989-2023) for 83 IOs and 212 international funds and programs, representing the most comprehensive information on US funding of IOs to date. The preliminary results show strong support for the notion that the political orientation of the SFOPS chair (and Congress more broadly) influences US funding of IOs, even after controlling for the party of the president. These findings are important given the US' hegemonic role as the largest donor to IOs over the last few decades and the salience of recent IO funding cuts.

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Introduction

International relations theorists have long argued that domestic politics can affect a state's choice of how it participates in international institutions.[4] Studies have highlighted the importance of regime type on a state's credible commitment to international agreements,[5] how public opinion and interest groups shape involvement in international treaties,[6] and why legislators vote to support or constrain decisions made in international organizations (IOs).[7]

Still, much work remains to further understand the micro foundations of how domestic politics might affect IOs beyond questions related to compliance, membership, and critical junctures. Existing studies often conceive of IO participation in binary terms: compliance (versus violation), membership accession (or not, or exit), or support for missions (versus opposition). Yet participation in IOs can vary in levels, intensity, as well as over time and across organizations. Most empirical analyses examining the role of domestic politics in a state's participation in IOs have focused on individual IOs (including the European Union (EU), UN, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank) or single-issue areas. Yet our theories about international cooperation are often not specific to issue areas.

We seek to remedy these gaps in our understanding of how domestic politics affects participation in IOs by (a) conceiving of *IO participation in more nuanced ways* and (b) examining it broadly *across multiple IOs/issue areas*. In particular, we examine IO funding as a measure of participation (which operates across all IOs/issue areas, and on a continuous versus binary level), recognizing the conditional and sometimes qualified nature of states' decisions regarding IO participation. We thus ask: How does legislative politics affect US funding of IOs?

We focus on the US due to its role as a global hegemon whose historically large share of funding can disproportionately affect IO outcomes. While cross-country analyses of legislative decision-making toward IOs are valuable,[8] the legislative intricacies of individual countries would require accounting for different legislative rules regarding IO funding across countries. As a democracy, the US' domestic political institutions and its federal make-up make it more permeable to national legislators who can influence IO decision-making. We focus on US legislators (as one

[4] Baccini and Urpelainen 2014; Bowen, Broz and Schneider 2025; Dai 2005; Drezner 2003; Fagbemi, Ogunbanjo, Issa 2024; Fearon 1994; Forsythe 1987; Gourevitch 1978; Hunter and Walter 2025; Lindsay 1992; Milner and Tingley 2013, 2015; Minnich 2005; Moravcik 1997; Naoi 2009; Putnam 1988; Schneider 2018; Simmons 1998; Tama 2024.

[5] Chapman 2007, 2009; Leeds 1999; Mansfield, Milner& Rosendorff 2017; Mansfield and Pevehouse 2006; Pevehouse 2002a, 2002b; Tomz 2007.

[6] Bearce and Bondanella 2007; Bearce and Jolliff Scott 2019; Brutger & Clark 2023; Handlin, Kaya, and Gunaydin 2023; Hildebrandt, Hillebrecht, Holm and Pevehouse 2013; Holsti 2004; Inglehart 1970; Walter 2021; Voeten 2020; von Borzyskowski and Vabulas 2024; Vreeland 1999.

[7] Beaulieu 2002; Broz 2005, 2011; Connell & Shin 2023; Daugirdas 2013; Dieterich, Hummel and Marschall 2015; Fang 2008; Gartzke and Wrighton 1998; Howell & Pevehouse 2007; Jönsson & Johnsson 2018; Kersting & Kilby 2021; Lavelle 2011; Lee & Osgood 2019; Malamud & Stavridis 2011; Owen 2017; Raunio 2014; Schultz 2003; Tobin 2025; Thérien and Noel 2000; Tokhi and Zimmermann; Warren 2019.

[8] Hunter and Walter 2025.

aspect of domestic politics) because while their control over foreign policy is limited in some ways, they do have exceptional influence on funding decisions: one of the most powerful tools of the US Congress is the "power of the purse." We thus surmise that one way in which US legislators might influence participation in IOs is through funding decisions.

We argue that the political orientation of US legislators leads to an increase (or decrease) in IO funding in line with their preferences for (or against) internationalism. We reason that the legislator's *own preferences* drive changes in IO funding (rather than *constituents' preferences*) because US voters rarely vote on foreign policy issues (and IOs in particular) and may not pressure members of Congress clearly in this way. Congress' political orientation should matter. But beyond the aggregate, some individual members of Congress are more powerful than others in influencing IO funding. Specifically, we argue what matters is the *political orientation of the Chairs* of the relevant Congressional subcommittees which make appropriations decisions about IOs (i.e. the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs (SFOPS) subcommittees in the Senate and House). Chairs have agenda-setting power and thus disproportionate influence in US decisions on funding IOs.[9] Specifically, we argue that individual chairs who are Democrats or are more liberal are more likely to increase IO funding, while Republican chairs or those who are more conservative are more likely to lower funding for IOs.

We test this argument with two measures of individual political orientation – party membership and ideology – for three actors: the SFOPS subcommittee chair, Congress, and the president. We combine these individual characteristics with original data on US funding across IOs from 1989 to 2023. The funding data cover 83 formal IOs and 212 international funds and programs. In line with our hypotheses, preliminary results indicate that the political orientation of the SFOPS subcommittee chairs (including both their party membership and individual ideology) strongly shapes US funding of IOs, even after controlling for the political orientation of the president. There is also support for the role of political orientation of Congress in funding IOs. Domestic politics matters when it comes to how the US funds (and thus participates in) IOs over time.

This research matters because IOs have faced intense scrutiny in recent years, with different societal groups expressing backlash against IO participation. Börzel and Zürn (2021), for example, underscore that IOs have faced increased legitimacy problems; many scholars have noted that this may have domestic foundations. In the US, for example, the America First isolationist movement shows that some domestic legislators support pulling back or changing US involvement in IOs. Understanding the mechanisms of how domestic politics affects a state's decisions related to participation in IOs is thus important.

While existing scholarship mostly focuses on analyzing one IO at a time or one issue area (especially in the realm of political economy), this paper examines an overall relationship

[9] Beginning in the 119th Congress (which started in January 2025), the State and Foreign Operations Subcommittee (SFOPS) is now recognized as the National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs (NSRP) Subcommittee. We still refer to SFOPS because that is its title during the period of study.

between domestic actors and IO funding across many IOs in different issue areas. Understanding US funding decisions for IOs allows us to go beyond binary assessments of IO membership that are usually explained at the state level and has important implications for understanding the stability—or decline—of IOs.

What we do (not) know about domestic politics and participation in IOs

Scholars have theorized for several decades that domestic interests and institutions affect international cooperation. At a conceptual level, Putnam's (1988) two-level games framework shows that domestic preferences drive international outcomes, which can also include states' participation in IOs. For example, members of the US Congress are less likely to increase international participation when the domestic economic is depressed (because constituents want Congress to instead spend limited resources domestically).[10] Also, right-leaning members of the US Congress are more likely to block IO missions that involve armed humanitarian operations (including through the United Nations (UN), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the Organization of American States (OAS)).[11] Other studies similarly show how national legislatures play an important role in shaping a country's participation in IOs, including their military deployments in wars.[12]

The literature highlights two mechanisms for why legislators might vote in certain ways about IO participation: (1) *constituent preferences* and (2) *legislator preferences*. While the two mechanisms may be observationally equivalent in outcome, we detail each.

