Polarizing the United Nations:
China's Rise and the Degree of Ideological Persuasion

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Abstract

China relies on a vision of sovereignty to persuade states to accept changes in the status quo. By developing a theory of ideological persuasion, I hypothesize that China's message of sovereignty is widely attractive, but China's image creates polarization between liberal and non-liberal states. This research analyzes decisions to accept a statist or liberal ideology where order is developing: the information order governing the internet. By building an original corpus of texts from prominent cybersecurity negotiations at the United Nations and conducting an elite experiment with diplomats, I test the degree and causes of support for a statist ideology. Text analysis reveals that rather than unifying the United Nations, China's message of cyber sovereignty creates widespread ideological polarization. The experiment identifies the cause. China's image, rather than its message of sovereignty, creates liberal backlash while maintaining the support of non-liberal states. This research concludes with a discussion of the implications of polarization. Given many liberal institutional designs favor a majority, China still possesses the possibility of achieving change through strategies of persuasion.

Word Count: 11,784

Introduction

China's impact on international order is one of the greatest uncertainties in international relations. Many have focused on whether China will be socialized to accept the status quo and integrate into the existing international order.[1] Recent work on China's grand strategy, however, has demonstrated that China is motivated to reform and shape the world in which it is rising.[2] This research flips the analytical lens to examine the degree to which China persuades officials to accept Beijing's vision of order. Rather than emphasizing liberalism, China champions the development of a statist vision of international order that elevates the right to sovereignty.[3] Just as the United States sought to legitimize liberalism, China pursues ideological persuasion to encourage officials to respect a statist ideology.[4]

Thus far, political scientists are hardly of one mind about the conditions when officials buy into China's state-centric vision of international collaboration. Theories of soft power anticipate that China has a limited ability to attract. Given the tight control of the Chinese Communist Party and centralized decision-making, many speculate that China's message will fall on deaf ears as it lacks one of the central means of accumulating soft power: a robust and independent civil society.[5] Other studies, however, find that China has the potential to persuade global audiences through the power of its messaging.[6] China's investments in the universal messages of sovereignty and non-interference should attract support within international organizations and appeal to states that have grievances against the existing order.[7]

I theorize that rather than unifying the United Nations, great power persuasion creates polarization. Specifically, a great power's image shapes receptivity to its persuasive message. China strategically relies on the universal value of sovereignty to attract support for its proposals by framing change as supporting a foundational value of statehood. Even though China relies on a universal norm, I contend that its image shapes receptivity to Beijing's message of sovereignty and state rights. Due to China's promotion, liberal officials begin to link sovereignty with authoritarian politics and repression. Rather than associating sovereignty with the status quo, liberal officials view China's vision of sovereignty as an untenable ideological shift away from the human-centric design of the liberal order. The officials from non-liberal states, however, are attracted to China's promotion of government rights and the elevation of sovereignty. China's image creates polarization among nations that were once united behind the fundamental importance of sovereignty.

To test how governments mobilize for China's vision of order, I examine the development of international order in cyberspace. Since internet governance is an issue area under development, it offers officials an opportunity to choose between a liberal or statist vision. In the competition for developing order, Xi Jinping underscores the importance of persuasion by noting that "the cybersecurity game of major countries is not only a technical game, but also a game

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[1]Johnston (2003); Johnston (2014).
[2]Goldstein (2020).
[3]Voeten (2021).
[4]Ikenberry and Kupchan (1990).
[5]Nye (2012).
[6]Mattingly et al. (2022).
[7]Goddard and Krebs (2015); Goddard (2018b); Broz et al. (2020).

of ideas and a game of discourse power." Although the United States established a vision of a "borderless internet" to extend liberal values of free expression beyond the reach of politics and national borders, China contests the status quo and seeks to return to an earlier statist ideology grounded in a vision of sovereignty, territory, and state control. Beijing contends principles of cyber sovereignty, rather than internet freedom, should guide interstate relations to establish a more fair and equitable international order. Within the United Nations, China's delegation actively promotes a vision of sovereignty as the guiding principle for cyberspace.

Across three different tests of developing order in cyberspace, I find China's promotion of sovereignty produces polarization between liberal and non-liberal states. I measure persuasion as the ability of China to close the gap between opposing preferences.[8] By examining United Nations votes for China's proposals to develop a state-centric vision of cyber order, I find liberal states contest whereas non-liberal states support China's vision of cyber order, resulting in highly fragmented and contentious support for China's proposals. To map the degree of persuasion over time, I transcribe UN Web TV cyber debates from the United Nations Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) that develops rules of responsible state behavior for cybersecurity. By analyzing the similarity of each country's OEWG speech with China's vision of sovereignty in cyberspace, I find patterns of polarization widen over time. To test the causes of polarization, I conduct an elite survey experiment with international diplomats. I find that China's image repels liberal officials while maintaining the support of officials from non-liberal states.

I conclude by discussing how the findings of polarization inform our understanding of China's rise and influence on international order. Cyberspace affords opportunities to understand what type of order China wants to build and where it attracts support. This research finds that despite relying on universal values, China's investments in social strategies do not fully persuade the United Nations. Most theories of domestic and international politics expect polarization to be an unwanted outcome. But for China, polarization is not always problematic. Many of China's initiatives pass by attracting most of the United Nations. When voting rules allow change when a majority approves, China can shift the status quo by relying on persuasive messaging that attracts a majority of the United Nations. Liberal backlash and the resulting polarization do not limit China's ability to implement ideological change as these states comprise a minority of the United Nations membership. In many instances, contention over China's proposals is not enough to hold back China's influence at the United Nations.

The implications of China's influence are vast for understanding ideological stability and change. Although great powers have long engaged in a competition to "win hearts and minds", we have less understanding of the degree to which a rising power encourages shifts and far less scholarship on the persuasive appeals of great powers when rhetoric is typically discounted as window dressing.[9] China's continued focus on persuasion, however, underscores its importance to great powers. Persuasion can facilitate ideological change even in the face of polarization. Many

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[8] Johnston (2014).

[9] This point is made by Goddard and Krebs (2015).

scholars anticipate liberal institutions should influence the vitality of the liberal order by allowing opportunities for voicing dissatisfaction and grievances. My research, however, suggests that "voice" – the feature thought to preserve liberalism's vitality – is the dominant mechanism for change. Although polarization and contestation may result, the majority-based system allows for transformation as China's reliance on sovereignty attracts widespread support, while China's leadership repels a smaller coalition of liberal states. This research suggests as China finds its voice, ideological changes in other liberal sub-orders could abound.

1   China's Rise, Sovereignty, and Persuasion

Ideology, in many ways, is the glue that holds international order together. Ideology defines the social purpose of rules and institutions and the reasons for collaboration. Voeten defines ideology "as a widely understood set of interconnected propositions about how a set of issues should be resolved and who should resolve them."[10] For instance, the social purposes of a liberal international order include freedom from arbitrary authority, the protection of human rights and civil liberties, and the elevation of democratic participation.[11]

Rising powers are often motivated to shape the ideology of international order and China is no different. Many believe that shaping the ideology of international order is the prize of hegemony.[12] Power transitions often lead to changes in the norms and values that define international order. For instance, "Rome and Britain each created a world order, the oppressive rule of the Pax Romana was in most respects very different from the generally liberal rule of Pax Britannica."[13] Similarly, China advances a statist ideology that reorients the liberal focus on the rights of individuals to the rights of governments. Statism "emphasizes self-determination as ethically good, reserves a prominent role for the state in domestic political economy, favors redistributing resources away from the West, and advocates for the restoration of non-interference in the domestic affairs of states."[14] When new China constructs new institutions, the rules and social purpose answer to a statist rather than liberal ideology. For instance, in the lending regime, China argues against recipients making changes in domestic political institutions as a condition for receiving loans to preserve the statist emphasis on non-interference in domestic affairs.

Ideologies are important for prestige.[15] China is motivated to set its mark on institutions and shape the normative foundations of order. As Goldstein argues, under President Xi Jinping's leadership, China's role as a great power is fulfilled by "China not simply adapting to, but instead more actively shaping, the world in which it is rising."[16] The scope of the Chinese Communist Party's vision under President Xi Jinping is broad. By promoting the centrality of

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[10]Voeten (2021), 21.
[11]Doyle (2011) See also Doyle (2005); Keohane (2012); Ikenberry (2011); Allan et al. (2018).
[12]Ikenberry (2000).
[13]Gilpin (1981), 37.
[14]Voeten (2021), 24.
[15]Gilpin (1981).
[16]Goldstein (2020), 178.

China, scholars argue Xi seeks to pursue developments that grant China an international voice and influence proportionate to a vision of China as a central global power.[17] China did not have a seat at the table when most international institutions were formed, as it did not gain its United Nations seat until 1971. Therefore, China was unable to play a significant role in constructing the current international order.[18] As China rises, its leaders argue that their country's great power status entitles it to a more prominent voice in international relations, and that they have valuable insights and perspectives to contribute to the global discourse.[19] China argues for constructing a more just and fair international order that includes the voices of all states rather than fulfilling the interests of a select group of Western states.[20]

Another reason for China to desire ideological change is to check the influence of the United States. The United States shapes the distribution of benefits and has outsized authority over outcomes within international organizations. China opposes US hegemony and seeks to minimize the security risks associated with US dominance. In some issue areas, China fears that the United States could weaponize the liberal order.[21] For instance, China has long perceived institutions that govern the internet as an extension of the US government and fears Washington could use its ties with the organization to disrupt connectivity.[22] China has expressed frustration with US dominance in internet governance institutions. For example, in veiled statements at the United Nations, Chinese officials have argued that organizations responsible for managing the internet should be independent of any state's control.[23]

1.1 Ideological Persuasion

One channel to achieve ideological change occurs through persuasion. Through the power of argumentation and rhetoric, a rising power can more subtly achieve its goals by causing others to "want what it wants."[24] By crafting attractive messages, great powers encourage elites to buy into alternative visions of order.[25] This strategy has been used successfully to diffuse liberalism and socialize elites to new ideas. For example, several US presidents campaigned to secure the adoption of a liberal ideology on the world stage, successfully convincing European officials to abandon notions of colonialism and economic nationalism.[26]

Persuasion is appealing to great powers because it involves institutionalizing change and attracting widespread support. After successful persuasion, elites accept the values of a great power's order as appropriate and worthy of support. This strategy encourages secondary states to accept new "packages of ideas and rules" that govern social

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[17]Economy (2022).

[18]Boon (2018), 135.

[19]Doshi (2021).

[20]Yan (2018).

[21]Daily (2010); Galloway and Baogang (2014). For theories of weaponization, see Farrell and Newman (2019).

[22]Creemers (2020).

[23]China's Submissions to the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, *see* here.

[24]Lukes (1974).

[25]Ikenberry and Kupchan (1990).

[26]Ibid.

relations within a given order.[27] Great powers strategically encourage the acceptance of an ideology so that even if the power's capabilities decline, the norms and values remain resilient.[28] To create these shifts, great powers convince other member states to support the adoption of new rules and recognize an alternative ideology as appropriate.[29] Since multilateralism relies on the voluntary participation of secondary states[30], persuasion is an important strategy for securing support for shifts in the status quo.

China's ascent includes an emphasis on persuasion, which China refers to as "discourse power" or "the right to speak."[31] This is a form of soft power that seeks to convince and persuade, and involves "telling China's story well" to influence the favorable reception of China's ideas on the world stage.[32] China's persuasive appeal heavily emphasizes the concept of sovereignty to attract support for its vision of order. By promoting the concepts of justice and fairness and the need to construct a "community of shared future", China argues for building order that is equitable to all states rather than a select few.[33] Sovereignty is the dominant persuasive appeal to attract and encourage secondary states to mobilize for change.

By relying on sovereignty as a universal and foundational value of statehood, China strategically connects with earlier ideas and institutions that enjoy widespread acceptance. The liberal order is layered on top of an earlier Sovereign Territorial Order that elevated the concept of sovereignty.[34] By relying on foundational concepts, China can strategically appear to be operating within the confines of the rules-based order even while changing them.[35] Rather than advancing new ideas, China calls for elevating the rights of governments. This is an effective strategy of "norm retrieval" that calls for elevating familiar and widely accepted principles over the liberal principles of human rights. China's proposals to elevate sovereignty should be attractive and even commonplace to United Nations member states.[36]

1.2 Predicting the Impact of Persuasion

The importance of persuasion to ideological change is evident but the impact of this tool remains more elusive. Existing theories make two conflicting predictions about the degree to which a rising power can rely on social tools to attract support.

The first prediction is that ideological persuasion results in a successful alignment between the vision of the great power and secondary states.[37] Theories that emphasize the rhetorical toolkit of great powers expect that relying on

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[27] Kupchan (2014), 221.

[28] Ikenberry (2000).

[29] Finnemore and Hollis (2016).

[30] Stone (2011).

[31] Yang (2021).

[32] Xi Jinping Speech, *see* here.

[33] Nathan and Zhang (2022).

[34] Simmons and Goemans (2021).

[35] Goddard (2018a).

[36] Paris (2020).

