

The quest for legitimacy in world politics – international institutions’ legitimation strategies

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Abstract. The article presents a top-down approach to the study of the empirical legitimacy of international institutions. It starts from the observation that international institutions’ representatives are engaged in various strategies aimed at cultivating generalised support. The article asserts that such strategies should be taken into account to gain deeper insights into the legitimation process of international institutions. To systematise these legitimation efforts and facilitate their empirical analysis, the article introduces the concept of legitimation strategies, which are defined as goal-oriented activities employed to establish and maintain a reliable basis of diffuse support. An analytical differentiation between three types of legitimation strategies is introduced depending on the addressees of legitimation strategies, that is, member state governments, international institutions’ staff, and the wider public. The applicability of the concept and the relevance of legitimation strategies for international institutions’ communication, behaviour, and institutional design is demonstrated by an empirical analysis of the G8’s and the IMF’s reaction to legitimation crises in the recent past of both institutions. In addition, the case studies suggest that a balanced set of legitimation strategies that takes into account the legitimacy concerns of all three constituencies is more likely to be successful in improving legitimacy perceptions.

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Introduction

Over the course of the past few decades, political authority has been delegated to and pooled in international institutions.¹ As a result, the legitimacy of political authority

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¹ Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, ‘Delegation and pooling in international organizations’, *Review of International Organizations*, Online First: DOI: 10.1007/s11558-014-9194-4 (2014), pp. 1–24.

beyond the nation state has not only become an issue of scholarly debates,² but international institutions themselves are taking an increasing interest in the management of their legitimacy. They employ *legitimation strategies*, including communication and symbolic policies as well as institutional and organisational reforms, to convince different ‘social constituenc[ies] of legitimation’³ of their right to rule. In this vein, the Commonwealth Heads of Government consider procuring ‘legitimacy not only [from] their member states but also [from] the wider international community in order to command confidence and commitment’ to be the first guiding principle for the ‘reform and construction of new international institutions’.⁴

International Relations (IR) research has only recently started to investigate the causes and consequences of international institutions’ legitimation strategies.⁵ Consequently, while deeper insights into international institutions’ legitimation strategies can greatly enrich how we understand and explain legitimation processes in world politics and the complex forms, functions, and dynamics of international institutions, they have yet to be theoretically embedded and systematically conceptualised.

To fill this void, this article offers three contributions: First, a theoretical perspective of legitimation processes is introduced. Second, an empirically applicable conceptualisation of legitimation strategies is proposed that is amenable to observation and analysis. Third, the added value of the approach is demonstrated by means of empirical case studies on the legitimation strategies of the Group of Eight (G8) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in times of crisis. Theoretically, we propose a top-down perspective, which focuses on international institutions’ legitimation strategies. To develop this perspective, we draw on Max Weber,⁶ who alluded to legitimation strategies in his work on the sociology of rule.⁷ We link Weber’s propositions to recent IR research on legitimacy management⁸ and combine them with insights from organisation studies.⁹

Conceptually, we deduce our definition of legitimation strategies from David Easton’s work¹⁰ and distinguish between three types of constituencies from which

² Michael Zürn, Martin Binder, and Matthias Ecker-Erhardt, ‘International authority and its politicization’, *International Theory*, 4:1 (2012), pp. 69–106.

³ Christian Reus-Smit, ‘International crises of legitimacy’, *International Politics*, 44:2 (2007), p. 164.

⁴ Commonwealth Secretariat, *Marlborough House Statement on Reform of International Institutions* (London, 2008).

⁵ James Brassett and Eleni Tsingou, ‘The politics of legitimate global governance’, *Review of International Political Economy*, 18:1 (2011), pp. 1–18; Ian Clark and Christian Reus-Smit, ‘Resolving international crises of legitimacy: Preface’, *International Politics*, 44:2 (2007), pp. 153–6; Dominik Zaum (ed.), *Legitimizing International Organizations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁶ Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 213.

⁷ We recognise the debate on the proper translation of Weber’s term ‘Herrschaft’. While some use the term ‘domination’, for example, Jens Steffek, ‘The legitimation of international governance: a discourse approach’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 9:2 (2003), pp. 249–75; we second Onuf’s translation as ‘rule’. See Nicholas G. Onuf, ‘Anarchy, authority, rule’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 33:2 (1989), pp. 149–73.

⁸ Ian Hurd, ‘Legitimacy and authority in international politics’, *International Organization*, 53:2 (1999), pp. 379–408; Ian Hurd, *After Anarchy: Legitimacy and Power in the United Nations Security Council* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Ian Clark, *Legitimacy in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Ian Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁹ Mark Suchman, ‘Managing legitimacy: Strategic and institutional approaches’, *The Academy of Management Review*, 20:3 (1995), pp. 571–610; Andrea Oelsner, ‘The institutional identity of regional organizations, or Mercosur’s identity crisis’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 57:1 (2013), pp. 115–27.

¹⁰ David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1965); David Easton, ‘A re-assessment of the concept of political support’, *British Journal of Political Science*, 5:4 (1975), pp. 435–57.

international institutions seek legitimacy. We show that international institutions seek legitimacy not only from member states, but also from civil servants working for international institutions' bureaucracies and from the broader public. Our core argument is that international institutions employ different legitimisation strategies depending on the constituency addressed. Analysing these three types of legitimisation strategies and their interaction more systematically will enrich our understanding of how the communication, behaviour, and institutional transformation of international institutions unfold, and why some institutions are more successful than others in managing their legitimacy.

The article is organised as follows: following an overview of the major themes of legitimacy research in IR, we describe how legitimacy is the result of an interactive process that relies both on the bottom-up attribution of legitimacy to international institutions by social constituencies *and* on legitimacy claims made by political elites. Second, we situate legitimisation strategies in the context of empirical legitimacy theory and provide a conceptualisation that takes into account different addressees of legitimisation. Third, we demonstrate the empirical applicability and relevance of our approach by applying it to the analysis of legitimisation strategies launched by the G8 and the IMF. The case studies reveal that international institutions of different institutional design do indeed take into account different constituencies when drawing up legitimisation strategies, and that both institutions' quest for legitimacy has implications for their communication, behaviour, and institutional design.

I. Legitimacy and international institutions

The concept of legitimacy denotes 'one of the central issues of social science',¹¹ namely the justification of the right to rule, and yet it has carved out a rather modest existence in past IR research.¹² Over the past two decades, this has been changing and legitimacy research has become pivotal in IR.¹³ This section reviews three central themes in the literature, ranging from its beginnings in classical IR theorising over regime theory to recent approaches on global governance: the distinction between normative and empirical research, the actors who are assumed to be of relevance, and the ways in which agency and legitimacy relationships are conceptualised.

Early IR writings¹⁴ are often characterised by the conceptual blurring of normative and empirical perspectives, which we hope to avoid in this article.¹⁵ From a normative perspective, legitimacy research is interested in the rightfulness or acceptability of political authority based on normative criteria such as democracy or justice. While the normative standards applied may vary, these approaches invariably presume legitimacy to be 'a property or characteristic of regimes which satisfy criteria

¹¹ David Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1991), p. 7.

¹² Shane P. Mulligan, 'Uses of legitimacy in international relations', *Millennium*, 34:2 (2006), p. 362.

¹³ Brassett and Tsingou, 'The politics of legitimate global governance', p. 1; Andreas von Staden, 'Introduction to Special Issue: Towards greater interdisciplinarity in research on the legitimacy of global governance', *Swiss Political Science Review*, 18:2 (2012), p. 149; Clark and Reus-Smit, 'Resolving international crises of legitimacy: Preface'.

¹⁴ E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years Crisis, 1919–1939* (New York: Harper & Row, 1939); Inis Claude, 'Collective legitimization as a political function of the United Nations', *International Organization*, 20:3 (1966), pp. 367–79.

¹⁵ Allen Buchanan and Robert O. Keohane, 'The legitimacy of global governance institutions', *Ethics and International Affairs*, 20:4 (2006), p. 405.

laid out by the observer'.¹⁶ Researchers are either concerned with the *prescriptive* formulation of criteria for the acceptability of governance by international institutions,¹⁷ or with the *diagnostic* evaluation of existing institutions against the backdrop of normative standards.¹⁸

Our contribution is rooted in empirical legitimacy research. It draws on Weber's work on legitimate rule.¹⁹ It is concerned with the social recognition of international institutions by those subjected to their rule or, to be more precise, 'with the extent and the (re)production of the kind of regime support that goes by the name of legitimacy'.²⁰ This research assumes an observer perspective, analysing the legitimacy claims and beliefs of rulers and subjects, as well as practices and strategies that underpin the attribution or withdrawal of legitimacy as social facts.²¹ Here, rule is considered to be legitimate 'if its subjects believe it to be so'.²² From this perspective, the questions whether international institutions are in need of legitimacy, whether they have the potential to tap sources of legitimacy, or are seen as being more or less legitimate, become purely empirical issues.²³

Beginning with the debates on international regimes, IR scholars, having discovered the emergence of political authority beyond the state, started raising empirical questions about the legitimacy of regimes and their democratic quality.²⁴ The common starting point for these statecentric discussions on the legitimacy of international institutions was Louis Henkin's puzzle why '[a]lmost all nations observe almost all principles of international law and almost all of their obligations all of the time'.²⁵ These early studies argued that – given the lack of an overarching coercive force – state compliance with international regulations has to rely on self-interest or legitimacy.²⁶

The advent of global governance research has contributed to a widening of perspective. While empirical enquiries rooted in regime theory were mainly concerned with the legitimacy relationship between international institutions and state governments, the growth of protests accompanying major international conferences during the 1990s²⁷ drew attention to what Ian Clark has called world

¹⁶ Rodney Barker, *Legitimizing Identities: The Self-Presentation of Rulers and Subjects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 9.