The first mechanism around *constituent preferences* has been well documented in political-economy studies, particularly regarding how legislators vote on participation in (IO) trade agreements,[13] IO financial programs,[14] or foreign aid. As Schneider (2018) summarizes, "office-motivated representatives may feel pressure from societal groups who have preferences about international cooperation and lobby the government to achieve desired policies."[15] Legislators may incorporate this constituency pressure in deciding whether to support international cooperation and also when to comply with international agreements because they may be rewarded (or punished) by voters at the ballot box.[16] At the aggregate level, this first mechanism around constituent preferences implies that democracies treat IO participation and compliance

[10] Meernik and Oldmixon 2004.
[11] Schultz 2003.
[12] See Dieterich, Hummel, and Marschall 2015.
[13] Lee and Osgood 2019; Owen 2017.
[14] Broz 2005, 2011; Connell and Shin 2023; Duagiradas 2013; Handlin et al. 2023; Heinzel, Reinsberg, and Siauwijaya 2026; Kersting and Kilby 2021; Lavelle 2011.
[15] Cameron and Tomlin 2002; Deutsch 1953; Milner 1997; Grossman and Helpman 1995; Milner 1995; Moravcsik 1998.
[16] A government's responsiveness to their domestic constituents and organized interest groups is a central reason for why governments comply or fail to comply with international agreements (Chaudoin and Urpelainen 2015; Dai 2005; Kleine and Schramm 2025; Milner 1988; Simmons 2009).

differently than autocracies because voters hold political leaders accountable at the polls.[17]

Research on public opinion about international organizations supports part of the *constituent preferences* mechanism.[18] Research shows that information about financial benefits can increase public support for IOs generally,[19] information about institutional performance shapes confidence in the UN,[20] information about IMF conditionality can reduce public support for the IMF,[21] and information about national interests shapes support for IO withdrawal.[22] However, the other part of the constituency preferences mechanism – that voters actually pressure their government representatives on the IO dimension and mobilize around these issues – remains less well documented. For actual US elections, research shows that Americans rarely vote primarily based on foreign policy choices, and that IO issues are not very salient with the US public).[23] The salience of the IO dimension may be weaker compared to other (especially domestic) priorities, perhaps diminishing the empirical strength of this mechanism in the US.

The second mechanism around individual *legislator preferences* has been underscored in American politics research. This work emphasizes that in addition to being office-seekers, politicians are also policy seekers with their own preferred policies. Whitman (1983), for example, emphasizes that legislators seek to be elected to implement their preferred policies. With regard to IO participation, individual legislators may have personal preferences regarding support of (or opposition to) IOs based on personal attributes like their own political orientation, education, experience in the military or other aspects related to international affairs.[24] However, this mechanism has not yet been empirically tested across IOs.

Regardless of the mechanism, research on how domestic politics affects IO participation has been limited in its empirical scope. Most research focuses on one issue area or one IO due to data availability. In an example of a one-issue-area-one-IO study (supporting the constituent preferences mechanism), Broz (2005) shows that US legislators' support for IO financial rescues rests on the share of high-skilled workers in their district as well as their campaign contributions from money center banks. Separately (supporting the individual legislator's preferences mechanism), Broz (2011) shows that left-wing legislators who tend to see the IMF as mitigating crises from market failures are more likely to support the IMF than right-wing legislators who tend to see the IMF as providing bailouts.

In another single IO study, Duagiradas (2013) shows that congressional involvement in supporting

[17] Chapman 2009; Frieden and Martin 2002; Hurd 1999; Mansfield, Milner, and Rosendorff 2017; Mansfield and Pevehouse 2006; Minnich 2005; Moravcsik 1997; Pevehouse 2002a; 2002b; Thompson 2006; Voeten 2005. For overviews, see Bearce and Jolliff Scott 2019; von Borzyskowski and Vabulas 2024; Edwards 2009; Hobolt and de Vries.
[18] See Bearce Jolliff Scott 2019; Bernauer et al. 2020; von Borzyskowski and Vabulas 2024; Edwards 2009; Hobolt and de Vries 2016; Inglehart 1970.
[19] Brutger and Clark 2023.
[20] Dellmuth and Tallberg 2015; Tallberg and Zürn 2019.
[21] Handlin et al. 2023.
[22] von Borzyskowski and Vabulas 2024.
[23] Holsti 2004; Guisinger 2009; Gabel and Scheve 2007.
[24] Malang 2019.

or opposing IOs also extends to the World Bank. This is because the US Code, a 250 page-long legislated set of instructions, provides mandates for how US World Bank representatives should vote (which is not easily overturned by the US President). Also, in the case of the World Bank and IMF, Lavelle (2011) shows that domestic political constituencies in advanced industrial states (in particular, the US Congress) have always been important drivers of these two international financial institutions' policies.

It is also worth noting burgeoning research on how the political orientation of actors *within IOs themselves* (i.e. IO leaders and bureaucratic staff) can shape IO decisions (beyond state preferences or legislators' preferences). For example, Lang, Wellner, and Kentikelenis (2024) show that the ideology of IO staff shapes their on-the-job decisions. IO staffers can therefore not just be thought of as the "long arms" of states, but as potentially purposive actors in their own right. Similarly, IO staff's personal traits — like knowledge or skills — can affect how they perform their duties.[25] IO bureaucrats' preferences can also affect IO funding decisions, pushing them to choose donor funds that are earmarked to their area of work.[26] Studies have also shown that IO leaders act as "partisan technocrats."[27] In sum, individual political actors – whether in legislatures at home or in IO bureaucracies – have preferences regarding states' participation in IOs which can shape their actions.

It has been difficult to extend research examining legislative politics on IO participation beyond single IOs or single issue areas due to data availability. In terms of funding, US budgetary decision-making across IOs is complex and non-transparent. Moreover, this research area has been difficult in the past because it transcends disciplinary boundaries: American politics and international relations are usually siloed research streams. As such, Bowen, Broz and Schneider (2025) argue that "to explain support and opposition for international organizations, we need a deeper understanding of the individual domestic political actors and the domestic institutions that constrain the choices of policy-makers in dealing with IOs."[28] Our paper is a step in that direction.

How can US legislators shape IO funding?

Whether it is due to *constituent preferences* or their own *legislator preferences*, members of the US Congress care about how the US carries out foreign policy decisions in IOs. Yet principal-agent challenges[29] – IO headquarters operate in far-off locations, collective action challenges arise with other states in the international community, and everyday challenges of bureaucracies (staff interference, voting rules, negotiations) can amass – usually limit the influence that legislators

[25] Clark and Zucker 2024; Forster 2024; Heinzel 2022; Heinzel and Liese 2021; Honig 2018.
[26] Heinzel, Reinsberg, and Siauwijaya 2026. See also Kersting and Kilby (2021) who argue that presidents use multilateral aid when Congress is controlled by the other party.
[27] Copelovitch and Rickard 2021.
[28] Bowen, Broz and Schneider 2025:2.
[29] Hawkins, Lake, Nielson, and Tierney 2006; Vaubel 2006.

can have on the state's participation in an IO.

But there is a key way in which US Members of Congress can influence IO participation: through the "power of the purse." The Appropriations Clause of the US Constitution, part of Article I, Section 9, Clause 7, establishes the principle that *no money can be withdrawn from the Treasury without prior authorization through an appropriation bill enacted by Congress.* This ensures that the government cannot spend money without congressional approval.