[37] Ikenberry and Kupchan (1990); Finnemore and Hollis (2016).

universal ideas, such as sovereignty, augments a great power's ability to shape the way that secondary states align with a rising power.[38] Recent studies have found that China's economic vision attracts followers and positively shapes public opinion.[39] China's message of fairness is especially attractive to those with grievances against the liberal order.[40]

The second prediction is that China's soft power deficit impedes its ability to influence ideological change.[41] According to Nye, Hollywood and Madison Avenue created a desirable and attractive image of the United States abroad. However, China lacks the same robust civil society responsible for generating attraction due to its heavy emphasis on state control.[42] Empirical evidence suggests that although China's global footprint is expanding, its influence is not particularly deep.[43] Green-Riley finds China's investments in soft power initiatives through the seemingly innocuous Confucius Institutes lead to unexpected consequences where participants do not hold more favorable views of China after participating in the program.[44] Similarly, Repnikova finds that even programs as benign and benevolent as educational exchange merely create mixed impressions of China.[45] Taken together, the evidence suggests that China lacks the ability to make persuasive appeals that attract and mobilize.[46]

The existing scholarship provides conflicting evidence about the likely effectiveness of Chinese attempts to persuade elites to accept new visions of international order. Importantly, prior studies do not directly examine whether China can effectively sell the merits of a statist ideology relative to liberalism. Studies that consider the impact of ideological persuasion tend to exclusively focus on the impact of liberalism and the extent to which elites and the mass public buy into its values.[47] Most studies focus on a small subset of countries rather than the international community at large and have yet to point the analytical aperture at a statist ideology. Can China mobilize coalitions within international organizations and persuade elites to accept its statist vision of order? To what extent does the United Nations membership support China's calls for statism over liberalism?

2   Theory: The Impact of Images on Persuasion

Great power persuasion is distinct from traditional notions of persuasion, as most theories focus on the appeal of messages and frames to predict change, with little attention given to the messenger. However, the messenger's image is crucial to consider when examining a great power's persuasion. Officials use images to evaluate a messenger's

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[38]Goddard and Krebs (2015).
[39]Mattingly et al. (2022).
[40]Broz et al. (2020).
[41]Nye (2017).
[42]Nye, "Peak China", 2023
[43]Shambaugh (2013), 6.
[44]Green-Riley (2021).
[45]Repnikova (2022).
[46]Popovic et al. (2020); Lee (2021).
[47]Allan et al. (2018).

purpose and intentions.[48] Despite relying on a universal norm of sovereignty, China's persuasion is not universally attractive.

Although messages matter, I argue that the images of great powers shape responsiveness to persuasive appeals. In Chinese, the concept of the "voice behind speech" (*hua wai yin*), emphasizes the importance of the speaker. Communication in world politics is challenging as messages are not always interpreted the same.[49] Although sovereignty is a foundational principle of statehood, liberal states interpret China's promotion of sovereignty as an ideological shift away from a liberal focus on the rights of individuals and elevating civil society to liberal states. Authoritarian states, however, are unaffected by China's image and stand ready to mobilize for a vision of sovereignty. Similar to the problems plaguing American institutions, a focus on images predicts the United Nations becomes highly divided under China's ascent.[50]

I theorize that China's promotion of sovereignty polarizes the United Nations and reshapes the meaning of sovereignty. In general, polarization refers to situations where policy preferences separate over time.[51] Under conditions of issue-based polarization, coalitions diverge across a group of issues and contest the appropriate policy response to resolving common threats.[52] Periods of polarization in international organizations witness coalitions moving further away from sharing ideas and recommendations for resolving policy issues. Rather than interpreting sovereignty as a value associated with the existing liberal international order, liberal states perceive China's promotion of sovereignty as legitimizing authoritarian politics and repression. Non-liberal states, however, find a vision of sovereignty and non-interference attraction. These differences produce polarization rather than full persuasion of the United Nations membership.

2.1   Images Cause Backlash

Communications scholars have studied how a country's image, also known as a source cue, can influence persuasion. Political actors behind a policy issue provide important cues that shape reactions to messages and can create polarization around universal values and institutions.[53] For example, learning about the policy position of a president, such as Obama, may reveal party affiliation, or it might link to a stance on a policy issue, such as healthcare.[54] These cues have the potential to reduce consensus sharply among members of an out-group who contest policies they might have otherwise supported in the absence of source cues. The actor promoting a policy can produce sharp reductions in consensus from members of an out-group who contest policies they might have otherwise supported in the absence of source cues.[55] Endorsements from actors of opposing identities or political affiliations can create backlash for those

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[48]Jervis (1989).
[49]Jervis (1976).
[50]For original work on clashes in the United Nations see Voeten (2000).
[51]Druckman and Levendusky (2019).
[52]Myrick (2021).
[53]Druckman (2001); Carmines and Stimson (1990); Bowler and Donovan (2000); Arceneaux and Kolodny (2009); Arceneaux (2008).
[54]Bullock (2011).
[55]Myrick (2021).

in the out-group but have no effect on in-group members.[56]

Great powers have the potential to be highly polarizing. At the international level, the logic of images operates similarly to Mao's famous adage "whatever the enemy supports we oppose and whatever the enemy opposes, we support." China's out-group includes states with opposing ideological identities who contest China's normative leadership. In the United Nations, officials scrutinize the state that proposed a resolution and the author of new norms and rules for information about ideology. The ideological cues from great powers are so strong that Bailey et al develop estimates of a government's ideology by arguing that moving with the United States in the United Nations tells us something about a government's ideological stance.[57] Despite many valid claims of hypocrisy around the rules it established, the United States is seen as the leader of the existing liberal rules-based order.[58] Liberal states perceive China as a state with different normative goals and values.

Different reactions to China's message are observed depending on the officials' ideological orientation. Liberal states perceive China's promotion of government rights as an ideological departure from the status quo emphasis on individual rights. This perception is partly due to China's image as an out-group member, which limits the receptivity of liberal officials to its appeals.[59] While most United Nations members accept the importance of emphasizing sovereignty and elevating the rights of states, liberal officials perceive China as constructing a different normative logic. When China proposes new rules that support sovereignty, democracies are more likely to reject them, while other officials are more attracted to China's leadership of state-centric institutions and its message that sovereignty is a familiar and commonplace value that deserves support.[60]

2.2   Images Reshape Meaning

I also hypothesize that a great power's image reshapes the meaning of its message. China has an image problem with liberal officials. These officials consider Chinese domestic politics when weighing its international proposals to scrutinize China's intentions and purposes. For instance, when China proposes internet governance rules, many liberal officials perceive China not only as a technical juggernaut but as a state that constructed the Great Firewall to limit the movement of information. Other reasons for China's image deficit to arise occurs from the foreign policy of the United States, which paints China as a threat.[61] One of the most recent campaigns includes the United States State Department's efforts to limit the adoption of Chinese technology within the networks of its allies, by painting an image of China as a surveillance state.

Although liberal officials may accept sovereignty, China's promotion causes them to begin associating the value

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[56]Nicholson (2012).

[57]Bailey et al. (2017).

[58]Ikenberry (2011).

[59]Chu (2021) considers China a normative threat to liberal states.

[60]This is similar to Voeten's prediction; see Voeten (2021), 181. Myrick's finding about source cues also supports this idea; see Myrick (2021).

[61]Yang and Liu (2012).

with authoritarian politics. Liberal officials begin to link support for sovereignty with policies that permit repression. For liberal states that value and endorse the rights of individuals, China's promotion of sovereignty presents an untenable turn toward a focus on governments and suggests a desire to limit the reach of human rights protections to protect the ability of governments to execute national policies as they see fit. As one United Kingdom official mentioned, when China relies on sovereignty to persuade, it signals a deviation from liberal values that privilege the role of civil society. For liberal states that value the status quo, China's promotion of sovereignty suggests an unacceptable shift toward "national ownership of the private sector."[62] Rather than accepting sovereignty as a value of the liberal order, China's promotion causes liberal officials to link sovereignty with international policies that devalue the protection of human rights.

Non-liberal states, however, should continue to support sovereignty with or without China's promotion. China's efforts to draw attention to sovereignty are especially attractive to authoritarian leaders who contest aspects of the liberal order, especially those that challenge the concepts of sovereignty and territory in favor of the universal protection of human rights.[63] Rather than emphasizing the power of global markets, authoritarian states call for international collaboration that respects national rights to sovereignty and non-interference. China's sovereignty message is likely to encourage support by indicating a departure away from the liberal international order that many officials criticized for interfering with domestic independence and promoting values of free exchange that ultimately lead to harm, such as the case with internet freedom and misinformation.[64] When China presents new institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, many non-liberal states find China's message of non-interference in domestic institutions persuasive and a welcome change from the status quo.

H_1 **(Polarization): China's persuasive message of sovereignty is more likely to attract non-liberal officials and less likely to attract liberal officials.**

H_2 **(Polarizing Cues): China's image lowers liberal officials' attraction to a message of sovereignty while maintaining the support of non-liberal states.**

H_3 **(Polarizing Meaning): Among liberal states, China's image reshapes the meaning of sovereignty from a value of the liberal order to one associated with authoritarian politics.**

3   Research Design: China and the International Information Sub-Order

To examine the degree to which governments support institutionalizing ideological shifts toward China's statist vision of order, I focus on the elaboration of order in cyberspace. Since governments are currently developing rules to

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[62] Author's Interview with UK Official, November 2022.
[63] Ginsburg (2020).
[64] Farrell and Newman (2020).

mitigate digital security threats, cyberspace offers a fertile space to explore whether new rules develop according to a liberal or statist ideology. It is also a sub-order that China is explicitly motivated to shape.[65] Although China's motivations vary across the status quo, China contests the information order and demands building rules that are more fair and equitable.

Although liberalism varies in its recognition of individual rights across sub-orders, cyberspace is an area that definitively extends a liberal ideology.[66] As the creator of the internet, the United States gained immense authority to instill a liberal vision of rules and institutions. The early history of the internet's creation in the United States is significant for the design of institutions and its norms as it results in "virtually every major aspect of the internet linked to the United States."[67] As Goldsmith notes, the United States government worked to use the internet as a force for democracy promotion as "the internet was an American invention that, in its very code, seemed to embody the American values of free speech."[68] The protection of free expression is elevated by the internet's ignorance of geography and territorial boundaries. Regardless of location, all have the right to send and receive information. Government control of the internet, according to Washington, is inimical to First Amendment ideas of an open internet and the free and unadulterated data flow. US foreign policy sought to limit government control over information flows by painting such control analogous to "digital walls" threatening fundamental values of freedom of speech and association online.[69]

To extend liberalism, international institutions governing the internet are highly decentralized private or multi-stakeholder organizations that heavily involve civil society, engineers, and technology firms while keeping government involvement at a minimum.[70] The more limited collaboration through traditional intergovernmental organizations, such as the United Nations, is intentional.[71] For many years, one of the most important institutions to the functions of the internet — the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) — operated through a contract with the US Department of Commerce. Although states have found methods for censorship to occur within national boundaries, the United States argued private control over international domain name allocation and the root file of websites prevents governments from circumventing global internet access since non-state actors have an economic interest in preserving connectivity.[72] The anxiety over the involvement of governments is reflected in the institutional design of ICANN, as states are relegated to a Governmental Advisory Committee that makes recommendations to the ICANN board.

For China, greater fairness is achieved through a statist ideology. China's statist approach to internet governance

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[65]Lipscy (2017); Johnston (2019); Weiss and Wallace (2021).
[66]Farrell and Newman (2021).
[67]Hollis and Raustiala, Working Paper on File with Author.
[68]Goldsmith (2018).
[69]Clinton (2010).
[70]Simmons (2011); Raymond and DeNardis (2015), 573; Nye Jr (2010).
[71]Drezner (2004), 495
[72]Raustiala (2017).

diffuses new values that grant the state outsized — if not complete — decision-making power over internet policies.[73] Statism in cyberspace builds from China's domestic focus on defending its cyber borders and claiming national jurisdiction of China's cyberspace.[74] Beginning in 2011, China, Russia, and other members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization submitted a Code of Conduct to the United Nations General Assembly, calling for the United Nations to take up a statist approach to constructing rules and institutions for cyberspace. In a key change from the liberal emphasis on private control over networks, China and co-authors of the code of conduct affirmed the "policy authority for Internet-related public issues is the sovereign right of States, which have rights and responsibilities for international Internet-related public policy issues."[75]

When building new institutions to structure digital collaboration, China argues for defending the principles of sovereignty against perceived injustices associated with the liberal status quo. China argues that internet governance should be shared among states. As such, the United Nations, rather than private institutions, should play the leading role.[76] By allowing only nation-states seats at the internet governance negotiation table, China asserts internet governance will be more democratic to governments by fulfilling the sovereign right of all nations to participate. China contends a state-centric design also builds greater fairness and equity as all sovereign states work together under the UN framework to "uphold the principles of engaging in discussions as equals."[77] China argues states, rather than firms, should be key actors in carrying out activities and maintaining order in cyberspace.[78]

3.1 Dependent Variable: Ideological Persuasion

Persuasion is defined as the ability to close the gap between opposing preferences.[79] When order develops in cyberspace, I capture the decisions of countries to support a statist vision. Ideological persuasion occurs when a country's voting patterns and speeches support a statist ideology over the status quo liberal ideology.

To track preferences for developing cyber order, I first collect speeches from the United Nations Open Ended Working Group (OEWG). China proposed the OEWG to develop new rules of the game. The OEWG represents a shift from an earlier period of collaborating through highly commercialized or expert-led forums. At the opening of the OEWG, China's diplomat Wang Lei argued that the Chair's call not to be emotional during the negotiations should be momentarily disregarded as there is "every reason to be emotional because this is the first time ever when all sovereign states in the world have an opportunity to discuss the order and norms of cyberspace."[80] The OEWG is of special significance, he argued, because it advances a vision of sovereign equality by departing from previous forums

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[73] Maurer and Morgus (2014).