¹⁷ See, for example, David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995); Thomas W. Pogge, *Politics as Usual: What Lies Behind the Pro-Poor Rhetoric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

¹⁸ See, for example, Robert A. Dahl, 'Can international organizations be democratic? A skeptic's view', in Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker-Cordón (eds), *Democracy's Edges* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 19–36; Robert O. Keohane, Stephen Macedo, and Andrew Moravcsik, 'Democracy-enhancing multilateralism', *International Organization*, 63:1 (2009), pp. 1–31.

¹⁹ Weber, *Economy and Society*.

²⁰ Steffen Schneider, Achim Hurrellmann, Zuzana Krell-Laluhová, Frank Nullmeier, and Achim Wiesner, *Democracy's Deep Roots* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), p. 3.

²¹ Steffek, 'The legitimization of international governance', p. 253.

²² Clark, *Legitimacy in International Society*, p. 79.

²³ Jan Aart Scholte, 'Towards greater legitimacy in global governance', *Review of International Political Economy*, 18:1 (2011), p. 111.

²⁴ Hurd, 'Legitimacy and authority in international politics', p. 403; Andrew Hurrell, 'International society and the study of regimes', in Volker Rittberger and Peter Mayer (eds), *Regime Theory and International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 49–72.

²⁵ Louis Henkin, *How Nations Behave: Law and Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), p. 47.

²⁶ Daniel Bodansky, 'The legitimacy of international governance: a coming challenge for international environmental law?', *American Journal of International Law*, 93:2 (1999), pp. 596–624; Thomas M. Franck, *The Power of Legitimacy Among Nations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

²⁷ Donatella Della Porta and Sidney G. Tarrow (eds), *Transnational Protest and Global Activism* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005); Zürn, Binder, and Ecker-Erhardt, 'International authority and its politicization'; Robert O'Brien, Anne Marie Goetz, Jan Aart Scholte, and Marc Williams, *Contesting Global*

society.²⁸ These studies proceeded from the observation that '[e]mpirically, non-governmental actors and social movements play such a decisive role in debating and challenging the legitimacy of international governance that we are justified in regarding them as its ultimate rule addressees and judges of its legitimacy.'²⁹

II. Legitimation strategies: Theoretical foundation and concept formation

Most of the existing literature on the empirical legitimacy of international institutions³⁰ conceptualises legitimacy as a bottom-up relationship between international institutions and their social constituencies. We argue that this perspective is too narrow, as it misses the 'genetic' aspect of legitimation.³¹ Legitimacy is and can only be the result of an *interactive* political process between rulers and subjects.³² These legitimation processes, which culminate in the attribution (or rejection) of legitimacy, comprise both the bottom-up attribution of legitimacy by social constituencies and the top-down cultivation of legitimacy by rulers.³³ At the core of this interactive understanding of legitimation lies the insight that individuals do not attribute legitimacy to international institutions in a societal vacuum, but are constantly influenced by many factors such as international institutions' policy outputs, external shocks, and legitimacy claims by a plethora of actors.³⁴ As regards the latter, Weber emphasised a top-down perspective on legitimation processes: 'Experience shows that in no instance does domination voluntarily limit itself to the appeal to material or affectual or ideal interests as a basis for its continuance. In addition, every such system attempts to *cultivate the belief in its legitimacy*.'³⁵ These legitimacy claims are 'the lifeblood of politics of legitimation and such politics is essential to the cultivation and maintenance of an actor's or institution's legitimacy'.³⁶

We follow these propositions and focus on the role of international institutions and their representatives in legitimation processes. In order to reconstruct the legitimacy perceptions of different constituencies and to better understand the communication and behaviour of international institutions, it is necessary to take legitimation strategies into account. The reason why these efforts can be expected to play an important role in legitimation processes is given by Easton. He argues that a few powerful actors commanding the necessary organisational resources and skills may be able to make their legitimacy claims hold greater weight than those of the

Governance: Multilateral Economic Institutions and Global Social Movements (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

²⁸ Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society*.

²⁹ Jens Steffek, 'Legitimacy in International Relations: From state compliance to citizen consensus', in Achim Hurrelmann, Steffen Schneider, and Jens Steffek (eds), *Legitimacy in an Age of Global Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), pp. 188–9; Lisa M. Dellmuth and Jonas Tallberg, 'The social legitimacy of international organizations: Interest representation, institutional performance, and confidence extrapolation in the United Nations', *Review of International Studies*, 41:3 (2014), pp. 451–75.

³⁰ Our definition of international institutions broadly includes regional and global organisation, clubs of governance, regimes, and networks governed by formal international agreements.

³¹ Claus Offe, 'Political disaffection as an outcome of institutional practices? Some post-Tocquevillian speculations', in Mariano Torcal and José Ramón Montero (eds), *Political Disaffection in Contemporary Democracies: Social Capital, Institutions, and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 26.

³² Achim Hurrelmann, Steffen Schneider, and Jens Steffek (eds), *Legitimacy in an Age of Global Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), p. 8.

³³ Brasset and Tsingou, 'The politics of legitimate global governance'.

³⁴ Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power*, ch. 4.

³⁵ Weber, *Economy and Society*, p. 213, emphasis added.

³⁶ Reus-Smit, 'International crises of legitimacy', p. 159.

unorganised millions.³⁷ Although Easton originally referred to competition between different constituencies, the argument can be extended to understand the significance of international institutions' legitimation strategies. Because international institutions command expertise and are integrated into networks that provide them with access to national political elites and the broader public, their representatives are in a privileged position to shape the legitimacy perceptions of their constituencies. To be sure, this emphasis on the top-down 'impulse of the powerful to try to legitimate their power'³⁸ is not intended to supplant subjects of rule as the crucial constituency that ultimately confers or revokes legitimacy on the basis of many different considerations, such as the output of international institutions, criticism uttered in public, or external shocks. Rather, we attempt to broaden the perspective on how legitimacy is constantly reproduced, what role international institutions play in these processes, and how their quest for legitimacy influences institutional design, behaviour, and communication.

To access legitimation strategies empirically, we propose the following definition: *legitimation strategies are goal-oriented activities employed to establish and maintain a reliable basis of diffuse support for a political regime by its social constituencies.* This definition builds on a widely accepted and empirically applied understanding of *legitimacy as the diffuse support for political regimes.*³⁹

It is premised on two distinctions: first, we differentiate between diffuse and specific support. While reasons for supporting political regimes may range from mere apathy to individual cost-benefit calculation,⁴⁰ diffuse support is a distinct category defined as a 'reservoir of favorable attitudes or good will that helps members to accept or tolerate outputs to which they are opposed or the effect of which they see as damaging to their wants'.⁴¹ Where there is a reliable basis of diffuse support, neither coercion nor bribery are needed to create compliance.⁴² Institutions commanding diffuse support are more likely to achieve compliance with their rules, can draw on the active support of actors who do more than simply comply, and they benefit from lower coercion and bribery costs.⁴³ Consequently, legitimation strategies can be distinguished from strategies designed to win specific support, which rely on onetime inducements or means of coercion. Legitimation strategies aim at generating a more robust, sustainable foundation for favourable attitudes based on explicitly normative considerations.

Second, legitimation strategies are connected to political regimes. As Easton claims, the term legitimacy should be reserved for political regimes, that is, political institutions establishing authority, like the nation state or international institutions. It should not be applied to authorities or policies.⁴⁴ Diffuse support can only be directed at political regimes, whereas specific support can also be extended to incumbent

³⁷ Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, pp. 166–7.

³⁸ Hurd, 'Legitimacy and authority in international politics', p. 388.

³⁹ Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*; John A. Booth and Mitchell A. Seligson, *The Legitimacy Puzzle in Latin America: Political Support and Democracy in Eight Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Pippa Norris, *Democratic Deficit: Critical Citizens Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁴⁰ Weber, *Economy and Society*, pp. 212–13.

⁴¹ Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, p. 273.

⁴² Hurd, 'Legitimacy and authority in international politics', p. 387.

⁴³ Reus-Smit, 'International crises of legitimacy', p. 164.

⁴⁴ Note that Easton explicitly understands even the weak international institutions of his time as political structures to which the concept of legitimacy can be applied and which are in need of legitimacy (Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, p. 284).

authorities and policies.⁴⁵ Diffuse support for regimes represents an enduring bond that enables subjects of rule to oppose the incumbents of offices and their policies and yet retain support for the offices and institutions.⁴⁶

Consequently, legitimation strategies are distinct from the policy output of international institutions and from other strategies employed to win support for individual authorities or their particular policies. The United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's campaign UNiTE to end violence against women,⁴⁷ for instance, is a public relations effort, aimed to generate support for a specific policy, whereas the European Union (EU) Commission's campaign 'EU Agencies: Whatever You Do, We Work For You'⁴⁸ is a legitimation strategy which seeks to cultivate diffuse support for the European system of independent agencies. Clearly, public relation strategies and even policy output may also shape legitimacy perceptions, but their effects are beyond the concept of legitimation strategies.