IOs rely heavily on donor governments' assessed and voluntary contributions to support their work. Assessed contributions are mandatory dues paid by member states based on a pre-determined IO formula that often reflects a member state's economic capacity. While assessed contributions are in principle required to be paid, countries can go into arrears for not paying these dues or delaying payment, and can try to unilaterally restrict funding (for political leverage). Voluntary contributions, on the other hand, are donations made by member states or other donors. Often, voluntary contributions are earmarked for specific purposes which allow donors to guide IO project support to align with their preferences.[30] Earmarked funding can more easily be adjusted than assessed contributions, which gives Congress the ability to change IO budgets in line with their policy goals.[31]

Nelson (1986: 973) argues that the US can withhold payments to IOs in three ways: as (1) specific (or surgical) cuts aimed at particular programs; (2) contingent withholdings that will only take effect if certain circumstances develop; and (3) nonspecific, noncontingent across-the-board cuts.[32]

The US Congress can alter its funding to IOs as a way of supporting or undermining an IO's goals without needing to change the IO's mandate or decision-making structure. This leverage has been explicitly stated by members of Congress during hearings. For example, during the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs (SFOPS) hearing on March 27, 2007, the Committee discussed the President's Fiscal Year 2008 Budget for International Organizations and Peacekeeping. Congress person Chandler stated: in "a country like the United States, which of course we feel like we have leadership in this world, when we do not pay our dues, when we do not pay our obligations, it sends a message to the rest of the world." Some scholars go further to argue that governments threaten to or actually withhold funding as a tacit demand for policy change akin to extortion.[33]

[30] Reinsberg, Heinzel and Siauwijaya 2024; Graham 2017; Heinzel, Cormier and Reinsberg 2023; Zhang and Chen 2025.

[31] In this paper we focus largely on assessed contributions and use appropriations data. But we also include a few organizations for which we could find voluntary contributions for the US as an external partner, such as US funding for the African Union.

[32] For example, the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act, also known as the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, included a "sequestration" process where automatic spending cuts were made if the federal deficit exceeded predetermined targets. These cuts applied to both defense and non-defense programs.

[33] Pacciardi, Spandler and Söderbaum 2024. This is in line with arguments about government strategies to elicit IO policy change, made by von Borzyskowski and Vabulas (2025).

In line with these incentives, the US Congress has withheld (or changed) funding for IOs repeatedly over time. In fact, the Congressional Research Service states that altering funding for UN entities is one of the most common mechanisms by which the US Congress seeks to influence US policy at the UN.[34] For example, in 2017 the US Congress withdrew funding from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), citing concerns that the UNFPA "supports, or participates in the management of, a program of coercive abortion or involuntary sterilization," particularly in China.[35] In another example, US President Trump announced in 2018 that the US would pay no more than 25 per cent of the UN peacekeeping budget to encourage other countries to share the burden.[36] Nonetheless, the US Congress *actually increased* the peacekeeping budget that year, underscoring the importance of legislative politics in IO funding decisions.

Recent events underscore the importance of US legislators for IO funding. In 2024, more than 100 House lawmakers signed a letter to UN Secretary-General António Guterres warning that United Nations' (UN) funding could be on the line if the UN General Assembly retaliated against Israel over its war with Hamas.[37] And in February 2025, Trump threatened to usurp the "power of the purse" from Congress by initiating a review of US membership and funding to all IOs; this review resulted in the announcement that the US would leave 66 international institutions (January 2026). Trump also issued a "pocket rescission" to cancel 5 billion USD in foreign aid and IO funding (August 2025). And the US Congress also rescinded $4 billion to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change's Green Climate Fund (GCF) in 2025, which had previously been committed under the 2024 Biden administration.

IO funding is important because it can affect the direction of IO policies, IO effectiveness, and even their viability. Increases in IO funding may expand these institutions and enhance the US' image and soft power abroad. Alternatively, decreases in IO funding can challenge the mandate and operations of international institutions and potentially diminish US influence in them. As Congresswoman McCollum stated in a congressional committee hearing in 2007, "What kind of signal do we send to the rest of the world for where our commitment is, and how can we help restore our credibility in the world when we are in arrears in at least these three major UN organizations?" Decreasing US funding may also create a vacuum of leadership which could be filled by other countries including US adversaries. A significant reduction in funding may even cripple the IO's viability and challenge its ability to survive.[38] Indeed, 2025 cuts from donors to the UN have left the global body gutted: the UN humanitarian office faces a $58 million shortfall, UNICEF projects its budget will shrink by 20%, and the UN migration agency expects a 30% budget

[34] Congressional Research Services 2018. The act of withholding funds is also common in foreign aid. See Cheeseman et al. 2024; Swedlund 2017a, 2017b.
[35] Congressional Research Services 2022.
[36] Diehl 2019.
[37] Elkind 2024. The letter also states that "Congress has taken note of the numerous UN actions aimed to delegitimize Israel's right to self-defense, raising serious questions over the future of US funding to the UN. We remind you that the US is the largest donor to the U.N. Our contributions account for one-third of the body's collective budget."
[38] von Borzyskowski and Vabulas 2025; 2024b.

drop.[39]

A common understanding is that states' participation in IOs can be simply thought about at the (unitary) state level,[40] and particularly the presidency. We note, however, that funding decreases (or increases) have occurred under both Democratic and Republican presidents. For example, in 2024 when Biden (Democrat) was US President, the US Congress (Republican) ended funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) following allegations connecting some UNRWA employees to the October 7, 2023, attacks on Israel.[41] While the eroding support for international organizations is palpable in 2025, this example serves as an important reminder that participation in IOs is not purely driven by the executive branch. Instead, we note that US commitments to IOs can sometimes vary from Congress to Congress, and in particular, are directed and controlled by the relevant Chair of the subcommittee making IO funding decisions (SFOPS).

Hypotheses

We argue that the detailed makeup of the US Congress, including the preferences of who leads the Congressional subcommittees related to IO participation, influences IO funding above and beyond the preferences of the president alone.

Our argument therefore contrasts with analyses that black-box the state or explain IO participation as primarily or exclusively *executive-driven.*[42] Wildavsky (1998) explains this counter-claim in the "two presidents" theory: while domestic issues may be greatly affected by partisan differences (where Congress arguably plays a large role in deciding policies), partisan differences are more muted in foreign affairs because the topics are less polarizing. According to this logic, the public and Congress tend to "rally round the flag" (and let the Executive's prerogatives lead) when it comes to matters of foreign policy. This thinking has created the adage that "politics stops at the water's edge" and the idea that Congress may be more deferential to the president when it comes to international engagements, including participation in IOs.[43]

Political orientation

In contrast, we argue that US legislators are likely to support increases or decreases in IO funding as a way of implementing preferences on internationalism. As explained earlier, this may arise from two theoretical mechanisms: (1) *constituency preferences/pressure* and/or (2) *legislator's preferences* (political orientation).

[39] Farge and Shiffman 2025.
[40] See for example Abbott and Snidal 1998; Barnett and Finnemore 1999; Hooghe, Lenz and Marks 2017; Hurd 2024; Martin and Simmons 2013; Stone 2011.
[41] Congressional Research Services 2025.
[42] Hinkley 1994; Widavsky 1998.
[43] Milner and Tingley 2013, 2015.

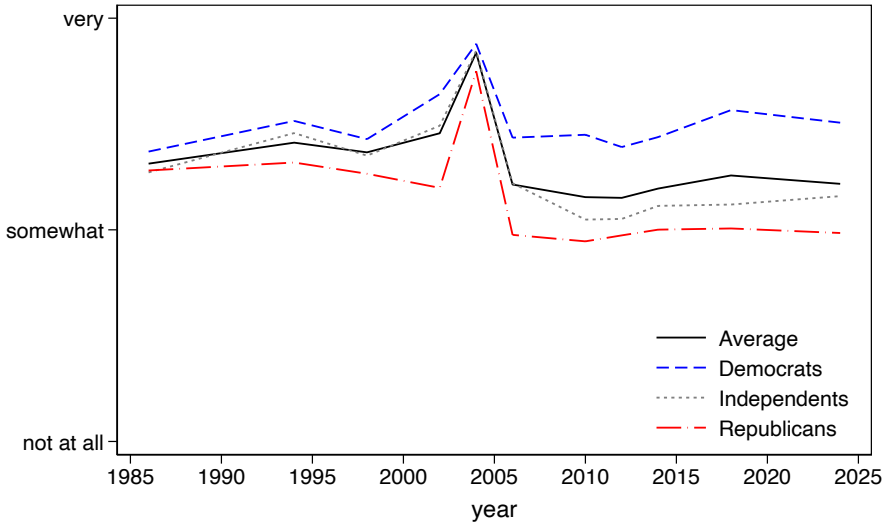
We argue that the individual legislator's preferences mechanism is more likely because US voters' rarely vote based on foreign policy, and thus legislators may not feel a direct pressure from voters related to IOs. Even in studies across Europe, scholars note that "international issues [have] long [been] interpreted as significantly less relevant for voters" and that "voters expect from their representatives to focus primarily on local issues and national interests, rather than some "distant" problems."[44]

However, legislators' own individual preferences can matter for international cooperation even if these issues are *not* salient for the public. As Wittman (1983) emphasizes, politicians are also policy seekers with their own preferred policies. They seek office to implement their preferred policies.