[74] International Strategy for Cooperation in Cyberspace, *see* here; Johnston (2019); Creemers (2020); Segal (2017).

[75] A/69/723, Page 3.

[76] State Council Information Office briefing on white paper 'Jointly Build a Community with a Shared Future in Cyberspace,' *see* here

[77] Sovereignty in Cyberspace: Theory and Practice, *see* here.

[78] Sovereignty in Cyberspace: Theory and Practice, *see* here.

[79] Johnston (2014).

[80] OEWG Corpus, China, Substantive Session One, Meeting One, September 2019

that only invited a small number of governmental experts.

After the OEWG passed, the setting is ripe for China to influence behavior through its persuasive appeals. In an interview with China's delegation, China describes its efforts to rely on the power of its rhetorical example to attract support.[81] By submitting policy papers and delivering lengthy speeches, China sets a distinctly statist vision for elevating the role of states in internet governance.[82] Many of China's statements appeal to the value of sovereignty in cyberspace and encourage governments to ground collaboration in elevating the principle of sovereign equality.

When governments develop new rules at the OEWG, they choose between a liberal or statist vision of cyber order. Speeches at the OEWG reflect national preferences on developing international order for cybersecurity and ideological orientation. Each official actively engages in the debate to signal their national positions.[83] Participation in the OEWG reveals each nation's willingness to learn and understand the preferences of others to move toward a mutually acceptable solution. As El Salvador noted, the open dialogue of the OEWG allows governments "the opportunity to know the position of other states" through the information exchange and preferences conveyed in speeches.[84] Rather than merely making symbolic speeches, however, the OEWG is important for representing each government's preferences for how order should develop and whether the rights of individuals or the rights of states should be emphasized.

The United Nations Secretariat streams videos of the deliberations on United Nations TV but does not publish transcripts of the negotiations. To capture the text of each official's speech, I rely on automatic speech recognition (ASR) systems to overcome this challenge and build the first comprehensive database of government statements specifying national preferences for developing international order. The UNCD allows for observation of the process of ideological persuasion. To observe each government's preferences, I match each text to a speaker and the specific agenda item to develop a country-agenda-speech level corpus spanning the length of negotiations of the OEWG meetings. This process builds on the work of others to create corpora from live-streamed negotiations that overcome analyzing debates when international organizations do not produce transcripts.[85] The UNCD captures 1622 officials' speeches at the OEWG from 2018-2023. Although the OEWG dedicates one informal meeting to stakeholders, non-state actors are not included in the sample.

I use the Wordscores text scaling algorithm to define speeches along an ideological continuum between liberalism and statism.[86] I define the training set as speeches made by China, which presents a highly state-centric vision, and the European Union, which resolutely demands a focus on individuals.[87] The Wordscores method uses the relative

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[81] Author's interview with the Chinese delegation at the United Nations Open Ended Working Group for ICTs, July 2022.

[82] China's Submissions to the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, *see* here.

[83] See work on the "discursive practice of exchanging reasons in multilateralism" Mitzen (2013), 53.

[84] El Salvador, Second OEWG, Second Session, Meeting 9.

[85] Wratil et al. (2022).

[86] Carmody et al. (2020); Catalinac (2018).

[87] Given the large change in US leadership from the Trump to Biden administration that coincides with the OEWG, I focus on the European Union as a steady representation of a liberal position of internet freedom. The European Union consistently promotes a liberal vision of order in cyberspace

frequencies for each word within China and EU speeches to calculate the probability of reading each reference text, which generates a numerical score for each word. Then the latent position of each document in the test set is calculated as the arithmetic mean of the posterior probabilities. The other speeches within the corpus are compared to the reference texts to place policy preferences along a spectrum ranging from those expressing preferences similar to the EU'S focus on individuals versus those expressing alignment with China's state-centric vision. As a validation check, I conduct content analysis to elaborate on the points of contestation and the extent to which fragmentation has an ideological dimension.[88]

3.2   Independent Variable: Ideological Preferences

I argue that China's persuasion polarizes: liberal states contest whereas non-liberal states accept China's vision. To measure a government's ideological preferences, I examine domestic and international manifestations. At the domestic level, I use the Polity measure of democracy to capture a state's commitment to protecting liberal values at home through constitutional protections of individuals and checks and balances on the government. The second measure captures a state's commitment to liberalism within international collaboration. Bailey et al develop a latent score of ideological preferences by using voting patterns in the United Nations that track the alignment of voting with the United Nations.[89]

I also develop digital measures of online ideology that capture how a country's ideological approach to the internet. First, using data from Google's transparency reports, I use the number of requests a government submits to receive digital intelligence from Google to capture a government's integration in the liberal international information order and reliance on American technology firms for critical crime-fighting functions. Since the data is highly skewed, I use the log of the requests. Second, Freedom House calculates a Freedom on the Net score to represent adherence to norms of Internet Freedom. The score is published yearly and uses a variety of indicators, including the extent to which a country imposes obstacles to internet access, limits on content available within territorial boundaries, and violates user rights to free expression, surveillance and privacy, and imprisons or harasses individuals as repercussions for online speech and activities. Since this score is published by an NGO closely affiliated with the US, it strongly represents alignment with the US vision of a liberal international information order.

3.3   Controls

In the realm of power politics and institutions, many anticipate coercion, or the threat of coercion, determines movement toward a hegemon or rising power's preferences. To consider the potential for investments to pull governments

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focused on extending the rights of individuals, whereas the United States focused mainly on security issues during the Trump administration before returning to internet freedom ideas in the Biden administration.

[88]See also the appendix for additional validation exercises of the measures.

[89]Bailey et al. (2017).

towards China, I follow other studies that measure the influence of "pull factors" through China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).[90] The BRI provides infrastructure and development assistance to countries along a land and sea corridor. I use the Broz et al measure of the BRI, which captures a nation's adjacency to announced BRI routes that are especially likely to receive investment from China. In addition, having a Free Trade Agreement or Bilateral Investment Treaty with China is another way that China might pull countries into its international orbit.

To focus on cyber-related benefits, I capture the intensity of a government's involvement in the digital aspect of the BRI. Using the records of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, I created an original dataset focused on China's Digital Silk Road (DSR) investments in technology and telecommunications that include 4,832 observations. These relationships map the benefits a country receives from technical collaboration through China's BRI through a count variable of the number of technical projects. The projects most interesting are those that enable a statist approach to the internet, including technical training, data centers, telecommunications networks, safe cities, 5G networks, and surveillance equipment. Given the speculation that China's investments have strings attached, focusing on the intensity of these investments represents an attractive carrot of investments in infrastructure. To normalize China's investments by the size of the ICT market, I divide by the percentage of citizens using the internet. China makes the highest DSR investments in Eritrea, Burundi, Pakistan, India, and Uganda.

Governments with limited capacity could be more likely to be persuaded to support a statist order. I first measure capacity through VDEM's Digital Society project digital regulatory capacity, which measures whether "the government has sufficient staff and resources to regulate internet content in accordance with existing law?" as a proxy for legal capacity. In addition, I use the Digital Society Project's technical capacity variable, which measures whether "the government has sufficiently technologically skilled staff and resources to mitigate harm from cyber-security threats." Other measures of capacity involve development. Some governments could desire China's highly centralized vision of order when they lack the national wealth to mitigate cybersecurity threats independently. Following Voeten, I use GDP per capita as a proxy for economic development.[91] Other governments may lack digital diplomatic expertise with the norms and issues of cyber governance. Novices are particularly important to theories of socialization.[92] Using records of GGE attendance, I created a variable measuring how many times a government attended the GGE discussions. This variable uniquely allows researchers to determine whether a government's status as a novice informs reactions to China's social tools.

Grievances are one area that can push governments to demand change.[93] Discomfort may arise from the openness of the order. Although the liberal international order brings economic benefits and rapid growth from openness, it does nothing to stop malicious code or misinformation from seeping across borders.[94] I measure grievances with

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[90] Broz et al. (2020).
[91] Voeten (2000), 206.
[92] See Johnston (2014), 33.
[93] Broz et al. (2020).
[94] Farrell and Newman (2020).

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the openness of the liberal order through the amount of misinformation a government experiences domestically. The Digital Society Project measures the level of foreign misinformation a government experiences by asking experts how routinely foreign governments and their agents use social media to disseminate misleading viewpoints or false information to influence domestic politics in this country." When a government experiences a high level of misinformation, it could be more likely to go along with China's proposals to escape the dangers of the liberal order.

4   Test One: Which Governments Does China Attract?

Test One examines which governments are attracted to China's statist vision of order. I use the vote for the OEWG as an indicator of a statist order. To develop guidance on norms of responsible state behavior, governments historically met within the UN Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) format to elaborate consensus reports that provide greater detail and clarity on appropriate behavior.[95] Typically, UN GGE negotiations involve 15-25 experts selected by region.

Working with other partners, China proposed a separate United Nations process, the Open Ended Working Group format, to shift collaboration in the area of cybersecurity toward a state-driven approach that includes all member states rather than a select few.[96] The resolution argues the OEWG will encourage an "inclusive, open, and democratic negotiation process" with democratic indicating the wide participation of all UN member states.[97] Although the OEWG may seem commonplace in other issue areas, it represents a dramatic ideological shift that raises the participation of member states in developing rules for cyberspace. From the beginning of the OEWG, civil society are only afforded opportunities to join informal intersessions. The OEWG represents a shift from an earlier period of collaborating through highly commercialized or expert-led forums.

The regression results across models suggest patterns in line with the theoretical expectation of polarization: views about supporting a statist order are fragmented along traditional ideological preferences. The vote is largely wrapped up in preferences about the appropriate role of the state in international governance. Countries with a large ideological distance from Washington at the United Nations are highly likely to mobilize for China's statist institutional design in cyberspace. Similar patterns hold when analyzing protections of liberalism at the domestic level. In jurisdictions with high checks and balances on governments, countries mobilize against China's proposal and contest the passage of a new OEWG. Ideological preferences for digital governance and rights are also salient. States that more frequently work with Google to investigate crimes and that have higher ratings of internet freedom are less likely to support China's statist proposals. Taken together, the results suggest that ideology is a decisive factor in decision-making, even when controlling for a wide variety of material factors.

The content analysis of the debate about the UN General Assembly debate about the launch of the OEWG adds

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[95]Hollis (2017).

[96]NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, "A surprising turn of events: UN creates two working groups on cyberspace" *see* here

[97]Draft Resolution A/73/505.

credibility to the finding of ideology driving decision-making. Non-liberal states applauded the change. Iran noted the OEWG is significant as "the first inclusive and transparent multilateral process under the auspices of the United Nations" and for serving as a "state-driven process."[98] Thailand also emphasized the need for the OEWG to support state rights.[99] Liberal states, however, largely contested the proposal as an ideological shift.[100] In a letter led by Canada, but also supported by Australia, Estonia, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom, the group called for a continuation of the "expert-led" format of the GGE. The group is also critical of the OEWG resolution for introducing the potential for changes that could overwrite GGE norms.

Material factors are not fully absent from considerations about mobilizing for China's order. The relationship between BRI proximity and voting patterns is positive and significant. In addition, countries with a lower GDP per capita are more likely to vote for the OEWG. Theories that focus on hegemonic persuasion acknowledge that reliance on substantive factors cannot be fully divorced from the material.[101] However, the results are surprising as the strong and positive results for ideology hold even when controlling for material factors. The results suggest that China's vision of order polarizes on the basis of ideological differences as liberal states oppose whereas authoritarian support a shift toward a statist ideology.

5   Test Two: Persuasion or Polarization over Time

The second study tests how China's ideological persuasion influences patterns of mobilization in the United Nations. By using the timing of the Open-Ended Working Group, which was conducted over two sessions with two meetings in each session, I am able to examine the influence of China's persuasion over time in issue areas that China is highly motivated to shape. If traditional theories of persuasion are at work, China's reliance on sovereignty should pull all governments toward a common understanding over time to support a statist vision of order over a liberal. However, if great power persuasion is the mechanism influencing behavior, liberal states should sharply resist China's norm entrepreneurship at the OEWG and continue to contest China's calls for change.

In this test, I focus on attraction to China's goals to lock in and codify ideological shifts in the agenda items of international law and norms. The most important statist goal is the elevation of sovereignty. China argues governments should develop new rules that cement sovereignty as "the foundation of order in cyberspace."[102] Sovereignty means that every government should have equal rights to participate in internet governance and develop rules of the game. It also means that international rules should respect a government's right to jurisdiction over its national information

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[98]UNCD Corpus, Iran, Substantive Session 1, Session 3, Meeting 9, March 2021.

[99]UNCD Corpus, Thailand, Substantive Session 2, Session 2, Meeting 9, March 2022.

[100]Explanation of vote on Resolution L.27/rev1: Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security *see* here

[101]Ikenberry and Kupchan (1990).

[102]China's Submissions to the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, *see* here.