This definition not only helps to differentiate legitimation strategies from neighbouring concepts such as promotion or public relations in terms of objectives that are difficult to observe, but also in terms of the practical means available for cultivating diffuse support. Public relations strategies are open to many different forms, because they serve the less demanding task of creating specific support. Legitimation strategies, by contrast, are invariably characterised by recourse to social norms and the logic of appropriateness. They aim at generating or signalling conformity with established social norms of legitimate authority. Empirically, this aim becomes visible when international institutions' representatives justify the identity and purpose of the institution to their constituencies.

The link between an institution and the prevailing norms in a given society is constituted by the institution's identity; that is, a set of shared rules, rituals, and beliefs that shape decision-making processes by specifying the basic assumptions, or the correct way to perceive, think, and feel about the world.⁴⁹ A clear institutional identity is necessary for an institution to project itself to its constituencies. These projections work as a 'centripetal force' on which support for an institution is based.⁵⁰ Cultivating the legitimacy of international institutions, thus, implies calibrating the relationship between the institution's identity and the prevailing social norms that define the parameters of rightful rule.⁵¹ This nexus between identity and legitimation suggests that international institutions' quest for legitimacy can have substantive implications for what they say and do in the world.

International institutions can try to achieve congruency with prevailing norms in two general ways: first, they may signal by purely communicative means that the institution's identity and purpose are in line with the normative expectations of a given constituency.⁵² These *discursive* legitimation strategies are observable

⁴⁵ Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, chs 11–12.

⁴⁶ Easton, 'A re-assessment of the concept of political support', p. 437.

⁴⁷ United Nations, 'UNiTE to End Violence Against Women' (New York: UN Department of Public Information, 2010).

⁴⁸ European Commission, EU Agencies, 'Whatever You Do, We Work For You' (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2007).

⁴⁹ Stephen C. Nelson and Catherine Weaver, 'The cultures of international organizations', in Jacob Katz Cogan, Ian Hurd, and Ian Johnston (eds), *Oxford Handbook of International Organizations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁵⁰ Oelsner, 'The institutional identity of regional organizations, or Mercosur's identity crisis', pp. 115–19.

⁵¹ Reus-Smit, 'International crises of legitimacy', p. 167.

⁵² Frank Nullmeier, Anna Geis, and Christopher Daase, 'Der Aufstieg der Legitimationspolitik: Rechtfertigung und Kritik politisch-ökonomischer Ordnungen', *Leviathan*, 40:27 (2012), p. 24; Terence C. Halliday, Susan Block-Lieb, and Bruce G. Carruthers, 'Rhetorical legitimation: Global scripts as strategic devices of international organizations', *Socio-Economic Review*, 8:1 (2010), pp. 77–112.

when international institutions' representatives engage in proactive communication, in which they justify institutional identity and purpose on the basis of social norms. Contrary to other components of their communication in documents, speeches, and audio-visual material that report about the institution's activities in a value-neutral format, these *legitimacy claims* make use of value-laden language to (re)define and present the institution as a force for a normative good, such as poverty reduction, the protection of human rights, or the promotion of democracy. These legitimacy claims can for instance be identified by content analytical methods.

Second, legitimation strategies can assume more substantive forms of behavioural adaptation and institutional change.⁵³ Especially in times of legitimacy crisis, when international institutions realise that a discursive legitimation strategy may not be sufficient to regain support, they might find themselves forced to update their institutional identity in order to conform to the prevailing normative expectations.⁵⁴ These *institutional* legitimation strategies can take the form of a general revision of governance targets, the introduction of new procedures, or even the adaptation of the institutional design, for instance by increasing the accessibility of the institution or giving it a multilateral form.⁵⁵

Discursive legitimation strategies manifest themselves in linguistic changes but exhibit little substantive transformation. Institutional strategies, by contrast, are rooted in a more fundamental adaptation of institutional identity. When an institution's purpose and principles are under siege, members and staff are likely to reconsider and reformulate their institutional identity. To analyse these more substantive legitimation strategies resulting from such identity transformations, international institutions' central documents such as treaty revisions, annual communiqués/reports, and other writings introducing institutional transformations (for example, accountability reports) may be examined. In addition to information on the kind of institutional change made, this research needs to explore the social norms and legitimacy demands addressed through these reforms.

For conceptual clarity, we have introduced these two basic types of legitimation strategies – discursive and institutional – as ideal types. In practice, they are often mixed and blend into hybrid forms. Pure communication without identity updating and institutional adaptation is likely to result in failure or rhetorical entrapment. Pure adaptation without communication is unlikely to yield substantial legitimacy gains, because it may go unnoticed by the relevant constituencies.⁵⁶ Rather than treating this distinction as categorical, it should be regarded as a continuum where discursive legitimacy claims and substantive institutional adaptation constitute the extreme points.

III. Producers and addressees of legitimation strategies

The following section specifies the agents of legitimation and their addressees, that is, the constituencies of legitimation. We concentrate on top-level representatives

⁵³ Zaum (ed.), *Legitimizing International Organizations*, p. 224.

⁵⁴ Kenneth Abbott and Duncan Snidal, 'Strengthening international regulation through transnational new governance: Overcoming the orchestration deficit', *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law*, 42:2 (2009), pp. 501–78.

⁵⁵ Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore, 'The politics, power and pathologies of international organizations', *International Organization*, 53:4 (1999), p. 718; Jonas Tallberg, Thomas Sommerer, Theresa Squarrito, and Christer Jönsson, *The Opening Up of International Organizations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Oelsner, 'The institutional identity of regional organizations, or Mercosur's identity crisis', p. 117.

⁵⁶ Dominik Zaum, 'Conclusion', in Dominik Zaum (ed.), *International Organizations, Legitimacy, and Legitimation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 227.

of international institutions as producers of legitimation strategies. This group encompasses directors-general and deputy directors-general. The matter is more complex in international institutions that only have a marginal or no independent bureaucratic staff. The G8 and similar club formats do not have fully-fledged secretariats. Nonetheless, they apply legitimation strategies. Here, our own research shows that the annually rotating chairs assume the task of producing legitimation strategies.

That said, the main argument of this section is that there are three ideal typical constituencies which may hold different normative parameters on the rightful authority of international institutions and which, therefore, call for different types of legitimation strategies.⁵⁷ Contrary to common wisdom, international institutions not only have to bolster their legitimacy in the eyes of member governments⁵⁸ but would do well to also address the normative expectations of their administrative staff and the wider public. Clearly, international institutions cannot fully satisfy the normative expectations of all three addressee groups. Rather, legitimation strategies have to balance different demands.⁵⁹ Failure to do so is likely to result in the failure of individual strategies or even in the emergence of legitimacy crises.⁶⁰ We differentiate three types of legitimation strategies: intergovernmental, bureaucratic, and public.

III.a. Intergovernmental legitimation strategies

Intergovernmental legitimation strategies address member state governments. Most research dealing with the legitimacy of international institutions has traditionally focused on this type of legitimation,⁶¹ because legitimacy has long been considered as an issue between states.⁶² In this view, member state governments are the only relevant addressees of legitimation strategies for two main reasons: first, member states are international institutions' principles. They provide resources and are capable of withdrawing authority.⁶³ The fate of international institutions depends on social recognition by their members, albeit to varying degrees. This is not to say that national governments provide resources only because they acknowledge an institution as legitimate. Material interests and other strategic motives play an important role as well,⁶⁴ but only member states' belief in the legitimacy of an institution provides a reliable basis for its continued functioning.

Second, international institutions care about the legitimacy beliefs of governments because nation states are the main addressees of their rule. While some international institutions address individuals directly, many aim to alter the behaviour of member states. And since the majority of international institutions lack the 'carrots and sticks'

⁵⁷ Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society*, p. 185; Andrew Hurrell, 'Legitimacy and the use of force: Can the circle be squared?', *Review of International Studies*, 31:1 (2005), p. 24.

⁵⁸ For a critical discussion of this state-centric perspective see, Steffek, 'Legitimacy in international relations'.

⁵⁹ Suchman, 'Managing legitimacy', p. 585.

⁶⁰ For a similar argument see, Leonard Seabrooke, 'Legitimacy gaps in the world economy: Explaining the sources of the IMF's legitimacy crisis', *International Politics*, 44:2 (2007), p. 254.

⁶¹ See, for example, Hurd, 'Legitimacy and authority in international politics', p. 401.

⁶² Steffek, 'Legitimacy in international relations', p. 175.

⁶³ Darren G. Hawkins, David A. Lake, Daniel L. Nielson, and Michael J. Tierney (eds), *Delegation and Agency in International Organizations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁶⁴ Kenneth Abbott and Duncan Snidal, 'Why states act through formal international organizations', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 42:1 (1998), pp. 3–32.

necessary to induce state compliance, they have strong incentives to justify themselves *vis-à-vis* their member states to improve compliance.⁶⁵

Empirical research on intergovernmental legitimation strategies focuses on the capacity of international institutions to address joint problems and generate public goods.⁶⁶ Effectiveness is often seen as the primary source of international institutions' legitimacy.⁶⁷ Most research thus focuses on discursive and institutional legitimation strategies addressing this dimension of international institutions.