There are two distinct ways in which we might observe the second mechanism of an individual legislator's political orientation: (1) through their party membership (i.e. Democrat versus Republican) and (2) in their ideology as manifested in supporting liberal versus conservative bills in Congress. We explain both.

First, on party affiliation as a measure of political orientation, research shows that support for the UN and other IOs splits clearly between party lines. Post-1995 surveys show that Republicans are less supportive of multilateralism whereas Democrats are more likely to support multilateralism and international organizations.[45] See, for example, data in Figure 1 from the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, which measures whether respondents think strengthening the United Nations should be a very important foreign policy goal of the US, a somewhat important foreign policy goal, or not an important goal at all.

Figure 1: Partisanship and the importance of strengthening the UN



[44] Malang 2019; Šabič 2008.

[45] Smeltz et al. 2022, p. 6 and 21; Broz 2011; Friedhoff 2021.

Prior research argues that Republicans tend to disfavor internationalism because they fear losing control over foreign policy issues.[46] Republicans therefore prioritize preserving the country's freedom of action and are generally opposed to multilateral initiatives that they believe would undermine US sovereignty.[47] This means that Republicans tend to be more supportive of withdrawing from IOs[48] or otherwise lowering participation in IOs. This suggests that right-leaning political candidates may contest IOs and the constraints they impose.[49] Democrats, on the other hand, tend to be more favorable of multilateralism because they believe that the US needs to enlist other nations and cannot solve most problems alone.[50]

Research beyond the US supports the notion that right-leaning governments may be less supportive of IOs, too. Far right governments in particular publicly denounce IO procedures and decisions as a way of weakening their authority or reversing IO policy outcomes.[51] In the case of OECD countries' earmarked funding for international development/foreign aid, Tokhi and Zimmerman (2025) argue that far-right governments undermine IOs by systematically reducing their earmarked commitments. Still, other research shows that populist governments neither leave IOs more frequently than others[52] nor do they trigger withdrawal cascades.[53] In other words, governments may use funding as a tool for reducing support in IOs when they decide to still stay in them.

While partisanship may serve as an important proxy for a legislator's political orientation, individual members' ideologies also matter along a spectrum. The strength of a legislator's preferences therefore might be important beyond just party ID. We therefore expect that left-leaning legislators are likely to increase IO funding while right-leaning legislators are likely to lower IO funding. In the case of the US, this is members of Congress with more liberal voting track-records (who tend to be more internationalist) as opposed to those with more conservative voting track-records who tend to be more isolationist.

The SFOPS chair

Nonetheless, not all legislators' political orientations are equally important. We argue that a legislator's (sub)committee membership in IO-related topics provides differential power in influencing IO funding because this is where debate and decisions originate, and where funding proposals are made.[54] Under the United States Committee on Appropriations, it is the "State,

[46] Milner and Tingley 2013.
[47] Busby et al., 2012.
[48] von Borzyskowski and Vabulas 2024a.
[49] Kiratli and Schlipphak 2024.
[50] Busby et al. 2012.
[51] Carnegie, Clark, and Kaya 2024; Pacciardi, Spandler, and Söderbaum 2024.
[52] von Borzyskowski and Vabulas 2025; 2019.
[53] Walter 2021.
[54] Shepsle and Weingast 1987.

Foreign Operations, and Related Programs (SFOPS)" subcommittee that is relevant for deciding IO funding. This subcommittee operates in both the Senate and the House. The SFOPS subcommittee sets the agenda and enforces policy preferences in their jurisdictions. This committees also gets a second chance to revise bills at the conference stage (when the two chambers of the bicameral US legislature resolve differences between versions of a bill).[55]

Within subcommittees, *chairs* hold vast power compared to other members, and we therefore argue that this legislator's political orientation is important for understanding US funding of IOs. This is because chairs have outsized roles in determining which decisions come to the committee, how they are presented, and how they are brought to the floor.[56] In fact, studies show that much of the power associated with positions in Congress is concentrated among a small set of committee chairs that play a disproportionate role in policymaking.[57] They have the ability to hire, fire, and direct staff, schedule or block hearings and markup, and run all meetings.[58] Our argument therefore is that the partisanship and individual ideology of the SFOPS sub-committee chair should affect IO funding: Democratic /chairs with more liberal voting records are more likely to increase IO funding while Republican/ chairs with more conservative voting records are more likely to decrease IO funding.

It is worth nothing that the selection of the SFOPS chair is not random: it involves a multi-layered process governed by the rules of the House of Representatives and Senate as well as the majority party's internal caucus in each chamber. Both the Republican and Democratic caucuses have their own internal procedures (including secret ballots and term limits). Certain rules and norms are fairly standard: the chair is always a member of the majority party (HoR or Senate), a designated body handles the nominations for committee and subcommittee chairs, and seniority is traditionally a key factor in the chair's selection. Nonetheless, party rules can also emphasize other qualifications including merit, commitment to the party's agenda, and overall diversity.

As an example, Chair of the SFOPS subcommittee, Congressperson Rogers spoke about his subcommittee's role in approving IO funds during the June 27, 2017 hearing. UN Ambassador, Nikki Haley, was in attendance at the hearing and offered to be a facilitator of information between Congress and the President in finalizing the budget. In reacting to President Trump's suggested budget cuts for the UN that year, Mr. Rogers voiced that:

> "As the Subcommittee and the Full Committee and the full House and the conference with the Senate, as we weigh how much funding for what takes place, I hope the recipients of these funds at the UN and the other agencies around the world that we contribute to, I hope they realize that we are watching now very carefully how they control their spending. And we will be judged on what we do just as they will as well.

[55] Ibid.
[56] Berry and Fowler 2018.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.

> These are severe cuts that the administration has come forward with. Now, I remind everyone, Presidents propose; Congress disposes. And we will be watching to see how these organizations control their spending, which is our spending. I hope somebody will tell them that we are watching and we will continue to watch until we are able to pass these bills."

Statements like this make clear the SFOPS subcommittee Chair in particular and the Congress at large play important roles in the allocation of IO funding. They are not just a rubber stamp on the executive branch's recommendations. This means that the political orientation of the SFOPS subcommittee chair for each branch of Congress (and Congressional majorities more broadly) should matter.

Hypothesis 1: Political Orientation of the Subcommittee Chair

> ***H1a:*** *The SFOPS House/Senate subcommittee Chairs being Democratic should result in higher funding for IOs.*
>
> ***H1b:*** *The SFOPS House/Senate subcommittee Chairs having more liberal ideology should result in higher funding for IOs.*

If the political orientation of the relevant Subcommittee chair matters, so too might the political orientation of Congress in the aggregate. While the chair controls what gets to the floor, the overall Congress needs to vote on bills. The more support the chair has in the legislature, the higher the chance of a bill's passage.