Table 1: Votes for the Statist Ideology

	Dependent Variable = Voting for OEWG			
	Offline		Online	
	International	Domestic	Multistakeholder	Internet Freedom
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
UN Voting	4.076***			
	(0.971)			
Polity		−0.241***		
		(0.057)		
Google			−0.784***	
			(0.192)	
FON				−0.144*
				(0.057)
Digital Silk Road	0.917	0.666	2.415	3.359
	(1.419)	(1.156)	(1.345)	(2.018)
FTA	−1.552	0.226	0.658	−1.993
	(1.147)	(0.814)	(0.936)	(1.640)
BIT	−0.015	0.179	−0.313	2.420
	(0.691)	(0.641)	(0.594)	(1.531)
BRI	2.495**	1.083	1.915**	3.826*
	(0.951)	(0.678)	(0.725)	(1.809)
Cyber Novice	0.307	0.229	0.618*	0.396
	(0.317)	(0.227)	(0.305)	(0.465)
GDP per Capita	−1.189**	−1.366***	−0.675*	−1.936*
	(0.373)	(0.336)	(0.321)	(0.878)
Technical Capacity	0.465	0.372	0.485	1.818
	(0.517)	(0.419)	(0.451)	(1.158)
Regulatory Capacity	0.069	−0.131	0.344	−1.467
	(0.450)	(0.392)	(0.362)	(0.913)
Misinformation	−0.277	−0.199	−0.123	−1.645
	(0.297)	(0.263)	(0.251)	(0.874)
Constant	−3.096	11.773***	5.827*	20.263*
	(3.789)	(2.891)	(2.652)	(8.493)
Observations	151	146	151	61
Log Likelihood	−39.304	−53.086	−52.561	−15.368
Akaike Inf. Crit.	100.607	128.172	127.122	52.737

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

space.

5.1 International Law

Developing new bodies of law is important for attracting governments to a statist vision and codifying new rules to guide state behavior in cyberspace. China argues the OEWG should develop rules that reinforce the rights of governments. Through higher forms of legal obligation, the interests and rights of states are supported, as law requires governments to lead and manage responses to emerging harms. Governments should commit to "standard-setting" rather than "providing guidance" through voluntary recommendations. According to China, voluntary norms may send an "unconstructive message" about the unwillingness of governments to abide by international rules. Instead, the international community should translate norms into a more binding international legal instrument to strengthen state sovereignty.[103]

China's focus on extending a statist ideology justifies the creation of new rules to impose obligations on states. By developing legal obligations on governments to play a role in internet governance, new rules shift the ideological focus to governments rather than firms or technical experts. As China mentions, "states should step up cooperation against cyber terrorism" and lead efforts to fight common security threats.[104] Through higher forms of legal obligation, the interests and rights of states are supported, as international law requires governments to lead and manage responses to emerging harms. This means that international law will require governments rather than civil society to play an active role in managing digital communications and tracking the security implications of data flows.

The agenda item of international law reflects an intense amount of polarization between liberal and authoritarian countries (Figure 1). In response to calls to develop new binding treaties, liberal states grew to contest developing a rules-based order specific to cyberspace. According to the United States, the decentralized nature of internet governance should be maintained, as attempting to develop binding legal instruments and taking an arms control approach to ICTs would effectively "suppress all the revolutionary and positive developments that this technology could provide to the world."[105] Others argued that traditional liberal bodies of law governing other issue areas are sufficient. The Netherlands summarized the liberal position that the world has "traffic regulations," and countries do not need to change the rules of the road when innovations are developed.[106] The liberal body of international law already contains all the necessary boundaries, so there is no need to create a new convention tailored to cyberspace.

On the other hand, China's discourse power compels and attracts non-liberal states in cyberspace. Despite being known as governments that wish to escape their commitments, authoritarian states called for clear and binding rules of the game. Using elements of China's government-focused discourse power as a justification, Iran acknowledged the

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[103]China's Contribution to the Initial Pre-Draft of OEWG Report, *see* here.

[104]China's Position on International Rule-Making in Cyberspace, *see* here.

[105]UNCD Corpus, United States, Emerging and Existing Threats Agenda, First OEWG, Substantive Session 1, Meeting 4, September 2019

[106]UNCD Corpus, Netherlands, International Law Agenda, Substantive Session 1, Meeting 5, September 2019

need to develop new rules to codify the principle that "states have rights and obligations in the ICT environment."[107] Authoritarian states explicitly call for binding legal commitments. The Russian delegate bluntly asked if international law applies to cyberspace "what are we doing here? Why is the number of cyber-attacks in the billions?" The delegate continued, "if international law is voluntary and we emphasize that voluntary nature, then some people are free to apply it, some people are obligated to apply it, whereas others aren't."[108] Support was not isolated to a handful of authoritarian states. China's calls for building rules attracted the 101 body membership of the Non-aligned Movement coalition.

By the second OEWG, polarization continued and grew most intense at meeting three as authoritarian states maintained strong support for China's emphasis on developing new statist rules whereas liberal states more assertively reflected the EU's calls for focusing on bodies of human rights law. Following China, Egypt continued calling for binding measures emphasizing "sovereignty, sovereign equality, and political independence."[109] Russia expressed surprise that liberal governments would prefer to rely on voluntary norms as this proposal "is similar to making sure that their traffic rules are optional. I think this only benefits those who travel down roads in tanks."[110] Liberal states remained steadfast in beliefs that existing bodies of international law are sufficient to govern interstate relations in cyberspace. As South Korea noted, although there is some "desirability of having a set of clear, binding rules governing cyberspace," seeking a legally binding instrument at this stage is both "impractical and potentially misleading."[111] Referencing existing international division, South Korea noted gaining agreement from 193 member states for a multilateral convention "has become a rarity, let alone their universal acceptance."[112] In addition, new rules might give the impression that a "legal vacuum governs the digital domain."[113]

5.2 International Norms

To encourage the development of an order that supports the interest of governments, China advanced several new international norms specifying the rights and responsibilities of governments. The sovereignty norm extends a statist ideology by emphasizing the state as the ultimate authority in international affairs and recommends governments control ICTs. All states should share "in the management and distribution of international Internet resources on equal footing."[114] China encourages developing additional OEWG norms that elevate the government's role in specific areas of combating threats. Critically, each of the norms strengthens the government's role in securing the ICT environment.

Although liberalism theoretically includes the protection of sovereignty, authoritarian and democratic governments

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[107]UNCD Corpus, Iran, International Law Agenda, First OEWG, Substantive Session 1, Meeting 5, September 2019

[108]UNCD Corpus, Russia, International Law Agenda, First OEWG, Substantive Session 1, Meeting 5, September 2019

[109]UNCD Corpus, Egypt, Second OEWG, First Session, Meeting 7.

[110]UNCD Corpus, Russia, Second OEWG, First Substantive Session, Meeting 5.

[111]UNCD Corpus, South Korea, Second OEWG, First Substantive Session, Meeting 7.

[112]Ibid.

[113]Ibid.

[114]China's Submissions to the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, *see* here.
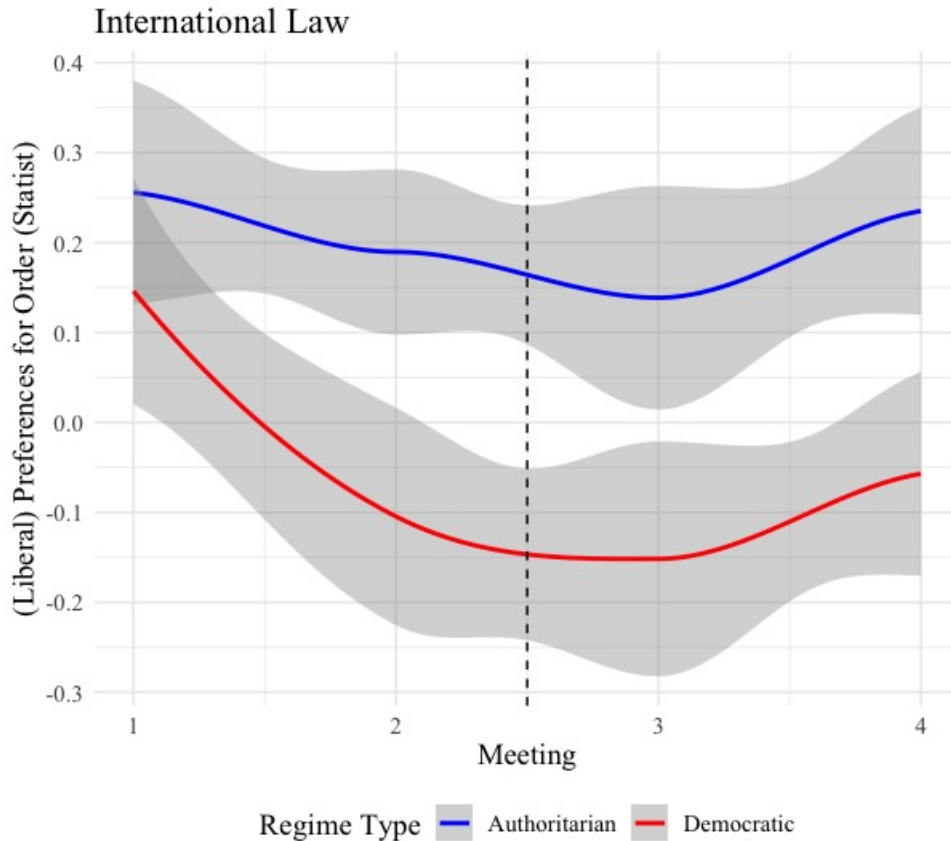
International Law

Figure 1: Rather than fully persuading, China's promotion of cyber sovereignty polarizes support for developing international law over time. Meetings one and two are the two sessions dedicated to international law in the first OEWG. Meetings three and four reflect speeches from the second OEWG

are highly divided about the need for developing statist norms. Most democratic states argued against developing new statist norms promoted by China. As Estonia mentioned, "there may be emerging the need for new norms maybe over the years to come, but currently, we should focus on the implementation of the existing norms that already constitute the international standard of state behavior."[115] Liberal governments also argued for prioritizing the role of civil society in norm implementation. On the other hand, authoritarian governments called for developing statist norms. Zimbabwe directly mentioned the need for China's norms on supply chain security and protecting the "right to make ICT-related public policies consistent with national circumstances."[116] Other authoritarian officials argued that China's norms are timely and justified their stance by arguing the need to address cyber threats. Syria supported developing new norms promoted by China because "the world doesn't stop at the stage of the 2015 GGE report," and several of the norms that focus on counter-terrorism are highly timely.

By the second OEWG, China failed to move many liberal states away from a position of contesting new norms.

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[115]UNCD Corpus, Estonia, First OEWG, Second Substantive Session, Meeting 2.
[116]Zimbabwe Contribution, *see* here.

Liberal states grew stronger in the movement toward the liberal position, whereas authoritarian states more assertively demanded norms that protect the rights of states. Liberal states argued against developing any new norms. South Korea mirrored the call for a focus on GGE decisions as these "norms embody what is expected of every state in its behavior in cyberspace, and also determines whether such behavior is responsible or reprehensible."[117] According to Seoul, existing norms should be prioritized because "GGE norms were a result of an expert-driven process." To encourage implementation, Australia proposed "the national survey of implementation" for states to voluntarily "self assess our actions that each of us have taken towards implementation, and what actions are still required." The survey commits institutional resources to evaluate government implementation of norms.[118] For the Netherlands, focusing on implementing norms has a liberal purpose. The existing norms "ensure that everyone can enjoy the benefits of the digital world securely while knowing that their human rights and fundamental freedoms are protected."[119] Like South Korea, many democracies ended the negotiations strongly contesting a statist approach that would develop new norms focused on states' rights.

Many debates about international law resurfaced in the agenda item on norms when authoritarian states recommended translating norms into binding rules. Cuba argued that the norms China proposed on sovereignty and non-interference "should be binding and should establish guidelines for states when it comes to protecting cyberspace."[120] Russia mentioned, similar to China, the need for international guidance to bind large technology companies, such as Facebook and Google, that "governments should also be looking at the possible ways of regulating the activity of the IT companies in the digital area."[121]

6   Test Three: The Causes of Polarization

Observational data suggests that China's promotion of a statist ideology polarizes the United Nations. Liberal states eschew, whereas the rest of the UN supports developing institutions proposed by China. In addition, the polarization of preferences does not narrow as China continues to emphasize a vision of sovereignty and government rights. Is China's leadership or statist values the cause of this polarization? To analyze how China's promotion of a statist ideology impacts institutional mobilization, I conduct an original elite experiment with diplomats. The experiment is theoretically important as it relates to a great power's ability to codify and lock in a new ideology.