III.b. Bureaucratic legitimation strategies

The concept of bureaucratic legitimation strategies draws attention to a neglected aspect of empirical legitimacy research, that is, to processes of top-down legitimation within the bureaucracies of international institutions. Bureaucracies are organisationally separate from plenary assemblies and have a formal autonomy *vis-à-vis* their member states.⁶⁸ Since the administrative turn in IR, bureaucracies are frequently considered to be 'a key engine of international organization' and thus an important legitimation constituency.⁶⁹ The agents of bureaucratic legitimation are top-level civil servants; addressees are medium and low-level civil servants. More informal institutions such as the G8 and the G20 'borrow' their staff from member state administrations.⁷⁰ These teams of 'borrowed' staff members are the addressees of bureaucratic legitimation strategies of less formalised institutions.⁷¹

Weber considered the administrative staff to play a pivotal role for political orders. Rule over a considerable number of persons requires a staff that can be trusted to execute the general policy as well as specific commands. Although civil servants are bound to obedience by a variety of motives, the basis of these power relations is the belief in their legitimacy.⁷² The quality of this mélange of legitimacy beliefs and motives of staff largely determines the way in which an institution executes its tasks: '... according to the kind of legitimacy which is claimed, the type of obedience, the kind of administrative staff developed to guarantee it, and the mode of exercising authority, will all differ fundamentally'.⁷³ Staff members' belief in the legitimacy of an international institution's authority and its inner power relations is thus of vital importance for international institutions. Only if staffs dispose of a pool of legitimacy

⁶⁵ Christopher Gelpi, *The Power of Legitimacy: Assessing the Role of Norms in Crisis Bargaining* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁶⁶ Tamar Gutner and Alexander Thompson, 'The politics of IO performance: a framework', *Review of International Organizations*, 5:3 (2010), p. 228.

⁶⁷ Buchanan and Keohane, 'The legitimacy of global governance institutions', p. 422; Robyn Eckersley, 'Ambushed: the Kyoto Protocol, the Bush Administration's Climate Policy and the erosion of legitimacy', *International Politics*, 44:2 (2007), pp. 306–24.

⁶⁸ Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore, *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 5.

⁶⁹ Jarle Trondal, Martin Marcussen, Torbjörn Larsson, and Forde Veggeland, *Unpacking International Organizations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p. 5.

⁷⁰ Peter I. Hajnal, *The G8 System and the G20: Evolution, Role and Documentation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 71–3.

⁷¹ Consequently, national civil servants being in charge of the G8 and the G20 are the addressees of legitimation strategies of both national governments and the international institution's chairs. This dual position has been confirmed during our interview with the head of the British G8 Sherpa team in 2013.

⁷² Weber, *Economy and Society*, p. 212.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 213. Although not discussed explicitly by Easton (*A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, p. 154), who does not specify the relevant constituencies of legitimation, we claim that the diffuse support for international institutions by their staff members – for instance backed by the belief in the rationality and legality of bureaucracies – is an important element of their legitimacy.

beliefs can they be expected to form a sufficiently reliable basis for the authority of the institution, making it well equipped to operate.⁷⁴ Hence, the aim of bureaucratic legitimization strategies is to cultivate positive legitimacy beliefs within an institution's staff, for instance by generating conformity with the virtues of formalised procedure and the abstract codification of impersonal rules.⁷⁵

Only recently have IR scholars started to investigate the role played by international bureaucracies and how their legitimacy concerns are addressed.⁷⁶ Most research focuses on *organisational* cultures and reforms, that is, changes to internal rules and procedures, horizontal and vertical coordination, planning, monitoring, transparency, professional ethics, and administrative recruitment.⁷⁷ Emmanuelle Schön-Quinlivan demonstrates for instance how administrative reform of the EU Commission helped to improve legitimacy perceptions between different directorates-general within the Commission and of the Commission as a whole.⁷⁸

Andrea Oelsner has broadened the perspective to include institutional identities as an important source of legitimacy. She argues that international institutions need to possess a distinct institutional identity to shape the legitimacy beliefs of their constituencies. Through leadership, professionalisation, and discursive strategies, central bureaucrats shape the identity of staff members. Jean Monnet and Henri Spaak are for instance credited for shaping the European Communities' identity. Raúl Prebisch played a similar role in the context of the Latin American Free Trade Organization (LAFTA),⁷⁹ and Trygve Lie and Dag Hammarskjöld are often portrayed as having shaped UN's institutional identity.⁸⁰

III.c. Public legitimization strategies

Finally, international institutions seek to legitimate themselves in the eyes of the wider public.⁸¹ This constituency includes citizens, the media, NGOs and other private actors, but also other international institutions and non-member states. In sum, this category comprises the unstable, sometimes not easily recognisable compound of public opinions held by citizens, movements, and epistemic communities, who feel affected by an international institution or who are constructed as an affected constituency by the international institution.⁸² To address the potentially divergent concerns of this broad group, *public legitimization strategies* have to target very general and broad norms. Thus, they often aim at widely shared norms such as the promotion of the global common good and democratic governance, for instance by establishing or reforming transparency and accountability measures.⁸³

⁷⁴ Suchman, 'Managing legitimacy', p. 574.

⁷⁵ Barker, 'Legitimizing Identities', pp. 31, 42.

⁷⁶ Exceptions are Barnett and Finnemore, *Rules for the World*; Trondal, Marcussen, Larsson, and Vegeland, *Unpacking International Organizations*.

⁷⁷ Nelson and Weaver, 'The cultures of international organizations'.

⁷⁸ Emmanuelle Schön-Quinlivan, 'Implementing organizational change – the case of the Kinnick reforms', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 15:5 (2008), pp. 726–42. On the IMF see, Bessma Momani, 'IMF staff: Missing link in fund reform proposals', *Review of International Organizations*, 2:1 (2007), pp. 39–57.

⁷⁹ Oelsner, 'The institutional identity of regional organizations, or Mercosur's identity crisis'.

⁸⁰ Ian Johnstone, 'The role of the UN Secretary-General: the power of persuasion based on law', *Global Governance*, 9:4 (2003), pp. 441–58.

⁸¹ Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society*, p. 14.

⁸² Furio Cerutti, 'The deeper roots of legitimacy and its future', *Review of International Political Economy*, 18:1 (2011), p. 124.

⁸³ On widely expected norms of legitimate authority see for instance, Robert O. Keohane, 'Global governance and legitimacy', *Review of International Political Economy*, 18:1 (2011), pp. 99–109.

Conventionally, the public is rarely considered a relevant constituency of international institutions, because: (a) it does not hold clear views on international politics and (b) even if it had clearly developed beliefs, these would be of no consequence. Neither its active support nor its compliance with international rules is of relevance to the functioning of international institutions. Recent research has shown that both of these conventional wisdoms are no longer valid. The public has become an important constituency of legitimation: first, international institutions have become a bone of contention in public debates, and mass protests addressing for instance the G8 or the IMF are only the most visible indicators of this societal politicisation of international institutions.⁸⁴

Second, international institutions cannot ignore this constituency because quite frequently they compensate for their lack of means of coercion or bribery by orchestrating public intermediaries to foster state compliance.⁸⁵ Legitimacy is an important resource for mobilising these intermediaries.

Research on public legitimation strategies has become more fashionable over the past few years, focusing mostly on procedural issues.⁸⁶ These studies demonstrate that measures increasing transparency, accountability, and accessibility were repeatedly implemented as a direct response to charges of illegitimacy voiced by NGOs.⁸⁷

IV. Empirical plausibility probe: G8 and IMF in times of legitimacy crisis

To probe the empirical plausibility and analytical utility of the concept of legitimation strategies, we look at two prominent international institutions: the G8 and the IMF. We select these cases for two reasons. First, both have experienced legitimacy crises and had varying success in managing them. Second, they differ substantially in terms of institutional design, purpose, and membership. It should be stressed that this case selection is not intended to single out individual drivers of legitimation strategies or their outcomes by way of comparative case studies. Rather, the high information intensity during legitimacy crises and the numerous significant differences between both cases enable us to demonstrate that the concept travels well across different contexts and subsets of international institutions. In an area in which the international sphere is populated by many different types of actors, this broad applicability is an important asset of a novel concept.

Both cases demonstrate that international institutions do care about the legitimacy perceptions of their members, bureaucratic staff, and the public. In the wake of legitimation crises, both the G8 and the IMF adapted what they say and do to address

⁸⁴ Zürn, Binder, and Ecker-Erhardt, 'International authority and its politicization'; Frank Nullmeier, Dominika Biegoń, Jennifer Gronau, Martin Nonhoff, Henning Schmidtke, and Steffen Schneider, *Prekäre Legitimitäten: Rechtfertigung von Herrschaft in der postnationalen Konstellation* (Frankfurt aM: Campus, 2010).