Hypothesis 2: Political Orientation of the Senate/House

> ***H2a:*** *The House/Senate being Democratic should result in higher funding for IOs.*
>
> ***H2b:*** *The House/Senate having more liberal ideology should result in higher funding for IOs.*

When we assess the role of legislative actors, we control for the political orientation of the President. As an example, consider party variation in these positions during the Obama presidency, as shown in Table 1. During this 8-year presidency, Democrats occupied between 1 and 3 of these positions. In 2009-2010, the SFOPS chairs in the House and Senate along with the President were all Democrats, resulting in all 3 positions being captured by a plausibly more pro-IO party. From 2011 to 2014, Democrats lost control of the House and with it the House SFOPS chair, thus occupying 2 of these positions. And in 2015-2016, the Senate also moved to Republican control, leaving only the Presidency in Democratic hands. We would thus expect 2009-2011 to lead to higher levels of IO funding, while 2015-2016 should lead to lower levels of IO funding.

Table 1: Party variation in Congress during the Obama Administration

Congress	Year	House SFOPS Chair's Party	Senate SFOPS Chair's Party	President's Party	Government
111th	2009	Democrats	Democrats	Democrat (Obama)	Unified
111th	2010	Democrats	Democrats	Democrat (Obama)	Unified
112th	2011	Republicans	Democrats	Democrat (Obama)	Divided
112th	2012	Republicans	Democrats	Democrat (Obama)	Divided
113th	2013	Republicans	Democrats	Democrat (Obama)	Divided
113th	2014	Republicans	Democrats	Democrat (Obama)	Divided
114th	2015	Republicans	Republicans	Democrat (Obama)	Divided
114th	2016	Republicans	Republicans	Democrat (Obama)	Divided

While we argue that the main mechanism underlying the legislator effects on IO funding is likely legislators' personal preferences (versus constituent pressures), it is still useful to distinguish these and test this empirically. One way to distinguish between the two mechanisms is to examine constituent pressures by way of public opinion. If we are correct that constituent pressures are not driving IO funding, then we should not find a statistically significant relationship between public support and IO funding.

H3: *Higher public support for IOs should NOT result in higher funding for IOs.*

Alternative Argument

There are also several reasons to believe that the political orientation of the SFOPS Chairs might *not* have any effects. This prediction is supported by five literatures as we outline below.

First, conservative subcommittee chairs may not be as anti-IO as their party label suggests. Republicans who choose to serve on the SFOPS subcommittee – i.e. those Republicans that deliberately select into an internationally oriented subcommittee – tend to be more supportive of international involvement than average Republicans.[59] This may be due to their backgrounds (i.e., more international experience, more multilateral involvement in the past, or more international orientation might lead them to want to serve on this subcommittee) or due to their future political goals. If that is true, then the difference in political orientation between Republicans serving on the SFOPS subcommittee and Democrats may be fairly small, thus predicting no effect from partisanship. Moreover, research shows that once far-right parties are in office, they rarely follow through on an anti-IO agenda.[60] Instead, they stick to rhetoric that is disparaging of IOs versus actual policy actions. This finding has prompted some scholars to claim that far-right governments "bark, but don't bite" when it comes to defunding or not supporting IOs.[61]

[59] Carter and Scott 2009; Howell and Pevehouse 2007.

[60] Voeten 2020.

[61] Moravcsik 2023. Still, savvy politicians sometimes find ways around institutional firewalls often by exercising informal power (Stone 2013).

Second, some research suggests that challenges to multilateral institutions result from populist nationalism (which can emerge in both left- and right-leaning parties) instead of stemming from a liberal-conservative or Democrat-Republican divide.[62] The argument is that a populist demand for a redistribution of gains combined with a nationalist move to reclaim sovereignty from international arrangements results in objections to international institutions.[63] While many people associate populist nationalism with right-wing politics, it can also be left-wing as seen with Sinn Féin (Ireland and Northern Ireland), the Justicialist Party (Argentina) , La France Insoumise (LFI) (France) or Smer – Social Democracy (Slovakia). Kiratli and Schlipphak (2024) show, for example, that populist voters are significantly more skeptical of IOs than non-populist voters. Similarly, Carnegie, Clark and Kaya (2024) show that populist governments may not completely retreat from IOs because they want to retain some of the myriad benefits of the organizations but they do use less overt interactions *within* IOs (which could include defunding). In this alternative argument, the key way that legislative politics might affect participation in IOs might be through populist nationalism rather than a left/right divide.

Third, as already articulated, there is a lack of information about international affairs in both the US Congress[64] and the US public,[65] perhaps because participation in IOs is less salient than domestic issues or because leaders deliberately de-politicize or obfuscate these actions. Indeed, there are mixed results on whether public opinion affects levels of international cooperation: voters face severe collective action problems in pushing forward their wishes.[66] This might suggest that support for IOs (as seen through funding) may not be subject to substantial swings and that legislators (and their constituents) may not have strong opinions about IOs. If this is true, we may not see the political orientation of the sub-committee chair making a meaningful difference in the level of IO funding. Instead, we should predict path dependency in funding IOs: the best predictor of next year's funding may be based on last year's funding.[67] Variation from year to year may reflect idiosyncracies that are not correlated with the political orientation of legislators/chairs of appropriations sub-committees. Theories of bounded rationality support this notion:[68] since members of the US Congress have a large volume of issues to vote on, they may not vary their support much unless there is a massive crisis. Of course, some IOs do become the subject of great public and Congressional attention (UNESCO, UNWRA, etc.), so there is certainly heterogeneity in IO salience that is worth exploring further.[69] As a side note, that is also an important reason to control for the previous year's IO funding in the analyses.

[62] Copelovitch and Pevehouse 2019.

[63] Nonetheless, Copelovitch and Pevehouse (2019) distinguish between the implications that left-wing populism versus right-wing populism might have for IOs. They say "For left-wing populists, the main "enemies of the people" are the wealthy and large corporations domestically; in contrast, for right-wing populists, the enemies come from beyond the border: immigrants, refugees, international bureaucrats, and IOs themselves."

[64] Holsti 2004.

[65] Guisinger 2009. Gabel and Scheve (2007) argue that the public is "rationally ignorant."

[66] Gilligan 1997.

[67] See Carey 2007 on bureaucratic inertia in foreign aid.

[68] Simon 1990. Similarly, McCubbins and Schwartz (1984) argue that, for the most part, members of Congress just approve legislation (acting as "police patrols") but they then sound the "fire alarm" when a situation deteriorates.

[69] Stone 2013.

Research design

To test our hypotheses, we collect and use original data on US funding of IOs from 83 formal intergovernmental organizations (FIGOs) and 212 international funds and programs from 1989 to 2023. By FIGO, we mean entities that have three or more states as members, solidified by a treaty, and sharing a permanent secretariat (such as the UN, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Interpol, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), African Union, and the International Whaling Commission).[70] By contrast, funds and programs include many IO sub-bodies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN missions, the OAS Fund for Strengthening Democracy, and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

We assemble funding data primarily from two US State Department sources: reports to Congress on IO Contributions (FY1989-1998 and FY2008-2023) and, when these were not available, Congressional Budget Justifications (FY1999-FY2007). We sourced these data from the State Department website and, through archival trips, from the Library of Congress and Fort Meade. To our knowledge, we are the first to comprehensively assemble a dataset of US funding across a range of IOs.[71]

Our dependent variable is US spending on international institutions (IOs and funds/programs) in millions of US dollars, logged. These data are preliminary – we are still in the process of completing and cleaning the data, and numbers will change. For some organizations, we have many consecutive years with information on funding. For others, information on funding is not available for some years and thus interrupted, or only available for very few years. We exclude a handful of institutions for which we do not have funding data in consecutive years (e.g. only funding for 1996, 2003, 2010), as that would not help with estimating the effect on year-on-year changes in IO funding.