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[117]South Korea, Second OEWG, First Session, Meeting 9.
[118]Australia, Second OEWG, First Session, Meeting 9.
[119]Netherlands, Second OEWG, First Session, Meeting 9.
[120]UNCD Corpus, Cuba, Second OEWG, Second Session, Meeting 5.
[121]UNCD Corpus, Cuba, Second OEWG, First Session, Meeting 5.
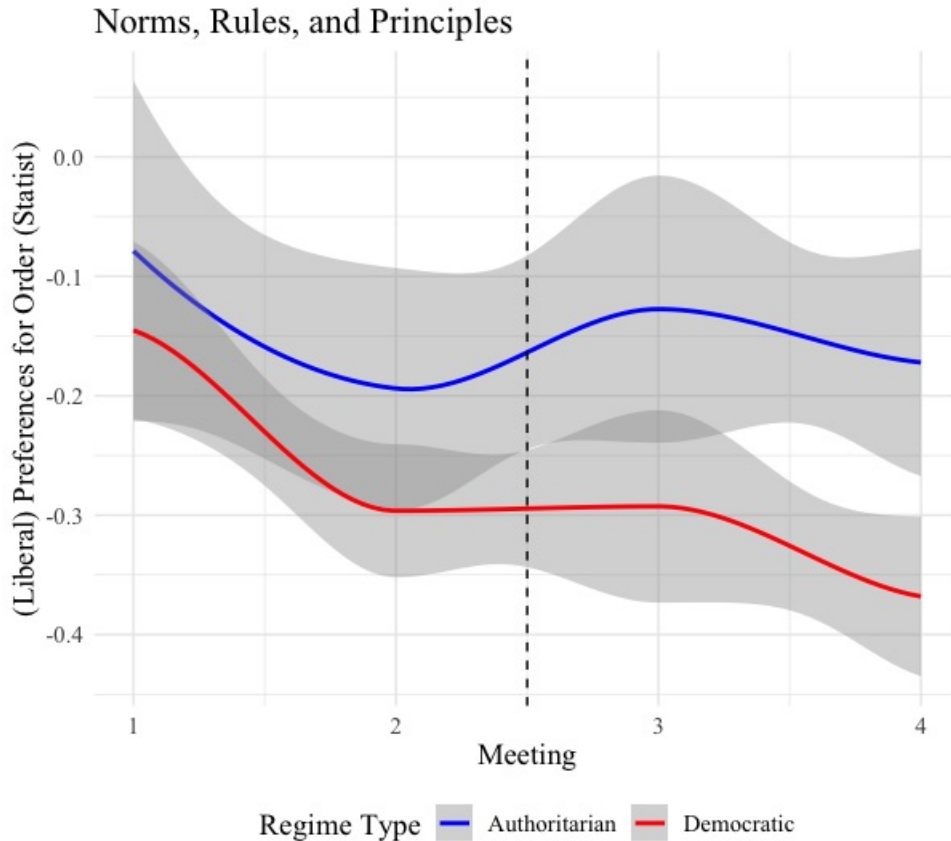
Norms, Rules, and Principles

Figure 2: Rather than fully persuading the United Nations, China's promotion of cyber sovereignty polarizes support for developing state-centric norms. Meetings one and two are the two sessions dedicated to norms in the first OEWG. Meetings three and four reflect speeches from the second OEWG.

6.1 Recruiting Diplomatic Elites

Recruiting elites is theoretically essential for understanding the impact of China's promotion of a statist ideology within international organizations. To test the impacts of images and persuasive messages on preferences for a rules-based order, I target the population China attempts to recruit within international organizations — the diplomats empowered to represent their countries in international negotiations. Although many public opinion studies test their expectations with a mass audience, successful coalition building depends on a rising power attracting support by convincing elites, thus indicating the value of determining how elites respond when exposed to the influence of frames and cues in an experimental setting. Likewise, an experiment helps explain the mechanisms of ideological persuasion at the micro-level, or as labeled by Ruggie, at the level of "innovative micro-practices."[122] Johnston more forcefully argues that examining the impact of social strategies "allows (even demands) that the unit is the individual or small group."[123]

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[122] Ruggie (1982), 27

[123] Johnston (2014), 27.

I use digital advertising to recruit diplomatic elites following the approach by Clark, who uses LinkedIn advertisements to recruit elites working for international organizations.[124] To recruit diplomats, I used digital advertising to message officials working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Permanent Missions among United Nations member states. Since the observational data reveals high polarization of preferences for international order along the lines of political ideology, I block elites into authoritarian and democratic states. I group elites by the Polity measure of regime type. Countries with scores of six or greater are classified as liberal democracies, and those with scores below negative six are classified as authoritarian regimes.[125] Through LinkedIn, I recruited 212 diplomats to participate, which included 141 democratic and 71 authoritarian officials. Overall, the diplomats recruited are experienced in foreign affairs, as the median experience of the diplomats in my sample is six, and the mean is nine years.[126]

6.2   Design and Measurement

To test how discourse power shapes institutional mobilization, I present a vignette proposing the creation of international law within international organizations for emerging technologies and implementing treatments to understand how ideological shifts impact support. The vignette in the control condition explains the development of rules for information and communications technologies similar to the ongoing process in the United Nations. The sovereignty frames I developed for the experiment use language from China's policy position papers for cybersecurity rules presented at the United Nations to extend a statist vision of order. I create four different treatments: (1) a control condition to create a rules-based order for emerging technologies at the United Nations, (2) a vision of a rules-based order promoting sovereignty (sovereignty message), (3) China promoting a vision of a rules-based order promoting sovereignty (China cue and sovereignty message), and (4) China proposing rules without sovereignty (China cue).

To test the impact of China's message of sovereignty on persuasion, I developed several measurements of attraction where diplomats express support for proposals. The first dependent variable, consensus mobilization, measures agreement on the need for international rules and collaboration through a rules-based order. The second dependent variable, action mobilization (foreign), measures whether the diplomat will encourage or discourage foreign officials from supporting the rules within international organizations. To capture the common international "two-level game" where diplomats need to coordinate support with their capitols to convince domestic officials to support international proposals, I measure action mobilization (domestic) by asking participants whether they will encourage or discourage the support of officials at home.[127] Respondents selected responses on a seven-point Likert scale: Strongly support / Support/ Somewhat support / Neither support nor oppose / Somewhat oppose / Oppose / Highly oppose. Finally, to understand how elites developed opinions, I asked respondents to describe their decision-making around the rules

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[124]Clark (2021).

[125]For others who use these cutpoints see Voeten (2021).

[126]See Appendix for additional details about countries in the sample.

[127]Putnam (1988).

by considering what their delegation would say if asked to take the floor and offer their country's position to glean insights on how frames impact mobilization within institutions. Given the high levels of consistency in mobilization answers across these three items (Cronbach's α = .91), they were combined into the ATTRACTION INDEX. I rescale the index on a 0-1 scale for ease of interpretation.

Table 2: Experimental Treatments

Conditions	Treatment Text
Control	Over the next few years, United Nations member states will be developing international rules for information and communications technologies (ICTs). One proposal includes creating a new international legal instrument tailored to the attributes of ICTs and evolving technological developments.
China Cue	Over the next few years, United Nations member states will be developing international rules for information and communications technologies (ICTs). China proposes creating a new international legal instrument tailored to the attributes of ICTs and evolving technological developments.
Sovereignty & China Cue	Over the next few years, United Nations member states will be developing international rules for information and communications technologies (ICTs). China proposes creating a new international legal instrument tailored to the attributes of ICTs and evolving technological developments. China notes one goal of the new rules is to strengthen sovereignty. For example: • States should be free to govern the Internet inside their borders as they see fit and make public policies consistent with national interests. • States should exercise jurisdiction over the ICT infrastructure, resources as well as ICT-related activities within their territories. • States have the rights and responsibilities to ensure the security of personal information and important data relevant to their national security, public security, economic security and social stability.
Sovereignty	Over the next few years, United Nations member states will be developing international rules for information and communications technologies (ICTs). One proposal includes creating a new international legal instrument tailored to the attributes of ICTs and evolving technological developments. One goal of the new rules is to strengthen sovereignty. For example: • States should be free to govern the Internet inside their borders as they see fit and make public policies consistent with national interests. • States should exercise jurisdiction over the ICT infrastructure, resources as well as ICT-related activities within their territories. • States have the rights and responsibilities to ensure the security of personal information and important data relevant to their national security, public security, economic security and social stability.

6.3 Sovereignty Message

First, I analyze reactions to the persuasive message of sovereignty without source cues. Interestingly, it is not the message that polarizes (Figure 3). When exposed to the statist values emphasizing sovereignty, democratic officials lower support by a roughly four percentage points, but the decrease is not significant. The results confirm the expectation of the theory of ideological persuasion that anticipates China's image drives polarization. Future research should consider the extent to which even the message of sovereignty becomes polarizing over time as cyber sovereignty becomes wrapped up in a vision of China's order rather than remaining exclusive to the United Nations. The results suggest that it is China's cue that reshapes a message of sovereignty into an untenable order for liberal democracies to support.
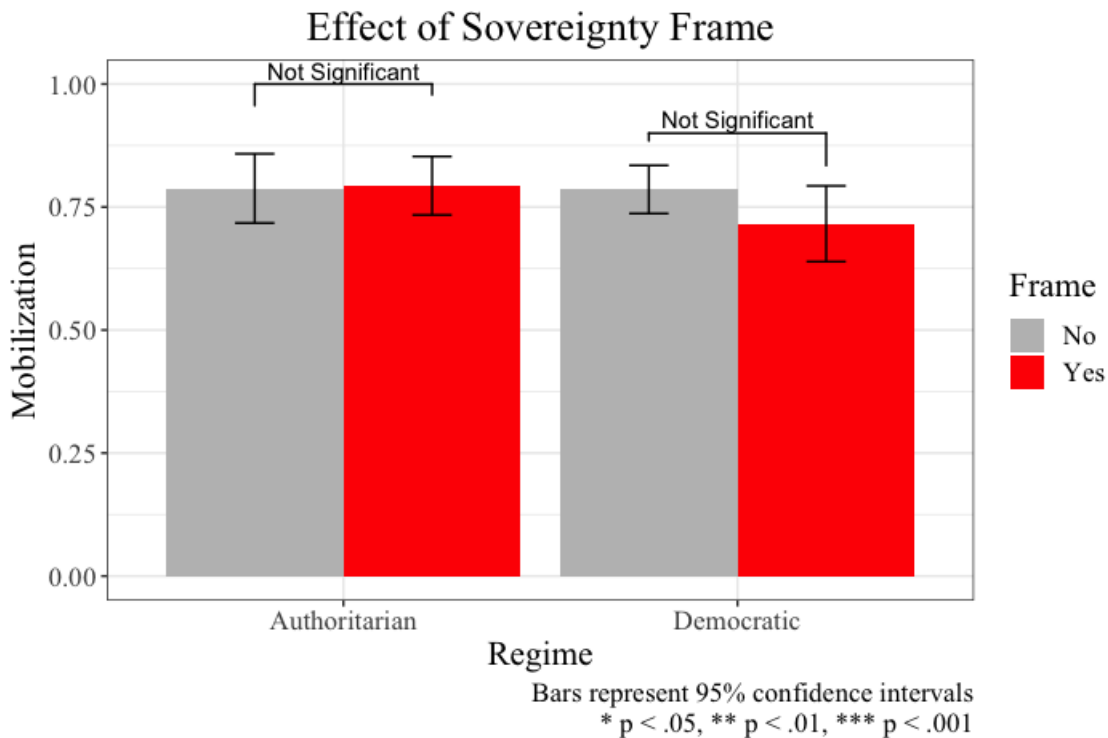
Figure 3: A vision of sovereignty does not polarize.

6.4 Polarizing Image

I analyze the impact of China's image on institutional mobilization (Figure 4). Among democratic elites, I find that China's source cue significantly lowers mobilization for a rules-based order. Exposure to information that China proposed rules in the United Nations leads democratic officials to reduce their support for cooperating through a rules-based order in cyberspace by roughly 22.4 percentage points (p<0.001). The results show that democratic officials strongly reject China's leadership of order. On the other hand, there is a one percent increase for authoritarian states between the control condition and the source cue, but this difference is not significant. This suggests that authoritarian

states are just as amendable to collaboration in the United Nations with China's cue as without.

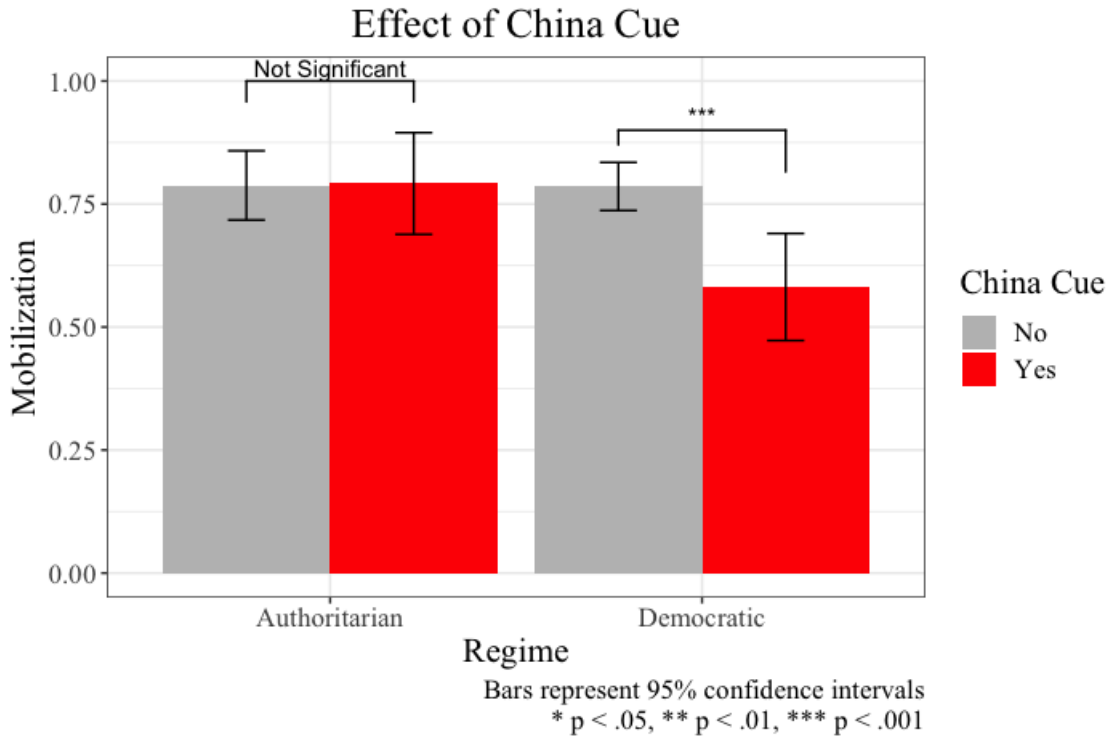Figure 4: China's promotion of international rules polarizes support.