⁸⁵ Kenneth Abbott, Philipp Genschel, Duncan Snidal, and Bernhard Zangl (eds), *International Organizations as Orchestrators* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁸⁶ Tallberg, Sommerer, Squatrito, and Jönsson, *The Opening Up of International Organizations*; Thorsten Hüller, 'Assessing EU strategies for publicity', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 14:4 (2007), pp. 563–81; Jens Steffek, Claudia Kissling, and Patrizia Nanz (eds), *Emergent Patterns of Civil Society Participation in Global and European Governance: A Cure for the Democratic Deficit?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008); Alexandru Grigorescu, *Democratic Intergovernmental Organizations? Normative Pressures and Decision-Making Rules* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁸⁷ Christopher L. Pallas and Johannes Urpelainen, 'NGO monitoring and the legitimacy of international cooperation: a strategic analysis', *Review of International Organizations*, 7:1 (2012), pp. 1–32.

the legitimacy concerns of their constituencies. Both institutions must, thus, be considered to be normative creatures which not only follow a logic of consequences or the functional preferences of their principles, but whose communication, behaviour, and institutional design are also shaped by the normative concerns of members, staff, and public.

Furthermore, the cases suggest that legitimisation strategies are interdependent. In order to be successful, international institutions have to balance the demands of their constituencies.⁸⁸ Legitimation strategies addressing one constituency may limit the set of applicable strategies towards the other constituencies and *vice versa*, because the underlying norms are incompatible. An institution should, for instance, not aim at legitimating itself as democratic and responsive towards the public and at the same time claim *vis-à-vis* its staff that it is an independent body of experts, as it is likely that both constituencies will notice these contradictions. While we do not expect all three constituencies to be of invariable importance to all international institutions at all times, we propose that institutions might be able to foster their legitimacy by balancing the legitimisation demands of different constituencies.

The analysis of legitimisation strategies and their effects on institutional communication, behaviour, and design builds in both cases on a systematic examination of legitimisation claims and institutional changes presented in a representative set of both institutions' public documents. Our reconstruction of the G8's reaction to its legitimacy crisis in the aftermath of the great recession analyses G8 summit communiqués, the documents most closely equivalent to IO annual reports. It is supplemented by insights from the G8 chair's summaries, G8 final reports, G8 media statements, and expert interviews with the German and the British Sherpa teams of 2012 and 2013, respectively. We trace the IMF's legitimisation strategies during the Asian financial crisis by scrutinising its annual reports. The analysis is also supplemented by insights from IMF media statements and the comprehensive scholarly literature on the Fund. This variety of sources enables us to identify legitimisation strategies directed towards all three constituencies. To gauge the results of legitimisation strategies in terms of better or worse legitimacy perceptions by different constituencies, we follow the established literature on empirical legitimacy and turn to the available data on political behaviour⁸⁹ and political communication.⁹⁰ Needless to say, it is not possible to determine precisely and definitively the degree to which the analysed legitimisation strategies have affected the perceptions of both institutions' constituencies.

IV.a. The G8 after the financial meltdown in 2008

The institutional reform of the G8 in the aftermath of the financial crisis and the way the reform was communicated to the public demonstrates that international institutions may respond to the threat of withdrawal of support by their member states by

⁸⁸ See also Seabrooke, 'Legitimacy gaps in the world economy', p. 254.

⁸⁹ Sebastian Haunss, 'Challenging legitimacy: Repertoires of contention, political claims-making, and collective action frames', in Achim Hurrelmann, Steffen Schneider, and Jens Steffek (eds), *Legitimacy in an Age of Global Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), pp. 156–72; Della Porta and Tarrow, *Transnational Protest and Global Activism*.

⁹⁰ Schneider, Hurrelmann, Krell-Laluhová, Nullmeier, and Wiesner, *Democracy's Deep Roots*; Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham (eds), *The Making of a European Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

implementing a set of legitimisation strategies. The case study shows how G8 representatives were able to balance the legitimacy demands of members and the public without coming into conflict with the legitimacy concerns of its 'borrowed' staff.

The G8's already precarious legitimacy among its membership and the public was further undermined in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008 when not only the public perceived the G8 to be increasingly irrelevant and unrepresentative in comparison to the G20,⁹¹ but even its members began to question the Group. Peter Mandelson, former trade minister of the United Kingdom, claimed that the '[e]ra of the G8 is over'⁹² and US President Barack Obama argued that the G20 was better equipped to represent recent shifts within the global economy.⁹³ Overall, the G20's upgrade from a ministerial to a heads-of-states process resulted in a legitimacy crisis of the G8 as regards its member states and the public. Both constituencies perceived the Group to be an outdated, weak, and unrepresentative institution. It was, in the words of a journalist, 'the wrong body, the wrong members, the wrong time'.⁹⁴

G8 summit declarations between 1975 and 2013 show that the Group's representatives were well aware of its precarious legitimacy. We observe a strong increase in legitimacy claims – explaining the Group's normative purpose and identity – in documents from 2008 on, and in 2009 the G8 even replaced the rather short chair's summaries with much longer communiqués, allowing a more nuanced response to its critics.⁹⁵

Substantively, these data suggest that the G8 implemented a set of institutional and discursive legitimisation strategies to dissipate its negative image of an unrepresentative, ineffective 'circus ... without bread'.⁹⁶ At the core of these strategies were two features of the G8's institutional identity that had over time receded into the background: its informality and its work to the benefit of all. In sum, the Group applied three distinct but balanced legitimisation strategies which refer not only discursively but also institutionally to the broadly accepted norm of the global common good and which emphasise the G8's capacity to effectively and credibly solve global problems.

In 2012, the G8 implemented an *intergovernmental legitimisation strategy*, which revived informality as a core institutional feature. Although this informality had constantly been appreciated by member governments in the past,⁹⁷ it faded away over time due to an ever-growing political agenda and 'too much focus on communiqués as opposed to building trust between world leaders'.⁹⁸ By stressing this institutional feature, which cannot easily be provided by other international institutions, the G8 managed to revive its members' commitment to the club. Barack Obama, one of its

⁹¹ As indicated by increasingly negative public communication and rising protest numbers. See, Jennifer Gronau and Steffen Schneider, 'Metaphorical concepts in the construction of international legitimacy', *Political Concepts Committee on Concepts and Methods, IPSA Working Paper Series*, 37 (2009), pp. 1–27; Jennifer Gronau, Martin Nonhoff, and Frank Nullmeier, 'Spiele ohne Brot: Die Legitimitätskrise der G8', *Leviathan*, 37:1 (2009), pp. 117–43.

⁹² Laurence Norman, 'UK Mandelson: "The Era of the G8 is Over"', *Wall Street Journal* (25 March 2009).

⁹³ White House, 'Fact Sheet: Creating a 21st Century International Economic Architecture', available at: {http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Fact-Sheet-Creating-a-21st-Century-International-Economic-Architecture} accessed 30 June 2015.

⁹⁴ Larry Elliot, 'If the G8 is to survive it', *Guardian* (8 July 2009).

⁹⁵ Jennifer Gronau, *Die Selbstlegitimation internationaler Institutionen: Die G8 und die G20 im Vergleich* (Frankfurt aM: Campus, 2015), pp. 269, 336.

⁹⁶ Gronau, Nonhoff, and Nullmeier, 'Spiele ohne Brot'.

⁹⁷ Hajnal, *The G8 System and the G20*, pp. 30–2.

⁹⁸ David Cameron quoted in: Patrick Wintour, 'Cameron plans to downgrade G8 summit', *Guardian* (29 July 2010).

most hesitant members and chair in 2012, renewed the club's informal protocol, claiming that:

Despite changes in the global economy and the international economic architecture, the core insight that led to the first Summit remains as true as ever: when the G-8 governments agree on an issue, that agreement has enormous power to shape the world in which we live. As a result, the overarching objective of the United States in 2012 was to bring the G-8 back to its roots in the spirit of Rambouillet: an intimate gathering of Leaders capable of taking action together on areas of common concern.⁹⁹

By introducing a substantive shift within the institutional structure of the G8 and presenting it as a necessary adaptation to maintain the G8's capacity to act to the benefit of all, this 'back-to-basics' approach re-emphasised the core feature of the G8's institutional identity. In 2013, Obama's successor to the G8 chair, Gordon Brown, likewise supplemented discursive legitimation with a strategy to increase institutional informality. G8 negotiations were limited to a few topics only, such as 'trade, tax, transparency', and the Group introduced an annual report to present its aims and to take stock of the latest G8 year.¹⁰⁰ The new approach also reduced negotiation participants to a minimum, relaxed the dress code, inviting leaders to put aside their ties and blazers and to roll up their sleeves, and limited the use of decorative materials such as G8 banners or printed carpets, which had formerly dominated the scenery.