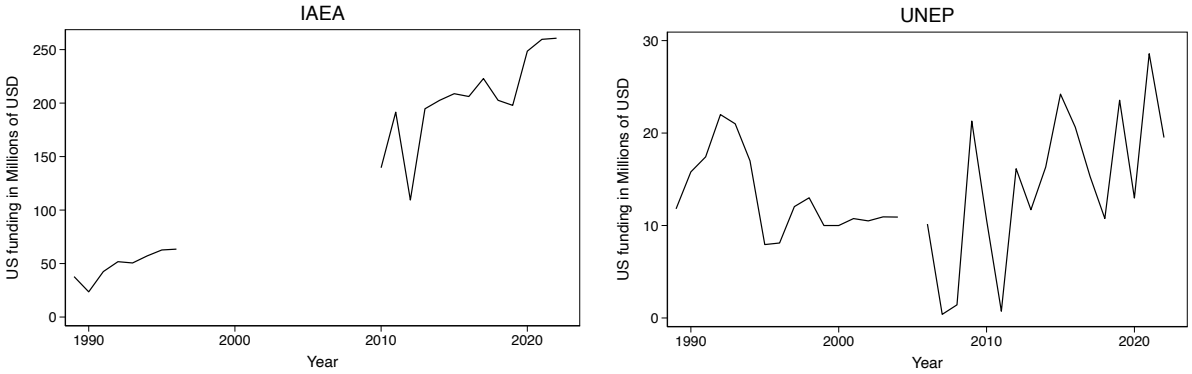
As an example of institutions with decent data coverage, Figure 2 shows raw data[72] on US funding for an IO (the IAEA) and a program (the UN Environmental Program (UNEP)). For the IAEA, we are lacking data in the 2000s but have data for 2010 onwards and in the 1990s. For UNEP, we were able to collect data for all years except 2006. US funding doubled in the early 1990s and then dropped back and stabilized around 10 million a year. From the late 2000s onward, funding has been quite erratic. This is in line with many other programs and organizations, which have also been subject to change over time.

[70] Pevehouse et al. 2020.

[71] Reinsberg, Heinzel, and Siauwijaya (2024) track 75 FIGOs for 1990-2020, focusing on international development organizations and specifically earmarked funding for official development assistance. Compared to that recent contribution, our scope of FIGOs and issue areas is broader. Our temporal coverage is marginally greater, but our country coverage is much narrower (US only). We focus mostly on assessed contributions, not earmarking.

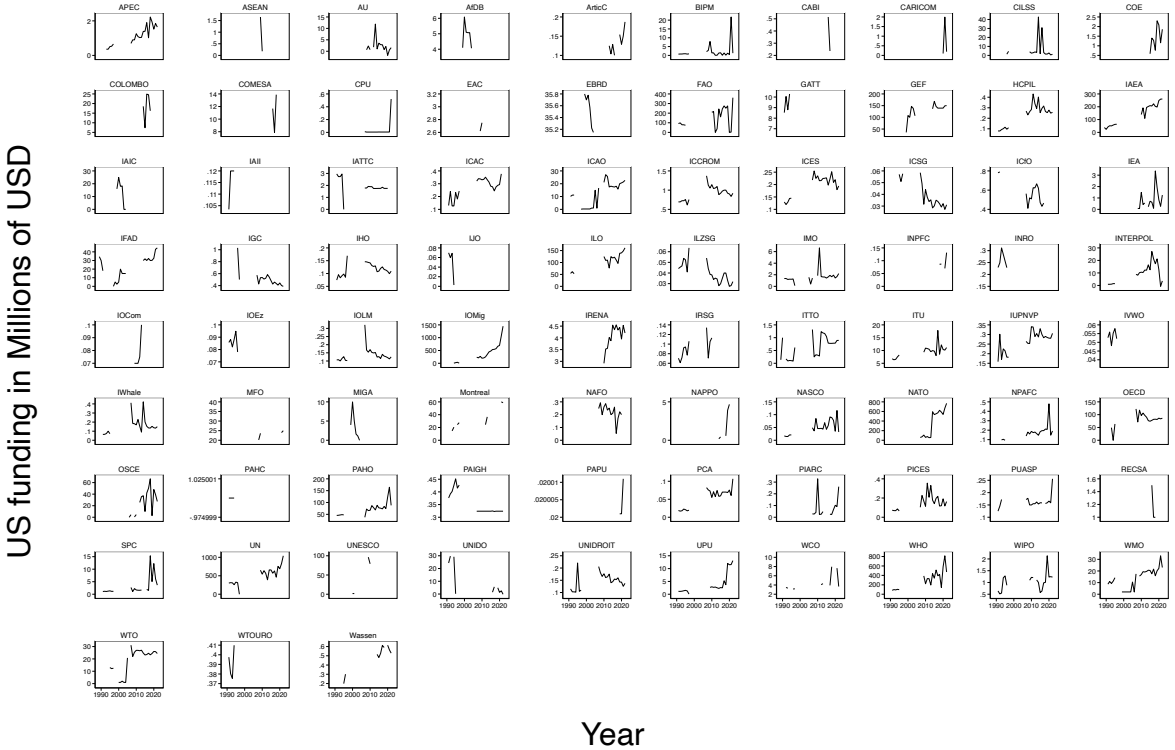
[72] This shows raw data, not logged and not adjusted for inflation.

Figure 2: US funding for the IAEA and UNEP, 1989-2023



For comparison, Figure 3 shows the IAEA alongside 82 other FIGOs from 1989 to 2023. These show wide variation in both funding changes and data availability. For the analyses that follow, we focus on these 83 FIGOs, but we also show analyses on 212 funds and programs.

Figure 3: US funding for 83 formal IGOs, 1989-2023



To capture the main theoretical mechanism of legislator preferences we use two measures of political orientation – partisanship and ideology – for two legislative actors: 1) the chairs of the SFOPS subcommittees and 2) Congress (Senate, House) more broadly. We control for the President, as noted below.

The first measure of political orientation is party membership. We distinguish between Democratic and Republican chairs, and count the total number of Democratic SFOPS chairs. The measure *SFOPS Chairs Democratic* indicates the number of Democratic subcommittee chairs among the House and Senate: it is coded 1 when one of the subcommittee chairs was a Democrat, 2 when both were Democratic, and 0 when both were Republican. If our argument (Hypothesis 1a) is correct, we would expect a positive and significant coefficient on this variable.

The second measure of political orientation is ideology. The variable *SFOPS chairs liberal ideology* captures ideology on the liberal-conservative spectrum by using DW-Nominate scores, which are based on roll call votes in Congress.[73] We use the first dimension, which is the traditional left-right political spectrum. We reverse the scale to more intuitively align with the hypotheses, so that a score closer to 1 is more liberal while a score closer to -1 is more conservative. We distinguish between the SFOPS chair in the House and Senate.

We code parallel variables for Congress more broadly. The variable *Congress Democratic* counts how many of the two institutions (Senate, House) are majority Democratic. This variable ranges from 0 (all are Republican-led) to 2 (all are Democrat-led). *Congress liberal ideology* captures the average ideology score of the entire Congress on the liberal-conservative spectrum. We also use two indicators separately for average values of *House liberal ideology* and *Senate liberal ideology.*

We do not lag these independent variables because our dependent variable is based on the calendar year in which decisions are made, not the fiscal year of spending. Budget hearings/decisions by the subcommittee happen between February and April-June every year, and legislation typically is supposed to happen in September of the same year. Those hearings and legislation give rise to spending in the fiscal year starting October and lasting to the next September. For example, hearings/legislation happen in 2010 for fiscal year 2011 (which starts in October 2010). We thus align our independent variables to measure the strength of Democrats and political ideology in 2010, when hearings and legislation happens. Further, independent variables are usually lagged to avoid reverse causality, but it is unlikely that IO spending decisions cause a higher number of Democratic victories/multilateralism preferences in the same year.[74]

Finally, for the other potential theoretical mechanism around constituency preferences/ pressure, we capture public opinion on support for IOs. We source these data from public opinion surveys from the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, which has conducted nationally representative surveys with some repeating questions for decades. Three questions/variables are relevant for our purpose: *support for strengthening the United Nations, working through the UN,* and *participating in IOs*.[75] Data for these questions are available for varying years, with the

[73] Lewis et al. 2021.