Open-ended responses confirmed the polarization of China's leadership. A Canadian official exposed to China's cue frankly responded, "Our delegation would not support these rules because they are presented by China." China's image raised the vision of sovereignty without needing to bring in a frame. One democratic official argued in response that "National governments should not have sole ownership of the internet in their countries, because this would increase risk of political abuse in regards to their own citizens." As expected by the theory of ideological persuasion, many democratic responses focused on the normative threat that China generates. Without directly mentioning China's Great Firewall, a democratic official argued, "The countries who fail to protect basic human rights may use these regulations to further oppress their populations and violate free and secure communication right, a fundamental human right." China's image alone was enough to raise fears about censorship, repression, and what it would mean for a rules-based order to be led by China. A United Kingdom diplomat argued that even though the United Kingdom strongly supports the rules-based order, China's rise complicates this support. When China proposes rules, the UK would not support "China having full jurisdiction over their own ICT space."

On the other hand, authoritarian states expressed appreciation for China's proposal. One diplomat from Egypt empathically argued that Egypt is likely to "strongly support the rules." Other officials reiterated support using China's rhetoric. When justifying support, an authoritarian official argued, "the international community should understand

that no model suits all" which reflects China's message of sovereign equality and the rights of nations to independently choose national regulatory models. When an official from Zimbabwe was exposed to China's promotion of the rules, the delegate argued China's proposal is desirable. Even though the content did not contain any messages about multi-lateral versus multi-stakeholder, the official from Zimbabwe argued China's leadership would help monitor the actions of the multi-stakeholder model where civil society largely operates outside of the watchful eyes of governments.

6.5   How China's Image Impacts its Message

Next, I consider how China's image impacts the meaning of sovereignty (Figure 5). China's promotion of sovereignty leads to a roughly 21.3 percentage point decrease in democratic officials' support for a rules-based order (p<0.001). Rather than increasing the willingness of democratic officials to mobilize by drawing from the foundational values at the heart of the United Nations Charter, focusing attention on sovereignty and the freedom of states to govern the Internet "within their borders as they see fit" has the opposite effect of reducing support.

In this test, I scrutinize differences in the open ended responses between liberal and non-liberal states. When exposed to China's call for strengthening sovereignty, I find that China's promotion causes democratic officials to voluntarily redirect attention to the need for strengthening human rights and incorporating a focus on protecting in-dividuals. Rather than unifying the Nations, China's use of sovereignty normatively threatens liberal countries. One Czech Republic official exposed to China's persuasive messaging argued the rules propose a direction that would "limit the freedom of the internet and potentially endanger human rights." The diplomat argued that the global community should instead " embrace a human-centric approach to setting up international rules." Exposure to China's leadership of a statist order caused an official from Australia to redirect the focus to civil liberties. Australia emphasized the need to protect liberal values, despite having no indication of liberalism within the treatment. This official recommended member states should instead direct attention toward "the rights of free speech, freedom of the media and a cautious approach to national regulation of domains." Likewise, when exposed to the treatment, Japan argued for redirecting a focus toward human rights: "even though it is within the internal affairs of a country, a violation against univer-sal norms such as human rights is what the international society should govern." The open ended responses provide evidence that liberal states find China's promotion of sovereignty normatively threatening.

On the other hand, authoritarian states largely kept support on the table and are amendable to China's leadership of a statist order. Authoritarian officials raise their support by roughly five percentage points but this difference is not sig-nificant. The open-ended responses provide more clarity on the ideological intent. An official from Belarus noted the probability of strong support from his delegation. China's rules would be supported as "ensuring a state's sovereignty in cyberspace is a national security issue." Similarly, a diplomat from Uganda noted the rules are ideologically aligned with the views of the Ugandan delegation and supported "for the purposes of National security and sovereignty of the
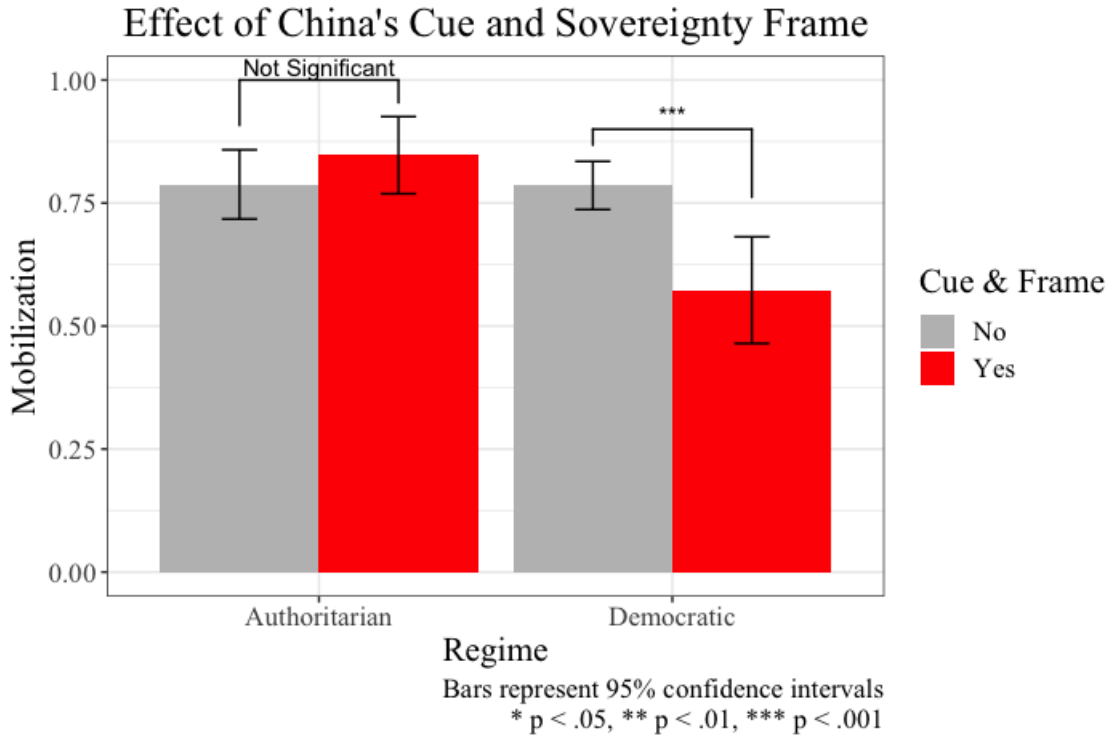
Figure 5: China championing a vision of international rules elevating sovereignty polarizes support.

Country." Many of the responses reflected strong certainty of granting China support. One official from the United Arab Emirates regarded China's sovereignty framing as desirable, noting the UAE "shall recognize the new policy and surely shall be in favor and not against." Many connected China's discourse power of sovereignty with better security conditions online. Thailand's diplomat argued that supporting China's proposals within international organizations is desirable from the standpoint of securing data.

To better understand the impact of China's image on the interpretation of sovereignty, I created a WordCloud, a visual representation of the Open-Ended Responses, in which words that are mentioned more often are plotted with larger font size (Figure 6). The Wordcloud reflects the polarization in rhetoric between officials exposed to China's cue and sovereignty frame. When exposed to China's message of sovereignty, authoritarian officials overwhelmingly accept China's appeal to focus on states, as evidenced by the high use of words such as country and national. On the other hand, democratic nations forcefully direct attention away from sovereignty to human rights, as reflected by the high frequency of "rights" appearing within the speeches of democratic officials. Words such as human, society, and freedom are frequently deployed. In conjunction with the content analysis, the results suggest China's discourse power represents a normative threat that causes democracies to associate sovereignty with a threat to human rights whereas authoritarian states maintain support for sovereignty.

Figure 6: Polarized Rhetoric

6.6   Alternative Explanations

Although this research has thus far presented evidence that China's image limits its ability to rely on the attractive value of sovereignty to persuade and mobilize, I have not fully ruled out alternative explanations that sovereignty improves China's position. To test these alternative theories that rhetoric has a positive effect, I take the difference between the condition where China uses sovereignty frames (statist values and leadership) and the condition where China proposes collaboration without framing (leadership). I do not find evidence for alternative theories of socialization that anticipate sovereignty frames raise support for China's new rules of the game. Among democracies, the level of support for China versus the level of support for China once it uses sovereignty to legitimate its rise, is roughly one percent lower (although not significant). The results suggest that China's discourse power does not augment China's ability to attract and persuade liberal democracies, and China's source cue overpowers China's frame. Rather than soft power helping China better approach adversaries, China's frames and cues work together to frustrate China's ability to mobilize support from liberal democracies while preserving support from authoritarian states. The results lend further support to my theory's expectations of polarization. The lack of statistically significant differences suggests that respondents think China's proposal would be about sovereignty even when they see the source cue without the frame. In other words, China's image is wrapped up in values of sovereignty and non-interference.

7 The Peril of Polarization?

Is polarization a problem for China to achieve its goals and lead international order as a "Sovereign Leviathan" similar to the US acting as a "Liberal Leviathan"? Examining voting records for negotiations reveals polarization does not always thwart China's goals as most states support China's proposals whereas a smaller minority of liberal states oppose.

China eventually achieved its goal of developing new bodies of international law by attracting a majority. During the General Assembly presentation of the Ad Hoc Committee on Cybercrime, China and Russia presented a resolution to begin a process of strengthening cyber sovereignty within the United Nations. China framed launching United Nations processes as creating opportunities for fairness and equality under China's call to create a community of a shared future. A community of shared future is an important concept within Chinese foreign policy that extols the need for mutual benefits and "win-win cooperation." China argued that new treaties provide an important way to fill gaps in existing international law under the existing inequitable system largely established by the West. Establishing new rules also promotes greater equality by "addressing the needs of all countries, particularly developing countries."[128] During the opening statements, Russia noted the need for the "era of agreements being made among clubs" to give way to a "democratic negotiation" that incorporates all countries.

It also limits the vitality of liberal bodies of law. In the area of cybercrime, the Council of Europe's Budapest Convention is the reigning body of law governing relations. Since China and Russia are not signatories to the Budapest Convention, they framed the United Nations as a more inclusive forum that incorporates all member states. In addition, other forms of collaboration in the aftermath of a cybercrime attack occur through Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLAT). Since many of the crimes rely on social media to coordinate and implement, many countries need to seek information from the United States Department of Justice through the MLAT system to investigate and prosecute the crime. This places the United States and its firms in a privileged role of providing information to the world. China and Russia propose developing rules through the United Nations to develop new standards according to the needs of the full international community rather than a select group of states.

Many states mobilized with China and Russia to vote for the Cybercrime Convention with the goal of strengthening sovereignty. But as predicted, liberal states widely contested the need for a new treaty on ideological grounds. The European Union justified its vote against the draft convention because its member states support a "free, stable and secure cyberspace, in which the rule of law, including human rights and fundamental freedoms, fully applied to promote the social well-being, economic growth, prosperity and integrity of free and democratic societies."[129] Even though a range of threats exist, Australia argued it would vote against the draft resolution as the proposal would "lead to a cyberspace that was less open, less free and less secure and diminish existing global efforts that were delivering

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[128]A/C.3/74/SR.50, Paragraph 43.
[129]A/C.3/74/SR.50, Paragraph 51.

results."[130] Speaking to the press, one European official justified opposition on normative grounds, expressing concern that "Russia and China are seeking to establish a set of global norms that support their view of how the Internet and information should be controlled."[131]
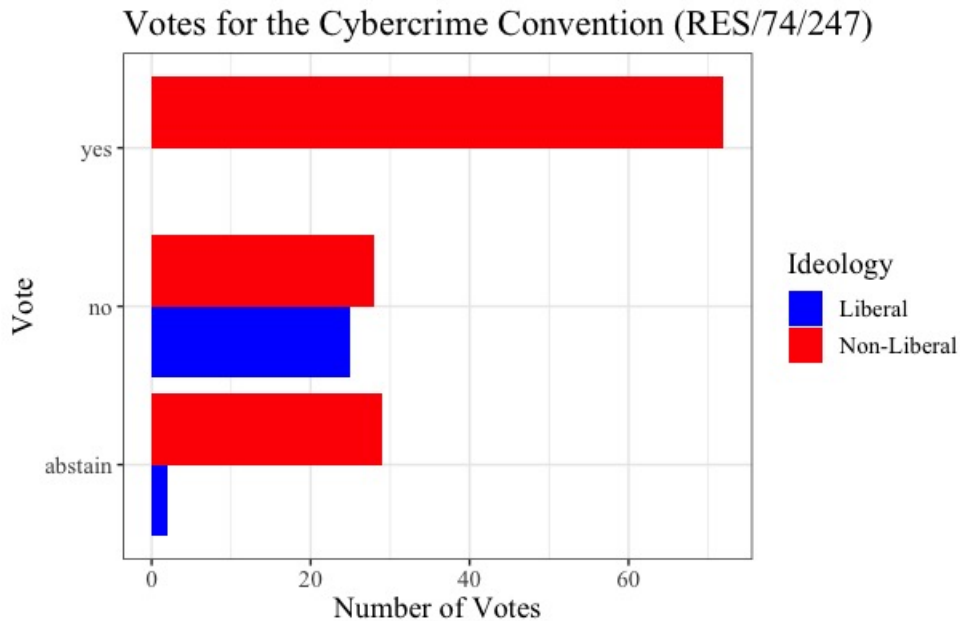

Figure 7: China's promotion of a statist ideology achieves sufficient support to implement change despite heavy contestation and polarization.