Simultaneously, G8 chairs implemented a *public legitimation strategy* that aimed at highlighting the Group's commitment to the global common good. It was hoped that the stronger emphasis on this traditional feature of the institution's identity would help to transform the G8's public perception of being 'circuses without bread' and increase public support for a responsible, focused, and effective manager of global problems. As noted above, this discursive legitimation strategy is reflected in the replacement of short chair's summaries by a final communiqué, a substantial increase of legitimacy claims in these documents, and the introduction of an annual report. The new formats allowed the G8 to respond in detail to current global affairs and to claim legitimacy as a still significant player. After 2009, this discursive strategy became even more explicit when the Group no longer introduced itself as a network of states, but began to present itself as an over three-decades-old institution. A prime example of its public legitimation strategy can be found in the communiqué of 2010:

What binds the G8 together is a shared vision that major global challenges must and can be addressed effectively through focus, commitment and transparency, and in partnership with other concerned members of the global community. The G8 has demonstrated the capacity to design credible approaches to meet the challenges of our times. For over thirty years, it has shown that its collective will can be a powerful catalyst for sustainable change and progress. At Muskoka in 2010, we are focusing on an effective agenda to address key challenges in development, international peace and security, and environmental protection.¹⁰¹

These legitimacy claims illustrate that the public legitimation strategy was primarily intended to address criticism of the G8's incapacity to solve global problems. It was also reflected in the Group's streamlined agenda at the subsequent summits, focusing

⁹⁹ US Department of State, 'Final Update on the U.S. G-8 Presidency', available at: {<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/202643.pdf>} accessed 30 June 2015.

¹⁰⁰ UK Government, 'Trade, Tax & Transparency. The 2013 UK G8 Presidency Report', available at: {https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/271676/G8_report_WEB_FINAL.PDF} accessed 30 June 2015.

¹⁰¹ G8, 'Muskoka Declaration 2010: Recovery and New Beginnings. June 26 2012', available at: {<http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/summit/2010muskoka/communique.html>} accessed 30 June 2015, § 2.

on global food security and climate change (2009 and 2012), health care and maternity (2010), and democratic empowerment in the Arab region (2011). Overall, this public legitimisation strategy not only allowed the G8 to distance itself from the younger, less 'like-minded', and less experienced G20; it also helped to gain support for the more pronounced image of the G8 as an effective facilitator of the global common good.

As regards the G8's *bureaucratic legitimisation strategy*, staff members no longer received giveaways from the G8 chairs such as stickers and pins with the respective G8 logo, which they valued as a 'reward for blood, sweat, and tears'.¹⁰² Although we do not interpret these memorabilia as a legitimisation strategy but rather as a supportive action fostering a sense of belonging, the reduction of gifts was highly compatible with the 'back-to-basics approach' in three ways. First, it underlined the new public image of a more focused institution because less time and money were invested in these symbolic practices. In the past, giving gifts to staff members had generated public criticism of the G8's showy character. Second, it complemented the reduced use of symbols at summits and thus helped to signal the informalisation of the Group to member governments. Third, it corresponded with the Sherpa team's demand for a rational legal proceeding as established for their work at home. Accordingly, the head of the British Sherpa team in 2013 appreciated the gifts as 'a nice thing to have' that 'shows you've been there ... and you'll remember it for years and years to come'. But 'in times of austerity', staff members 'just didn't feel it necessary, and how we could then explain that to taxpayers'.¹⁰³

In sum, the G8 case shows that the concept of legitimisation strategies offers a clearer understanding of international institutions' communication, behaviour, and design. The 2008 legitimacy crisis not only contributed to a transformation of G8 public communication, but was also a driving force for renewed informalisation and a transformed club agenda. To soften the legitimacy crisis, the G8 returned to its institutional identity as an informal club fostering global development. Its traditional informality was revived and a stronger focus was placed on the global common good.

This renewed emphasis on central aspects of its institutional identity and its balanced communication to the Groups' constituencies appears to have contributed to the mitigation of the legitimacy crisis in the aftermath of the financial crisis. Heads of states still attend G8 summits. They are satisfied that the task of freeing the G8 'from the baggage and bureaucracy of the past summits' was made possible 'by the frank, open, leader-to-leader discussion' at the 2012 summit.¹⁰⁴ As regards public support, our analysis of evaluations of the G8 in quality newspapers in Great Britain, the US, Germany, and Switzerland between 1998 and 2013 shows that since 2010 public debate has been less intense and at the same time more supportive than during the remainder of the analysed time period. Positive evaluations often refer to the legitimacy claims brought forward by the G8. Quite a few observers emphasise, for instance, that 'being a location for conversation is a strong justification of international summits'.¹⁰⁵ Even NGOs such as Action Aid UK acknowledge the G8's 'potential to ignite significant global initiatives with the potential to improve

¹⁰² Interview with German Sherpa team, 3 July 2012.

¹⁰³ Interview with Head of British G8 Sherpa team, 12 December 2013.

¹⁰⁴ David Cameron quoted in: Patrick Wintour, 'G8 summit: Trade deal can rescue world from recession, says PM: Tie-ups sought between EU, US, Canada and Japan: First talks with Hollande after Cameron backed rival', *Guardian* (18 May 2012).

¹⁰⁵ 'The next summit. The results of gatherings of the G8 usually fall short of the expectations generated in advance: That does not mean they are a waste of time', *Times* (26 June 2010).

dramatically the lives of the world's poorest people'.¹⁰⁶ This combination of a less intense, more positive public debate over the Group's legitimacy suggests that the public legitimisation strategy has had a positive effect, because this is clearly a more comfortable position than an intense critical debate.

Finally, staff members still express their support for the G8 process not only because their contribution to G8 summits is in line with their work for national public services, but because they believe in the worthiness of the G8 process:

So clearly we've worked hard, but I'm pretty sure that every single one of us did it because it was a rewarding thing to do, we used our respective expertise and knowledge and skills to deliver what we thought is a good agenda, is a good summit, which reached out to many many people.¹⁰⁷

IV.b. The IMF during the Asian financial crisis

We now explore the IMF's response to its legitimacy crisis in the late 1990s as an example for an institution that struggled – despite a number of legitimisation strategies applied by the Fund's management – over an extended period with declining support from member states, staff, and the public. The case underlines, first, that not only small clubs with a low level of institutionalisation and a coherent membership like the G8, but also strong international bureaucracies try to bolster their legitimacy in times of crisis. Second, the analysis shows that the Fund relied heavily on discursive legitimisation. These legitimisation claims were not balanced enough to accommodate the conflicting demands of its constituencies.

The case study focuses on a time when the 'existing critiques of the IMF's international crisis management role were given renewed political momentum and greater urgency'.¹⁰⁸ Today, with the help of the G20 and only after extended governance reforms, the IMF appears to have risen again 'like a phoenix',¹⁰⁹ though the process of recovery from the legitimacy crisis of the 1990s extended over more than a decade of declining support from donor and debtor states, the public, and staff.

Subsequent to the emergence of the Asian financial crisis in 1997, the IMF experienced a strong, sustained public and intergovernmental legitimacy crisis: it became the target of mass protests in debtor countries¹¹⁰ and NGO campaigns in creditor countries, and its legitimacy was increasingly questioned in the mass media.¹¹¹ As regards its members, the IMF was criticised by both debtor governments, who began to steer away from the Fund, and donor countries, who objected to the Fund's approach to the crisis.¹¹² Data on the number of IMF programmes in place worldwide suggest that the legitimacy beliefs of debtor countries

¹⁰⁶ 'G8 should seize initiative and listen to the pope', *Times* (10 July 2009).

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Head of British G8 Sherpa team, 12 December 2013.

¹⁰⁸ André Broome, 'The International Monetary Fund, crisis management and the credit crunch', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 64:1 (2010), p. 43.

¹⁰⁹ Joseph R. Joyce, *The IMF and Global Financial Crises: A Phoenix Rising?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 154; 173–7.

¹¹⁰ As indicated by our protest event data analysis for the period between 1996 and 2004, the IMF was the target of a series of riots in debtor countries such as South Korea, Jordan, Bulgaria, Mexico, and South Africa.

¹¹¹ Our analysis of news agencies coverage on the IMF shows that public attention doubled during the crisis.

¹¹² Anklesaria Swaminathan Aiyar, 'The growing irrelevance of the IMF', *Economic Times* (21 April 2009).

deteriorated in the aftermath of the crisis. After decades of growth between 1970 and 1996, the number of IMF programmes declined between 1997 and 2005 to levels lower than in the 1970s, because debtor countries deliberately avoided borrowing from the Fund.¹¹³ Similarly, the Fund's legitimacy problems can be gleaned from the organisation's budgetary crisis during this period. While budget and staff grew substantially during the 1990s, growth came to a standstill during the years after the crisis.¹¹⁴ In 1998, several leading US democrats even threatened to halt the US quota increase because of the Fund's role during the crisis. They were concerned about the negative effects of the IMF's involvement in capital account liberalisation and loan conditionality on financial stability, the environment, and labour standards.¹¹⁵

Overall, this legitimacy crisis was not only linked to the Fund's role in the emergence of the Asian crisis, which critics from donor countries like the US attributed to the IMF's disorderly liberalisation of capital accounts. It also triggered criticism of the negative consequences of loan conditionality for employment, poverty, and social stability. The IMF was seen to have 'intensified the pain by its inappropriate response' to the Asian crisis.¹¹⁶ In addition, the Fund has been criticised for its democratic deficit and its limited respect for environmental issues and human rights in debtor countries.¹¹⁷ While the IMF perceived itself 'as essentially democratic shop' that is 'owned by [its] member nations',¹¹⁸ even the former chief economist and vice president of the World Bank, John Stiglitz, accused the IMF 'to go about its business without outsiders asking too many questions' and to undermine 'the democratic process [in debtor countries] by imposing policies'.¹¹⁹ Others argued that less strict conditions for the repayment of loans would have allowed debtor governments to invest in their countries' social and ecological infrastructure, for instance in better flood protection, thus securing its economic capacities – and the lives of its citizens.¹²⁰ Finally, protesters accused the Fund of 'spreading the gospel of free-market capitalism to benefit corporations while ignoring the environmental impact of [its] policies'.¹²¹ As a result, the IMF underwent a pronounced legitimacy crisis from which it was only able to recover a decade later. We argue that this development was partly the result of a set of legitimation strategies that relied heavily on discursive legitimation, but relatively little on substantive change. This set of strategies did not balance the conflicting demands of the Fund's constituencies.