[74] Even if that was the case, it would only potentially affect a third of the Senate, the House every 2 years, and the President every 4 years.

[75] The question wordings were: (1) Below is a list of possible foreign policy goals that the United States might have. For each one please select whether you think that it should be a very important foreign policy goal of the United States, a somewhat important foreign policy goal, or not an important goal at all. (2) Do you agree or disagree with

highest coverage of 11 survey years for the first variable of strengthening the United Nations. This is what we show in Figure 1 above. The other two variables are available for 9 and 3 years.[76] We use these measures in alternative models; we also use them alternatively as lagged and contemporaneous, as it is less clear if legislators would pick up on growing public pressure immediately or with some delay.

In all regressions, we include IO/fund fixed effects and decade fixed effects. We control for the one-year lagged funding of each institution because a plausible prediction of funding this year is last year's funding for the same institution. We also control for the party/ideology of the President and the size of the overall US government budget (as substantial increases or contractions can also affect funding for pieces of the budget). Since the dependent variable is continuous, we estimate OLS models and cluster robust standard errors on institutions (organizations/programs).

Results

Figures 4 and 5 show coefficient estimates (with 95% confidence intervals) for predicting US funding for IOs in panel A (the left side) and programs/funds (panel B). The dashed line indicates 0.

Arguments about political orientation as measured by party receive empirical support. In Figure 4, the coefficient on *SFOPS Chairs Democratic* is positive and statistically significant, indicating that more Democratic representation in this position of the House/Senate is associated with higher IO funding. This speaks to the central importance of the SFOPS committee chair in the budgeting process for international affairs and IOs in particular. In a separate model, Democratic majorities in Congress (House and/or Senate) is also associated with more IO funding. Both models control for the President's partisanship; this variable is not statistically significant. These findings support Hypotheses 1a and 2a on the importance of legislative partisanship for IO funding.

the following statement. When dealing with international problems, the U.S. should be more willing to make decisions within the United Nations even if this means that the United States will sometimes have to go along with a policy that is not its first choice. (3) How effective do you think participating in international organizations is to achieving the foreign policy goals of the United States – very effective, somewhat effective, not very effective, or not effective at all?

[76] Data coverage is (1) 2024, 2018, 2014, 2012, 2010, 2006, 2004, 2002, 1998, 1994, 1986. (2) 2024, 2020, 2019, 2018, 2014, 2012, 2010, 2006, 2004. (3) 2024, 2022, 2017.

Figure 4: Effect of Partisanship on US Funding of

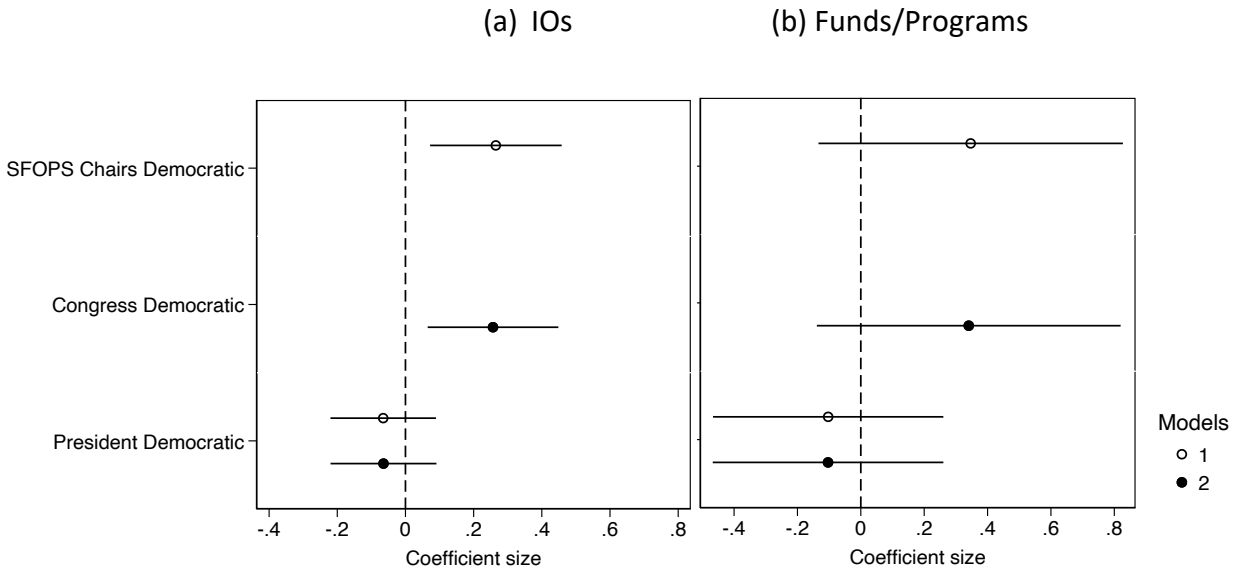
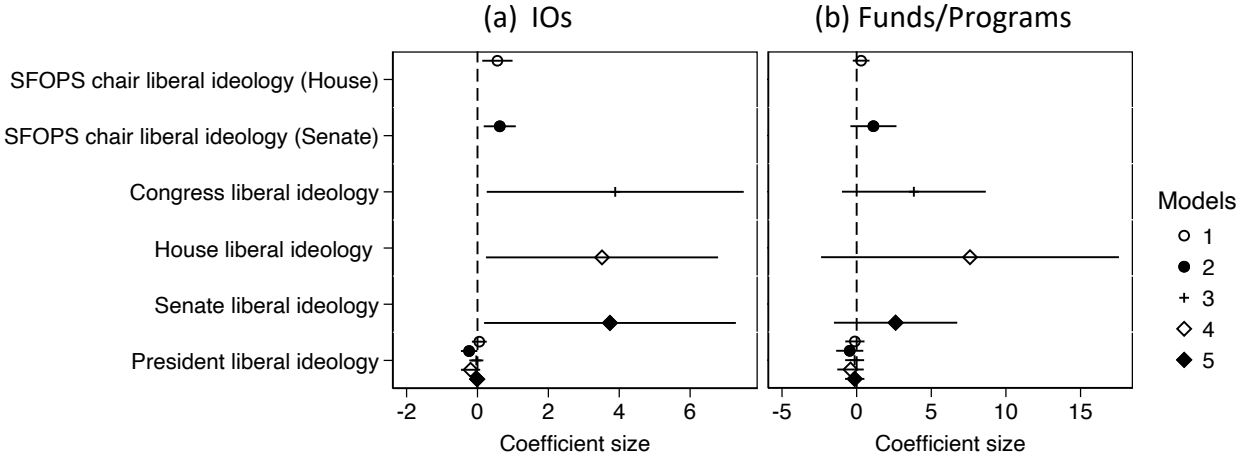


Figure 5 shows coefficient estimates for the effect of ideology on IO funding. The coefficients are positive and significant for the SFOPS chair in the House and the Senate, and also for the broader Congress, House, and Senate. This indicates that more liberal ideology of the SFOPS chair and Congress more broadly is associated with more IO funding. Again, the control for the President's ideology is not statistically significant. Taken together, these results provide support for Hypotheses 1b and 2b: they show the relevance of ideology of the SFOPS sub-committee and Congress for IO funding. Empirical evidence speaks against the alternative argument about a clear null effect of legislative actors.