The vote suggests polarization is not enough to hold back China's ideological entrepreneurship. Despite the backlash from liberal democracies over developing new rules focused on the rights and responsibilities of states, China and Russia were able to launch the process of developing a Cybercrime Convention. In the cybercrime convention, 79 states voted yes, 33 abstained, and 60 countries opposed (Figure 7). The voting records reflect the intense ideological contestation between liberal and non-liberal states. Despite these differences, China and Russia were able to pass the resolution and begin a five-year process of developing a new cybercrime convention that overrides the authority of the Budapest Convention and replaces it with a new treaty. It also begins a process that allows China and Russia to flesh out statist norms for regulating cybercrime. China has already submitted drafts indicating an intent to flesh out a statist approach. China argued that behavior prohibited under international law should be expanded. Governments should criminalize the use of the internet to incite, commit acts of terrorism, and disseminate harmful information while also including "the dark product chain in the scope of criminalization" and the sale of ICTs for crime.[132] The five-year treaty process will reveal how far China can codify norms, but the process of already superseding the Budapest Convention with a United Nations treaty represents a considerable ideological change that suggests polarization may not

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[130]A/C.3/74/SR.50, Paragraph 58.

[131]Washington Post, *see* here.

[132]China's Submission to the First Session of the Ad Hoc Committee, *see* here

hold up China's goals.

8 Conclusion

There is no end of history for ideological struggle and contestation. Although communism was liberalism's preeminent ideological contender during the Cold War, China now presents a lighter statist ideology that calls for a reorientation of liberalism's focus on individual freedoms to better protect the rights of states. China's role as an ideological entrepreneur, however, has been all but overlooked in stories of international socialization and persuasion.[133] Most theories focus on whether China has been socialized without yet tracing how China deploys strategies of socialization and persuasion to attract support for ideological shifts and the efficacy of China's efforts.

China's ability to persuade, however, does not reach full consensus due to the impact of its image. Observational data confirms the theoretical prediction that China's ideological persuasion creates widespread polarization between liberal and non-liberal states. Although liberal states have supported sovereignty and the need to cooperate through binding international rules in other issue areas, when China proposes the elevation of state rights and the need to codify protections for governments in cyberspace, backlash ensues. Liberal states strongly and vocally contest any movement toward China's statist ideology. On the other hand, authoritarian states commend China's vision and emphasize support for strengthening the role of the United Nations and institutionalizing the right of sovereignty in cyberspace. To a majority of governments, however, China's calls for a statist vision of collaboration appear commonplace, familiar, and not worth holding up collaboration in the field of cybersecurity.

This research has implications for the way we understand soft power by disentangling it to include images and persuasive messages. The experimental results demonstrate China's image produces polarization. Surprisingly for many theories that expect authoritarian and democratic states to have significant differences in their approach to international law, the results demonstrate that authoritarian and democratic states start from a place of similar support for a rules-based order. Once China promotes a statist vision of order, however, democratic officials take support of developing a rules-based cyber order off the table, whereas authoritarian officials maintain. The lack of significant findings for authoritarian states increasing their support for China or China's vision of sovereignty suggests these countries find little to contest as the promotion of sovereignty is familiar and universal with or without China's promotion. The findings of polarization have implications for how countries mobilize to aid or frustrate China's rise. When leveraging the universal and widely respected value of sovereignty, China is unable to produce the consensus that most theories expect at the end of a norm life cycle due to liberal backlash.

Despite polarization, China may be successful at shifting ideology and gaining a role as a Sovereign Leviathan. This finding of China codifying a statist order in an issue area that long operated according to a liberal logic has

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[133]Notable exceptions include Fung (2020); Yang (2021) and scholarship about China's moral leadership Yan (2015).

implications for the way that we understand the vitality of the liberal order. Most anticipate the institutional design works in favor of the liberal order's longevity and will hold up any movement toward alternative ideologies. Ikenberry argues the liberal international order is constitutional in nature and Allan et al argue liberal principles are attractive among the public and elites.[134] When China uses persuasion, however, democratic and majoritarian institutional designs, might be a feature that allows China to advance a more statist agenda. In contrast to theories of socialization that focus on consensus as the end goal, the work of building new forms of international order often relies on majorities. Democracies comprise a small coalition of states at the United Nations relative to authoritarian states and developing countries. Although many have found that democratic support for the liberal order is likely to shackle China's attempts at change[135], this study suggests the need to continue understanding the degree and dimensions of polarization. Since China polarizes support between liberal states and the rest of the United Nations, it is able to advance ideological change. My research suggests the need for continued research on coalition building and ideological change. As China finds its voice through an emphasis on discourse power, ideological change may ensue in other liberal issue areas.

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[134]Ikenberry (2000); Allan et al. (2018).
[135]Allan et al. (2018).

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9   Appendix

9.1   Summary Statistics

This section reports summary statistics for the main independent variables and controls used in Test One.

	Min	Max	Mean	Sd	Var	Median
IdealPointDistance	0.00	4.55	2.69	0.80	0.63	2.91
DSR	0.00	3.06	0.16	0.35	0.12	0.05
FTA	0.00	1.00	0.12	0.33	0.11	0.00
BIT	0.00	1.00	0.55	0.50	0.25	1.00
OBOR	0.00	1.00	0.34	0.48	0.23	0.00
Novice	0.00	6.00	0.57	1.35	1.83	0.00
GDP per capita	5.48	12.13	8.72	1.45	2.09	8.72
Technical capacity	-2.76	3.45	0.07	1.21	1.46	0.03
Regulatory capacity	-3.02	3.78	0.37	1.16	1.35	0.36
Misinformation	-2.46	3.35	-0.04	1.19	1.41	-0.22

I report the correlation of the independent variables deployed in Test One (Figure 8). In addition, to consider the possibility of multicollinearity, I calculate the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) score. Since all of the variables have VIF scores under 5, I proceed with my analysis.

9.2   UNCD Corpus

To develop the UNCD Corpus, I rely on text-to-speech tools to develop transcripts from the most prominent cybersecurity negotiations. I argue the UNCD Corpus is necessary to develop as other corpora include a limited focus on governments. The Internet Governance Forum, for instance, widely includes the voices of civil society, academics, and other non-state actors. In addition, previous United Nations cybersecurity negotiations are closed to the public. These negotiations only include a select number of countries, which necessitates the need to collect statements on government preferences.
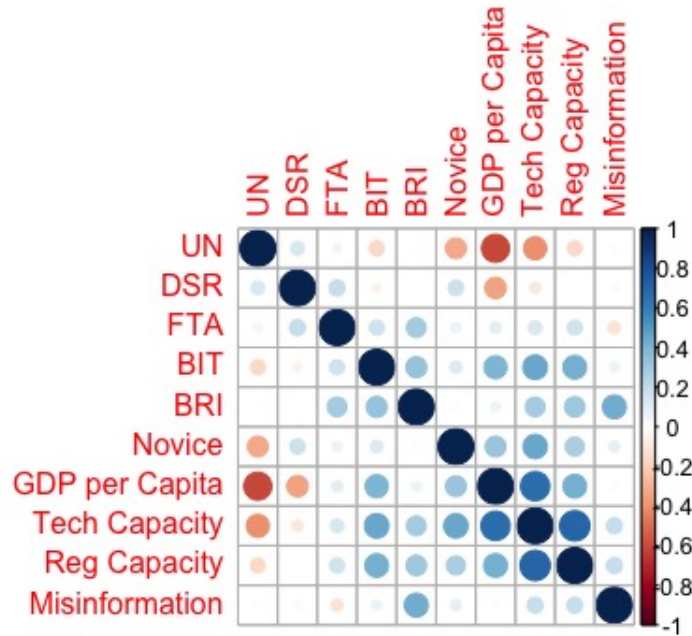
Figure 8: Correlation plot

9.2.1 Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR)

To begin, I develop a list of all of the United Nations video links of the OEWG negotiations. The corpus represents 156 hours of speeches and deliberations about how to develop international order for information and communications technologies. I record each UN TV session using commercial speech-to-text services, which research shows vastly outperform anything that researchers might train on their own. We collect meta-data on the agenda item. Since the agenda item sometimes switches mid-meeting, we are careful to accurately assign metadata about the topic delegates discuss. I work with a team of research assistants to assign countries to speakers and verify any problems with the recordings. This is necessary because the same translator handles all of the English translations for all Spanish speakers, for example, limiting the ability to pick out the distinctions of each individual speaker. The text is broken into speakers to produce a speaker-agenda item corpus.

One unique function of UN TV is that all of the meetings are offered in the six official languages of the United Nations, which means that even the preferences non-English speakers are fully represented through the United Nations translators. There are some instances, however, when the translator's audio might not have been clearly audible due to technical error. In the very rare instance when an English recording was not available, we used Google Translate to capture the audio from non-English speakers. To validate the accuracy of recording the UN TV videos, I also used a transcription service to hand transcribe a sample of videos and compared the similarity of those recorded via ASR.

After validating the UNCD Corpus, I conducted general summary statistics to understand who speaks at the United

Nations negotiations. Although the OEWG represents one of the most preeminent cyber negotiations, using government speeches to reflect preferences for order is not without bias. First, there are differences between the governments that speak and the governments that remain silent. Contrary to the United Nations General Assembly speeches, the OEWG does not require every government to deliver a speech. The OEWG represents the first occasion when all member states of the United Nations have the opportunity to jointly develop cybersecurity rules. For many governments, developing a national position on rules and institutions for cybersecurity is a relatively new task. Previous forums to develop rules only invited 15-25 experts to develop rules, norms, and principles of responsible state behavior. Second, power may influence the length of time that governments speak. The OEWG does not set a length of time on the speeches so many powerful governments often speak longer than governments with less capacity. Despite these challenges, I argue the OEWG is the ideal forum for understanding coalition politics as speeches are dominated by democratic and authoritarian coalitions. Since these governments participate the most, the OEWG presents the opportunity to understand whether democracies and authoritarian states move closer or further apart as China champions building a cyber order grounded in sovereignty.

9.2.2   Cleaning Speeches

In order to implement the Wordscores method, I proceed with cleaning the UNCD Corpus. I merge agenda and political information about each speaker into this database. I then take the following steps to clean the speeches. After this phase of cleaning and pre-processing, each speech is treated as a "bag of words", allowing researchers to examine how frequently a term appears across all speeches.

1. Remove punctuation

2. Remove non-alphanumeric characters and numbers

3. Change to lowercase

4. Strip white space

5. Remove stop words

6. Remove diplomatic stop words for the United Nations. These are words that appear frequently in UN speeches like "chairman," "delegation," and "excellencies." I also remove a list of country names as this information is also repeated frequently within each country speech (e.g. Sweden supports). Research examining networks should refrain from taking the last step as understanding which governments are cited can be used to map coalitions.

9.2.3 Wordscores

I segment the data by "country-agenda item" (i.e. How closely does the United Kingdom's speech at the second session of the OEWG align with China). I analyze the data by calculating Wordscores. This method[136] assigns policy positions or "scores" to documents on the basis of word counts. The Wordscores method involves selecting "reference texts" with known positions on a policy dimension to estimate the score of out-of-sample documents ("virgin texts"). Similar to other unsupervised methods, wordscores makes the "bag-of-words" assumption by treating individual words as "data" irrespective of their context. The first step is computing the estimated score for a document as the average of the scores of the words contained in it. Next, the algorithm computes the probability for word as an average of document scores, weighted by the posterior probability of each document given that it occurs within it.

By using "reference texts" with known positions or scores on a policy dimension, the Wordscores method estimates the scores of the rest of the sample. To make these calculations, the method first involves estimating the scores for each word type occurring in the reference texts and then combining these wordscores into a score for each virgin document. The method has been used for several purposes. Some researchers, for instance, use Wordscores to scale journalists and media outlets from liberal to conservative.[137]

Several steps are taken to validate my measure of Wordscores following calls to investigate the accuracy of the scaling.[138] I confirm that many of the alignments of the WordScores text generally match the coalitions identified through content analysis. For instance, in the international law debates, I find that the Russian Federation and the Republic of Iran are closest to China's speeches and emphasize positions similar to China as I found in the content analysis. On the other hand, Ireland, Mexico, and Switzerland, support a focus on human rights within their speeches, similar to the US. Reading the sample of speeches provides an additional degree of confidence that the scaling is indicating an underlying latent dimension about proximity to China's state-centric rhetoric versus Europe's individual focus. This reveals new patterns that may have originally been overlooked.