To reconstruct the Fund's reaction to this complex situation, we draw on an analysis of legitimacy claims published in IMF annual reports between 1980 and 2011. As with the G8 case study, we also include media statements and supplement these data with the extensive literature discussing the Fund's legitimacy crisis and transformation during the 1990s and early 2000s. Our data show that the

¹¹³ Ifan Nooruddin and Byungwon Woo, 'Heeding the sirens: the politics of IMF program participations', *Political Science Research and Methods*, 3:1 (2014), pp. 73–93.

¹¹⁴ Robert L. Brown, 'Measuring delegation', *Review of International Organizations*, 5:2 (2010), pp. 141–75.

¹¹⁵ IMF, *Annual Report 2010: Supporting a Balanced Global Recovery* (Washington, DC: IMF, 2010), p. 205.

¹¹⁶ 'Short shrift for the world's highly indebted countries', *Guardian* (5 October 1998).

¹¹⁷ Joyce, *The IMF and Global Financial Crises*, p. 119; O'Brien, Goetz, Scholte, and Williams, *Contesting Global Governance*, ch. 5.

¹¹⁸ John Burgess, 'At IMF headquarters embattled staffers wonder "why us?"', *Washington Post* (13 April 2000).

¹¹⁹ 'Valid questions on the new economy', *Washington Post* (14 April 2000).

¹²⁰ John Crace, 'Resources – inside the news – sinking into poverty', *Guardian* (29 September 1998).

¹²¹ Joseph Kahn and John Kifner, 'World trade officials pledging to step up effort against AIDS', *New York Times* (18 April 2000).

Fund's management was aware of its precarious legitimacy. The share of statements referring to the institution's identity and normative purpose reached an absolute maximum during the late 1990s. Substantively, this suggests that the IMF implemented a set of discursive legitimisation strategies to address the *overlapping* legitimacy concerns of member governments and the wider public. The norms at the core of these strategies were democratic participation, representation, transparency, and social security, which had so far only played a marginal role in the Fund's institutional identity.

To restore the confidence of emerging market economies and to address the concerns of social movements from both debtor and creditor countries, the Fund employed a discursive legitimisation strategy, which mainly addressed its alleged democratic deficit and limited consideration of social security issues. IMF financial officials acknowledged 'that they understood the protesters' concerns and were in fact trying to change ... the I.M.F. ... to accommodate them'.¹²² The IMF declared its willingness to forgive a large portion of the debt owed by poor countries¹²³ and the Washington meetings were used 'to confirm the role of the IMF ... in continuing to be in charge of fighting for growth and against poverty'.¹²⁴

While the language of transparency, accountability, and democratic participation had been alien to the Fund in earlier times, this type of legitimacy claim became much more frequent after 1997, and even dominated the Fund's rhetoric in 1998. In the eyes of the former IMF interim chief, Stanley Fischer, a 'quiet revolution' was underway at the IMF: 'We now publish about everything. If you don't believe it, look at our Web site'.¹²⁵

Similarly, the IMF's management proposed institutional reforms tailored to democratise the institution and to improve attention to social and environmental issues. Addressing concerns about the Fund's transparency and accountability, mainly voiced by creditor governments, the IMF management created the Independent Evaluation Office¹²⁶ in 2001. The Office was mandated to '[e]nhance the learning culture within the Fund, [s]trengthen the Fund's external credibility, [p]romote greater understanding of the work of the Fund, and [s]upport institutional governance and oversight'.¹²⁷ As regards demands for fair and equal decision-making procedures from civil society and debtor governments the management proposed to restructure quotas and voting rights.¹²⁸ On the project level more deliberative structures were designed to make debtor countries experience a greater sense of ownership of reform programmes and to allow more room for social aspects.¹²⁹ IMF officials had clearly recognised that 'a broad-based social consensus is needed to sustain an IMF programme'.¹³⁰

As regards public legitimacy, the IMF 'after years of being run with a central banker's love of secrecy'¹³¹ began to reach out to civil society in borrowing

¹²² 'The protesters and the bank', *New York Times* (18 April 2000).

¹²³ Judy Mann, 'Don't ignore the protesters', *Washington Post* (19 April 2000).

¹²⁴ Nora Boustany, 'In defense of the protesters – and the World Bank', *Washington Post* (19 April 2000).

¹²⁵ Burgess, 'At IMF headquarters embattled staffers wonder "why us?"'.

¹²⁶ IMF, *Annual Report 2000* (Washington, DC: IMF, 2000), p. 28; IMF, *Annual Report 2001* (Washington, DC: IMF, 2001), pp. 81, 91.

¹²⁷ IEO, 'Home', available at: {<http://www.ieo-imf.org/ieo/pages/ieohome.aspx>} accessed 30 June 2015.

¹²⁸ Seabrooke, 'Legitimacy gaps in the world economy', p. 262.

¹²⁹ Jacqueline Best, 'Legitimacy dilemmas: the IMF's pursuit of country ownership', *Third World Quarterly*, 28:3 (2007), p. 480.

¹³⁰ Interview with IMF executive director as quoted in: O'Brien, Goetz, Scholte, and Williams, *Contesting Global Governance*, p. 187.

¹³¹ Burgess, 'At IMF headquarters embattled staffers wonder "why us?"'.

countries¹³² and to provide more public information¹³³ via ‘new communication vehicle[s]’ such as the Chairman’s Statement, the circulation of a ‘Code of Conduct for Executive Directors’ on ethical standards, the reopening of its Visitor’s Center, providing a more informative website, and opening up its archives to the public.¹³⁴ By combining this set of discursive and institutional legitimation strategies, the management sought ‘to persuade the population that an adjustment package is legitimate’.¹³⁵ These public legitimation strategies aimed to create the image of an open, responsive institution, which had learnt its lessons and would take more strongly into account the human costs involved during adjustment or transition to a market economy. To use the more recent words of IMF’s former managing director, Dominique Strauss-Kahn: ‘These reforms [that is, quota and governance reforms] will help build a more relevant, a more legitimate and truly representative IMF, and – above all – a more effective IMF.’¹³⁶

This approach did not go down well with the IMF’s staff. When the Asian crisis hit, the Fund’s staff was composed of economists. As a result of their professional training, they saw economic liberalisation, international trade, and the promotion of economic growth as the legitimate purpose of the Fund.¹³⁷ From their perspective, the IMF’s public legitimation strategies, which emphasised poverty reduction, social security, and democratic participation, stood in stark conflict with the Fund’s identity and purpose. In their view, the measures constituted an inappropriate expansion of the IMF’s mandate towards more political issues, and the new goals hindered liberalisation and economic growth. Moreover, IMF staff was not trained to work in these areas and lacked clear guidance. Along with the immense workload arising out of the Asian crisis, the extension of the mandate resulted in overworked, disenchanted staff.¹³⁸ The Executive Board responded to workload issues by founding a ‘Working Group on Stress’ and providing the staff with more information on how to deal with stress.¹³⁹ Yet it failed to address the staff’s legitimacy concerns about the widening of the Fund’s activities beyond its mandate.¹⁴⁰ Although the Human Resource Department had requested clarification and a ‘more clear definition of the work of the institution as a whole’¹⁴¹ in the context of the Fund’s intergovernmental and public legitimation strategies, IMF management failed to address the inconsistencies perceived by their staff members.

Individually, public and intergovernmental legitimation strategies promised to mitigate the sources of the legitimacy crisis. However, they could not balance the demands of the Fund’s constituencies for two reasons: first, a discord between the IMF’s intergovernmental and public legitimation was perceived by members and the public. ‘The Fund’s member states join on the principle of sovereign non-interference, so the notion that citizens should receive information to pressurize their governments to adopt

¹³² IMF, *Annual Report 2001*, p. 35.

¹³³ IMF, *Annual Report 1999* (Washington, DC: IMF, 1999), pp. 177–8.

¹³⁴ IMF, *Annual Report 1999*, p. 43; IMF, *Annual Report 2001*, p. 83.

¹³⁵ Interview with IMF Executive director as quoted in: O’Brien, Goetz, Scholte, and Williams, *Contesting Global Governance*, p. 187.

¹³⁶ IMF, *Annual Report 2010: Supporting a Balanced Global Recovery*, p. 5.

¹³⁷ Jeffrey M. Chwieroth, *Capital Ideas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 12.

¹³⁸ IMF, *Annual Report 1999*, p. 119.

¹³⁹ IMF, *Annual Report 2001*, p. 81.

¹⁴⁰ This reaction exemplifies our distinction between legitimation strategies and other activities tailored to create less durable specific support. In essence, the reduction of stress addressed individual cost-benefit calculations but ignored normative concerns of staff members.