Figure 5: Effect of Ideology on US Funding of

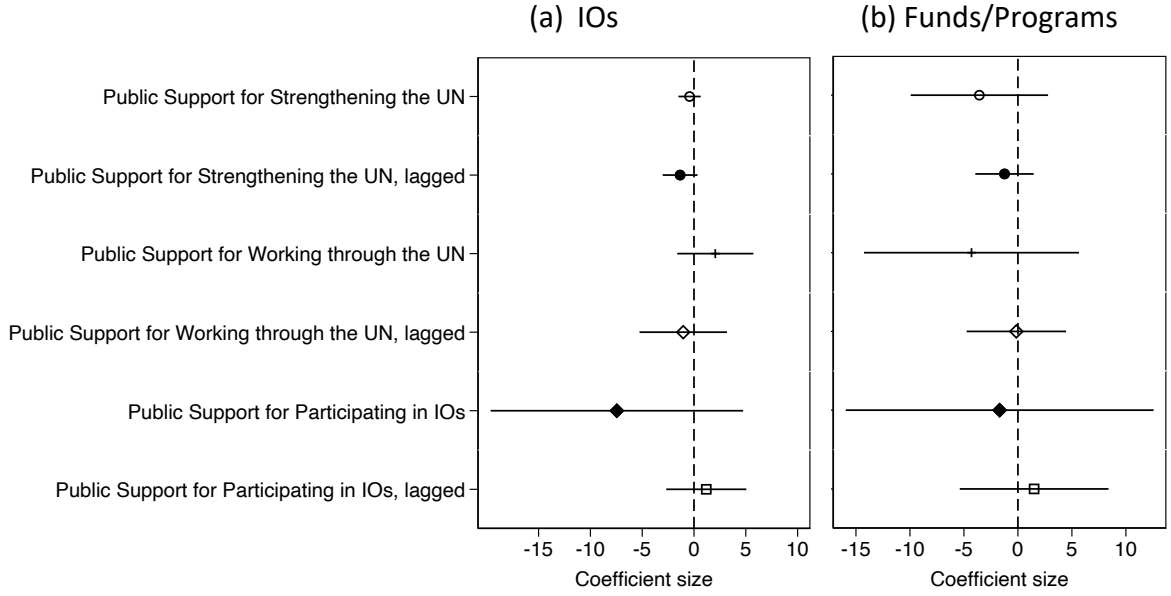


Moving from IOs to international programs and funds (often sub-bodies of IOs like the UN), we find similar patterns of positive coefficients, but none of these are statistically significant in Figures 4 and 5. This suggests that partisanship in the SFOPS subcommittee and Congress are not

associated with changes in US funding for these kinds of secondary institutions. That is in line with the expectation from alternative arguments about null effects but in contrast to our own arguments. This difference in statistical significance for formal IOs but not programs is unlikely to be caused by a sample size issue, as we have information on only 83 IOs but 212 funds. Instead, we suspect that the difference is due to salience. As discussed in the theory's alternative explanation section, formal IOs tend to make news headlines due to their higher salience among politicians and in foreign affairs. These include, for example, the WTO, WHO, IAEA, and the UN. In contrast, most funds are less well known, more technical, and usually not subject to as much public controversary. Exceptions such as UNWRA exist but rather prove the rarity of such funds making headlines. Thus, funds are likely more subject to path dependence and less to partisan swings.

In terms of the other potential mechanism around constituency preferences/pressures, the estimates in Figure 6 indicate that none of the coefficients are statistically significant. While it is difficult to convincingly show null effects, we do not find support for any robust effect of public opinion on funding of IOs. This suggests empirical support for Hypothesis 3. We suspect, as outlined above, that while the public has preferences on IOs (as documented in many survey experiments), lower salience and lacking mobilization means that these preferences rarely shape foreign policy.

Figure 6: No robust Effect of Public Opinion on US Funding of



Future Research

We examine how US funding of IOs changes with legislators' political orientations, including partisanship and voting record of the SFOPS subcommittee chair, overall congress, and US President. We also assess one way in which we might assess the mechanism at work: whether any

changes in funding are due to the individual legislator's personal preferences or constituent pressures by examining any correlation in IO funding changes with public opinion shifts toward IOs.

This provides an important test of where US legislative support (or opposition) for IOs comes from. Future research should study other factors that shape members of Congress' preferences for IO funding and overall participation beyond their political orientation. These include legislators' economic interests (e.g., the economic success, geography, or makeup of their district) and their social identity (e.g., including their education, military experience, gender, and age). Indeed, Connell and Shin (2023) show that racially conservative lawmakers whose districts face disproportionately high levels of migrant pressure are more likely to support congressional funding for the IMF and the World Bank.

Second, we plan to better understand the population of funding data including accounting for missing data (leaning on a FOIA request), distinguishing between assessed and voluntary, appropriations and disbursements, and between US membership and non-membership in IOs (i.e. the US funds some IOs in which it is not a formal member).

Third, we plan to examine heterogeneity in the results we might expect from different kinds of IOs. As we noted in the theory section, domestic salience varies across IOs. Given that the UN can sometimes be a lightning rod, we might expect there to be funding differences for IOs or funds with "UN" in the title versus other less well-known IOs. Issue area may matter as well. We might expect right-leaning members of Congress to fund IOs related to trade or national security, but be more reticent to fund IOs related to human rights, the environment, international law, development, and foreign aid. We plan to lean on previous scholarship showing issue area alliance with partisanship.

Last, we plan to examine transcripts of committee hearings as well as the new IOParlspeech data[77] to better understand why some IOs might be more likely to see funding changes than others. This will provide ample data to better understand the debates and decisions on the legislative floor. Later, we plan to analyze votes related to the US repaying arrears to IOs, a special kind of decision related to IO funding, which also requires Congressional approval. The Helms-Biden bill underscores that legislative support for paying arrears is crucial, and has been a key issue in determining US participation in IOs. We also plan to conduct further fieldwork at several IOs to interview more experts at the receiving end of US funding.

Conclusion

Our research begins to unpack how political divisions among US legislators can have a real impact on IO participation by way of IO funding. This can have a large effect on the stability – or decline – of the liberal international order. While news headlines have highlighted individual, highly

[77] Hunter and Walter 2025.

salient examples of how recent partisan tides have affected IO funding, we are the first, to our knowledge, to examine the domestic politics of US funding *across many IOs, issue areas, and over 30 years*. We focus on one state, the US, in order to control for institutional differences in legislative operations and because understanding what causes the ebbs and flows of US volatility in IO funding is important given the US' key role in IOs since WWII.

While our results are still preliminary, they begin to support the notion that the political orientation of the US congressional committee chair who is key to legislative agenda setting and decisions about US participation in IOs matters. Moreover, the political orientation of Congress more broadly also matters, as the legislature ultimately needs to pass appropriations bills. Those are important findings given that the bulk of research on IO participation operates with a unitary state in mind: this is witnessed through language like "the US" joins an IO, "the US" contests IO policies, and "the US" negotiates IO terms.

Further work should examine the generalizability of our findings in different countries' legislatures. While the findings are in some ways likely to be idiosyncratic to the US, given the details of its institutions and influence in IOs, there are likely to be similarities with other democracies where the legislative branch has the power of the purse.

The normative implications of our findings also deserve more attention: if IO (funding) has pressure from legislative politics, then what strategies do IOs implement to insulate themselves from volatility and still achieve their IO mission? Our preliminary interviews indicate some resilience strategies through funding structures. Similarly, heads of state and governments are certainly employing strategies to work around the challenges of legislators' preferences regarding support for IOs; research shows that this is a key reason that formal IOs have plateaued, and executive branch officials are increasingly turning to informal IOs.[78] The implications of domestic politics on IO participation is thus crucial to understanding the everyday operations of IOs but also the broader landscape of international cooperation and its constraints.

[78] Vabulas and Snidal (2013, 2020, 2021).

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