9.2.4 Comparison to Other Methods

Other ways to measure alignment with China through texts are diverse. Some have taken steps to measure the polarization of texts rather than alignment with a reference text.[139] Myrick uses a supervised machine learning method from Peterson and Spirling (2018) to predict the likelihood that a speech was given by a Republican or a Democrat. The level of polarization within each session is proxied by the average predictive accuracy of the best-performing algorithm. While this is also a viable method, using Wordscores is ideal for allowing me to capture the dependent variable of interest: alignment with China. By examining the alignment with China, I am able to see whether existing

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[136]Benoit and Laver 2003; Laver et al. 2003
[137]Barberá Sood, 2015
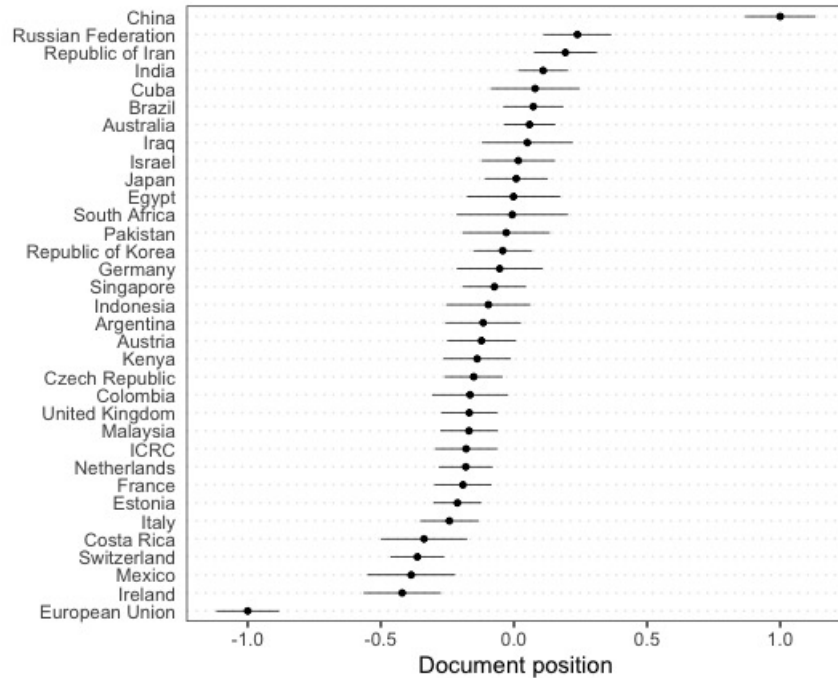[138]Grimmer Stewart, 2013, p. 271
[139]Myrick (2021).

Figure 9: Wordscores for the International Law Meeting 1

coalitions move closer or further away from China during a negotiation when China heavily deployed the power of discourse. In addition, by analyzing preferences along a continuum, I am able to see when a government moves away from China and whether they are moving toward a liberal position.

9.3 Elite Survey Experiment

9.3.1 Sampling Strategy

I use LinkedIn to target the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Permanent Missions. I use LinkedIn to advertise my survey to individuals working for the foreign service or those with experience in diplomacy via a sponsored message requesting participation in academic research. I note an example of finding Ministries of Foreign Affairs below (Figure 10).

I recruit authoritarian and democratic states through blocking. Blocking is an element of experimental design in which a researcher uses observed covariates to create pre-assignment groups of similar units to preserve power, even in relatively small groups. One advantage of using a blocked randomized design is allowing researchers to detect and estimate heterogeneous treatment effects.[140] For instance, if China's frames positively affect authoritarian countries but negatively impact democratic countries, these differential effects can be efficiently estimated. Without blocking, too few democratic or authoritarian countries may receive treatment, and average inferences will fail to yield the

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[140]Kalla and Broockman (2016).

true effects or may even bias the results towards inferences from one small population of governments.[141] Second, blocking allows me to estimate the causal effects within each block to analyze how existing identities moderate the impact of China's socialization. Blocking produces a better balance between treatment conditions and more precision in estimating treatment effects.

Although the population in authoritarian regimes might not use LinkedIn widely or be blocked from LinkedIn, I find that diplomats from authoritarian countries are highly active on career-oriented social media platforms. Consider the United Arab Emirates LinkedIn page, for instance, which has 864 employees registered as working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. This suggests that even though LinkedIn might be censored, the diplomats that interact with international affairs often use LinkedIn for networking.
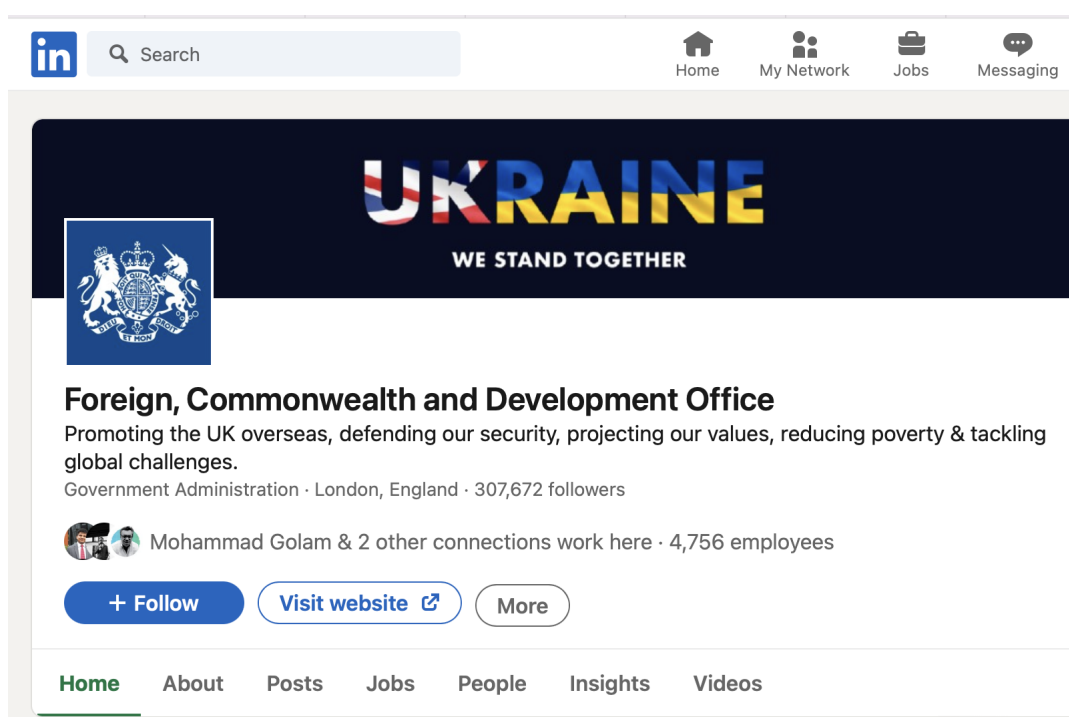
Figure 10: LinkedIn Targeting to Recruit Elites

Following the standard practice in the literature, democracies are defined as those with Polity scores of 6 and above. Using LinkedIn advertising, I recruit 141 democratic officials from the following countries with a highly democratic average score of 9.085.

Similarly, I use LinkedIn to recruit authoritarian countries with a Polity score of -6 or lower. The officials from autocratic countries together have an average polity score of -8.61.

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[141] Moore (2012).

	Table 3: Democratic Officials	
	Country	Polity2
1	Argentina	9.00
2	Australia	10.00
3	Canada	10.00
4	Czech Republic	9.00
5	Estonia	9.00
6	France	9.00
7	Germany	10.00
8	Ghana	8.00
9	Guyana	7.00
10	India	9.00
11	Indonesia	9.00
12	Israel	6.00
13	Italy	10.00
14	Japan	10.00
15	Mexico	8.00
16	New Zealand	10.00
17	Pakistan	7.00
18	Philippines	8.00
19	Poland	10.00
20	Portugal	10.00
21	Republic of Korea	8.00
22	Romania	9.00
23	Sri Lanka	6.00
24	Switzerland	10.00
25	The Netherlands	10.00
26	United Kingdom	8.00

9.3.2 Recruitment Messaging

I use the following message to recruit officials. My LinkedIn advertisement emphasizes that the survey is anonymous, reviewed by the IRB, and non-identifiable, following best practices for working with elite populations.[142] Diplomats are offered a chance to review the high-level results and the findings as an incentive to participate.

> Dear FIRST NAME:
> I am a Ph.D. student at the University of Pennsylvania researching how collaboration forms around emerging technologies at the United Nations. I want to learn how experts, like yourself, working at the COMPANY NAME think about developing international rules for the internet. The survey, via Qualtrics, is anonymous and will take less than 5 minutes to complete. I sincerely appreciate your help with my dissertation research!
> Survey link
> Best,
> Rachel

9.4 Survey

As part of my dissertation research, I developed a brief 5-minute survey to understand preferences for international law among foreign affairs experts. The survey is anonymous, non-identifiable, and approved by the University of

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[142] Kertzer and Renshon (2022).

	Table 4: Autocratic Officials	
	Country	Polity2
1	Azerbaijan	-7.00
2	Bahrain	-10.00
3	Bangladesh	-6.00
4	Belarus	-7.00
5	Iran	-7.00
6	Kazakhstan	-6.00
7	Kuwait	-7.00
8	Lao People's Democratic Republic	-7.00
9	Qatar	-10.00
10	Saudi Arabia	-10.00
11	Syrian Arab Republic	-9.00
12	United Arab Emirates	-8.00
13	Uzbekistan	-9.00

Pennsylvania ethics board. I will use the high-level results for academic publication to build global knowledge about collaboration at the United Nations. To begin, I would like to know a little bit about your background.

9.4.1 Pre-Treatment Questions

1. Which country do you represent?

2. Which sector of government do you work in?

    (a) Foreign Affairs

    (b) Defense

    (c) Trade and Commerce

    (d) Other (please specify)

3. How many years of experience do you have working on foreign policy for your country?

4. Do you have experience working on international issues related to information and communications technologies (ICTs)?

    (a) Yes

    (b) No

5. If yes, which ICT-related global forum did you attend?

    (a) Internet governance forum (IGF)

    (b) World Summit on Information Society (WSIS)

    (c) Group of Governmental Experts (GGE)

(d) Open Ended Working Group (OEWG)

(e) RightsCon

(f) Ad Hoc Committee on Cybercrime

(g) World Internet Conference

(h) Other (please specify)

9.4.2 Treatment

In the following questions, I will describe types of international rules for information and communications technologies. There are no right or wrong answers; I just want to know what you think as a foreign affairs leader.

[RANDOM ASSIGNMENT TO ONE CONDITION]

9.4.3 Outcomes

1. Regardless of your personal opinion or beliefs, do you think your country would support or oppose these proposed rules?

   (a) Strongly support these rules

   (b) Support these rules

   (c) Somewhat support these rules

   (d) Neither support nor oppose these rules

   (e) Somewhat oppose these rules

   (f) Oppose these rules

   (g) Strongly oppose these rules

2. Now consider how you would interact with officials from other countries. Would you encourage or discourage foreign officials to support these rules?

   (a) Strongly encourage foreign officials to support

   (b) Encourage foreign officials to support

   (c) Somewhat encourage foreign officials to support

   (d) Neither encourage nor discourage foreign officials to support

   (e) Somewhat discourage foreign officials from supporting

   (f) Discourage foreign officials from supporting

(g) Strongly discourage foreign officials from supporting

3. Now consider how you would interact with officials from your country. Would you encourage or discourage national officials to support these rules?

    (a) Strongly encourage national officials to support

    (b) Encourage national officials to support

    (c) Somewhat encourage national officials to support

    (d) Neither encourage nor discourage national officials to support

    (e) Somewhat discourage national officials from supporting

    (f) Discourage national officials from supporting

    (g) Strongly discourage national officials from supporting

9.4.4 Open Ended Response

1. What would you expect your delegation to say when delivering a statement about these rules during international negotiations? Why would your country be in favor or against the rules?

9.4.5 Manipulation Checks

1. Think back to the proposal to develop a new treaty described to you earlier in the survey. Which country proposed developing the treaty?

    (a) United States

    (b) Estonia

    (c) Indonesia

    (d) China

    (e) Other (please specify)

2. Think back to the proposed international rules described earlier in the survey. What was the stated goal of developing a new legal instrument for ICTs?

    (a) Improve Sovereignty

    (b) None

Thank you very much for your time. Would you be willing to speak with me more about your opinion on developing rules for ICTs in an interview? If so, please leave your email address below:

  [END OF SURVEY]

9.4.6   Full Results

Table 5: Experiment Results

	Dependent variable:		
	Mobilization Index		
	Full Model	Authoritarian	Democratic
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Sovereignty Frame	0.009	−0.003	−0.036
	(0.062)	(0.041)	(0.054)
Cue and Frame	0.042	0.052	−0.213***
	(0.075)	(0.051)	(0.055)
Cue	0.036	0.010	−0.224***
	(0.077)	(0.052)	(0.058)
Democratic	0.001		
	(0.077)		
Digital Silk Road	0.050**	0.042	0.049*
	(0.018)	(0.027)	(0.025)
Diplomatic Capacity	−0.029*	−0.046	−0.024
	(0.012)	(0.023)	(0.017)
GDP per Capita	−0.045*	−0.042	−0.061*
	(0.019)	(0.031)	(0.025)
Technical Capacity	−0.015	0.041	−0.031
	(0.022)	(0.041)	(0.029)
Regulatory Capacity	−0.008	−0.052	0.023
	(0.033)	(0.035)	(0.051)
Misinformation	−0.045**	−0.044*	−0.055*
	(0.016)	(0.018)	(0.026)
Frame:Regime	−0.049		
	(0.078)		
Cue and Frame:Regime	−0.257**		
	(0.089)		
Cue:Regime	−0.264**		
	(0.092)		
Constant	1.130***	1.143***	1.280***
	(0.178)	(0.271)	(0.227)
Observations	212	71	141
R^2	0.285	0.309	0.246
Adjusted R^2	0.238	0.207	0.194
Residual Std. Error	0.206 (df = 198)	0.131 (df = 61)	0.234 (df = 131)
F Statistic	6.081*** (df = 13; 198)	3.030** (df = 9; 61)	4.755*** (df = 9; 131)

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001