¹⁴¹ IMF, *Annual Report 2000*, p. 96.

Fund policies is a violation of principles of rightful membership and rightful conduct.’¹⁴² Consequently, the intergovernmental strategy, intended to create the image of a more representative, fair, and less interfering institution, fizzled, undermined by the sovereignty-challenging approach to win over the public of borrowing countries.¹⁴³

Second, public legitimisation strategies conflicted with the staff’s institutional identity. Democratisation, engagement with civil society, and the inclusion of social and environmental issues in loan conditionality not only went beyond the IMF’s mandate but were also perceived to jeopardise the Fund’s economic governance targets of liberalisation, free trade, and economic growth.¹⁴⁴ The new image of a democratically representative Fund taking care of social security and the environment violated staff members’ belief in rightful conduct. As a result, many of the Fund’s public and intergovernmental strategies remained mere rhetoric, and many of the institutional reform proposals discussed above were only implemented half-heartedly, if at all.¹⁴⁵ As the director of the Fiscal Affairs Department acknowledged, the Fund’s work on poverty reduction remained ‘very limited’ and was ‘not a main or explicit objective of the IMF’. Even more tellingly, he suggested that the purpose of safety nets had ‘much to do with strengthening the political sustainability of reform’.¹⁴⁶ Similarly, democratic rhetoric on the principle of ownership has not always translated into substantially different behaviour. Especially in the context of formulating and implementing Fund-sponsored policies, many staff members interpreted ownership as the acceptance by debtor governments and their citizens of Fund prescriptions rather than real participation.¹⁴⁷

In sum, the Fund’s reaction to the legitimacy crisis illustrates, first, that even established international bureaucracies are aware of the legitimacy demands of their constituencies, and that the Fund’s management was willing to address these demands through discursive and institutional adaptation. Second, the case shows that legitimisation strategies need careful coordination to be successful. As an external evaluation committee put it as regards ownership: ‘it has been difficult, for reasons of domestic political considerations and the deadweight of tradition and habit in development cooperation offices in the Fund ... to reconcile the declared intentions with practice’.¹⁴⁸ Consequently, concerns of debtor governments and the public could not be eliminated for a long time. Fund members stopped borrowing from the IMF, sought alternative regional arrangements for their financial needs, or publicly declared their intention to avoid future Fund borrowing.¹⁴⁹ Public protests against IMF annual meetings did not decline during the 2000s,¹⁵⁰ and demands for IMF reform were still frequently voiced by civil society groups¹⁵¹ since what was ‘passed off as a

¹⁴² Seabrooke, ‘Legitimacy gaps in the world economy’, pp. 263–4.

¹⁴³ This was even acknowledged by the Fund (IMF, *The IMF and Civil Society Organizations: Striking a Balance* (Washington, DC: IMF, 2001)).

¹⁴⁴ Manuela Moschella, ‘IMF surveillance in crisis: the past, present and future of the reform process’, *Global Society*, 26:1 (2012), p. 51.

¹⁴⁵ O’Brien, Goetz, Scholte, and Williams, *Contesting Global Governance*, ch. 5.

¹⁴⁶ As quoted in: O’Brien, Goetz, Scholte, and Williams, *Contesting Global Governance*, p. 178.

¹⁴⁷ O’Brien, Goetz, Scholte, and Williams, *Contesting Global Governance*, p. 187.

¹⁴⁸ IMF, *Report of the Group of Independent Persons Appointed to Conduct an Evaluation of Certain Aspects of the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility* (Washington, DC: IMF, 1998), p. 24.

¹⁴⁹ Momani, ‘IMF staff’, p. 40.

¹⁵⁰ As indicated by our protest event data analysis for the period between 1996 and 2004.

¹⁵¹ Peter Hardstaff, Daleep Mukarji, Louise Richards, Ashok Sinha, and Alex Wilks, ‘“Double standard” on IMF leader’, *Guardian* (3 April 2004); Heribert Dieter, ‘The decline of the IMF: Is it reversible? Should it be reversed?’, *Global Governance*, 12:4 (2006), pp. 343–9; Barry Eichengreen, ‘A blueprint for IMF reform: More than just a lender’, *International Finance*, 10:2 (2007), pp. 153–75.

democratisation [of the IMF] was perceived as ‘a way of ensuring the poor global majority continue to have no say’.¹⁵²

Conclusion

The cases of the G8 and the IMF demonstrate that diverse international institutions – ranging from informal clubs to strongly institutionalised bureaucracies – are united in a quest for legitimacy. To pave the way for a systematic empirical analysis of the causes and consequences of these top-down attempts to shape the legitimacy perceptions of different constituencies, this article develops the concept of legitimation strategies. It defines its boundaries and delimits three relevant constituencies of legitimation: member states, bureaucratic staff, and the wider public. Following Weber’s empirical understanding of legitimacy and its ascription or withdrawal, we suggest interpreting legitimation strategies as goal-oriented activities employed to establish and maintain a reliable basis of diffuse support for a political regime by its constituencies. Our core argument is that international institutions apply different sets of legitimation strategies – ranging from mere rhetoric to substantive institutional adaptation – depending on the targeted constituency.

Three main lessons can be drawn from the application of our concept: first, the fact that international institutions engage in legitimation strategies has important implications for research on their autonomy and behaviour. Although the mainstream IR literature assumes legitimacy to be a central resource of international institutions, necessary to engage in activities deviating from their member states’ preferences or to achieve governance targets,¹⁵³ international institutions’ strategic attempts to shape the legitimacy perceptions of different constituencies have so far received little attention. This contribution hopes to provide a first conceptual remedy and advance more specific and systematic empirical research on the question of how international institutions’ quest for legitimacy transforms their behaviour and to what extent successful legitimation strategies can increase their autonomy *vis-à-vis* their member states.

Second, by taking into account all three types of legitimation strategies and their interaction, research on the legitimacy of international institutions is better equipped to understand how international institutions manage to position themselves as legitimate elements of international politics. This article argues that a carefully balanced set of legitimation strategies might be one condition for success. Our case studies suggest that international institutions may be more successful in managing their legitimacy if they balance the normative expectations of their member states, staff, and the public respectively. This balancing might be easier for low-staffed institutions such as the G8, because weaker bureaucracies are less likely to develop strong institutional identities and are less able to assert their demands. Furthermore, the interaction between legitimation strategies and attributes of international institutions such as types of authority, modes of governance, membership, and

¹⁵² George Monbiot, ‘Don’t be fooled by this reform: the IMF is still the rich world’s viceroy: What will be passed off as a democratisation is in fact a way of ensuring the poor global majority continue to have no say’, *Guardian* (5 September 2006).

¹⁵³ Barnett and Finnemore, ‘The politics, power and pathologies of international organizations’; Hawkins, Lake, Nielson, and Tierney (eds), *Delegation and Agency in International Organizations*; Kenneth Abbott, Philipp Genschel, Duncan Snidal, and Bernhard Zangl (eds), *International Organizations as Orchestrators* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

mandate, can be expected to shape the success or failure of legitimation strategies and should be examined more closely. Moreover, in an era of contested multilateralism,¹⁵⁴ in which international institutions compete for limited resources, it can be expected that legitimation strategies of different institutions are interdependent. While some will challenge each other's legitimacy – as it was the case with the G8 and the G20 after the financial crisis in 2008¹⁵⁵ – others may jump on the bandwagon and form coalitions of legitimation.

Finally, the concept offers a substantial contribution to research on international institutional design, because their institutional set-up is not only shaped by functional demand in terms of the respective mandate but also by the quest for legitimacy. In order to better understand why some international institutions assume an informal club format while others become full-blown organisations; why some institutions' decision-making procedures are reformed substantially while others' remain unaltered; or why some institutions open-up to civil society while others do not, the interaction of international institutions' constituencies and legitimation strategies should be taken into account more systematically. Our case studies show that international institutions react to crises of legitimacy, among other things, by adapting their institutional design to the legitimacy demands of different constituencies. Thus, our concept might enrich ongoing research on the normative roots of institutional change in international institutions by specifying mechanisms and identifying likely periods of change.¹⁵⁶

In conclusion, research on international institutions' varying levels of legitimacy, autonomy and behaviour, and institutional design will profit from exploring 'varieties of legitimation',¹⁵⁷ that is, how international institutions prioritise constituencies of legitimation and what types of strategies are adopted by which types of international institutions to appeal to their audiences.

¹⁵⁴ Julia C. Morse and Robert O. Keohane, 'Contested multilateralism', *Review of International Organizations*, 9:4 (2014), pp. 385–412.

¹⁵⁵ Gronau, *Die Selbstlegitimation internationaler Institutionen*.

¹⁵⁶ Leonard Seabrooke, 'Everyday legitimacy and institutional change', in Andreas Gofas and Colin Hay (eds), *The Role of Ideas in Political Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 78–94; Tallberg, Sommerer, Squatrito, and Jönsson, *The Opening Up of International Organizations*.

¹⁵⁷ Nullmeier, Geis, and Daase, 'Der Aufstieg der Legitimationspolitik: Rechtfertigung und Kritik politisch-ökonomischer Ordnungen', p. 29.