

Location, Location, Location

The Process of Headquartering Intergovernmental Organizations

Tana Johnson
Duke University

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Introduction

In April 2012, representatives from 103 countries met to select the headquarters location for a new international organization, the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). Many participants hoped to place IPBES in a non-Western country. South Korea, in particular, assembled a bid with several alluring features – even a promise to cover more than half of the organization’s annual operating budget.¹ Yet in the final round of voting, Germany won the headquarters.

This was startling. The Secretariat of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) had developed and disseminated an explicit list of criteria for the headquarters decision. The list included considerations such as transportation links, a capable local workforce, and organizational immunity,² and South Korea’s proposal carefully addressed the stated criteria.³ Moreover, in all previous rounds of voting, South Korea had collected more votes than Germany.⁴ Therefore the outcome raised questions: by what criteria are headquartering decisions *actually* made? Is there a persistent bias toward locating international intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) in a small set of Western countries, even when non-Western countries would be suitable locations? Or is it simply that the objectively best-equipped countries for hosting IGOs just happen to be Western countries?

Competition and incentives to get businesses to set up shop in a particular city, province, or country are common practice – familiar to policymakers, laypeople, and researchers because of the benefits that businesses are thought to provide. The headquarters of international intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), too, must offer something of value, or else we would not observe South Korea, Germany, or other states vying to obtain them. Unfortunately, however, very little is known about the process of bidding for, or choosing, the locations of IGO headquarters.⁵ This leaves an enormous gap between scholars and the policy practitioners who labor over such decisions every time a new IGO is proposed.

To begin addressing this gap, this article considers three general aims behind headquartering decisions: IGOs’ functionality, stability, and protection against the influence of the host state. It posits that – upon controlling for the aims of IGO functionality and stability – the third aim is not a consistent predictor of headquartering outcomes. The process by which the United Nations became headquartered in New York City illustrates states’ ambivalence in protecting IGOs from host-state influence. Then summary statistics – from data that is in the midst of being collected and expanded – reveal intriguing patterns in IGO headquarters. Evidence so far suggests that headquartering outcomes look different from the predictions of a functional, stable, and protected ideal. This lends credence to critics of global governance and holds implications for IGOs’ ability to pursue public policy goals on behalf of all member-states. It also enriches international relations scholarship that explores the ways in which states seek

¹ Government of South Korea 2011, 2.

² United Nations Environment Program 2011.

³ Government of South Korea 2011.

⁴ International Institute for Sustainable Development 2012.

⁵ Outside of international relations scholarship, students of international law have concentrated on a few narrow aspects, such as states’ granting of extra-territorial status to IGOs within their national borders.

informal in-roads for exerting unilateral influence within IGOs.⁶

Aims behind IGO Headquarters Decisions

The most comprehensive guide to IGO headquartering does not come from a scholar. Instead, it comes from a practitioner, writing during the last days of World War II, when officials convened in Bretton Woods to negotiate the creation of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, and then in San Francisco to negotiate the creation of the United Nations. International Labor Organization (ILO) employee C. Wilfred Jenks – who represented his organization at both conferences and later would rise to ILO Director-General – publicized key principles for location decisions.

His principles can be sorted into three broad aims for IGOs: 1) protection against the influence of the host state, 2) functionality, and 3) stability.

Aim #1: Protection against the Influence of the Host State

Operating from the perspective of an international bureaucrat, Jenks emphasized protection against host-state influence as a key consideration in headquartering decisions. If host states could use IGOs to pursue their individual goals, this would threaten the effectiveness and legitimacy of intergovernmental organizations – which are intended to serve member-states more generally.⁷ Jenks suggested two ways to ward against this: implement explicit legal protections for IGOs, but also select hosts that can be trusted not to co-opt IGO operations for goals of their own.

Legal protections were pioneered in the League of Nations system. One crucial piece of protection is an “extra-territorial” designation. Such legal status places an IGO outside the jurisdiction, supervision, or administrative control of the host state.⁸ This promises, for instance, freedom from suits or other processes in national courts; the inviolability of organizational premises and archives; the ability for an institution to enter into contracts without the patronage of the host state; the exemption of organizational funds or salaries from national exchange controls or taxation; and freedom from censorship or covert surveillance of official activities.⁹

Truly robust legal instruments pair the extra-territoriality of the institution with immunity for its personnel. After all, shields for the inanimate parts of the institution are feeble unless the animate parts also receive protection. Immunity undercuts civil or criminal proceedings against staff or government delegates for acts performed in their official capacity. In its strongest forms, it would be extended to all IGO personnel irrespective of their nationality, rank, or role.¹⁰

However, Jenks warned that these legal instruments alone do not provide protection vis-à-vis states, because extraterritoriality and immunity do not prevent host countries from attaching strings to the provision of facilities or other resources. For instance, the host-state could require an IGO to situate itself in an under-populated or under-developed spot that the national

⁶ Thacker 1999; Steinberg 2002; Davis 2004; Oatley and Yackee 2004; Voeten 2005; Fleck and Kilby 2006; Gould 2006; Thomson et al. 2006; Dreher and Jensen 2007; Dreher et al. 2009; Schneider 2009; Johnson 2011; Stone 2011, 2013; Kleine 2013; Koremenos 2013; Vabulas and Snidal 2013.

⁷ Hurd 1999; Johnson 2011.

⁸ Jenks 1945, 39, 41.

⁹ Jenks 1945, 45.

¹⁰ Jenks 1945, 39, 40.

government wishes to build up. Or, it could insist that an IGO hires a particular number of staff from the local population or contributes its own resources toward local infrastructure projects.

Simple proximity, too, opens opportunities for host countries to co-opt IGO activities, even if formal legal protections are in place. Hence the trustworthiness of the host also becomes important. The world's most powerful states struggle with trustworthiness,¹¹ because they find it difficult to credibly commit not to use their superior capabilities to influence the affairs of IGOs hosted within their borders. Officials in national capitals, even outside of great-power states, face similar difficulties with any IGOs located near their own government agencies. That is why Jenks issued a special warning against such locations, where temptations and opportunities are likely to meet:

It is undesirable that [an IGO headquarters] be located at a place where the influence of any great power is dominant, since such a location is unlikely to be acceptable to other great powers, or congenial to any substantial number of the intermediate powers and smaller countries. Similar considerations apply, though with less force, to the selection as international headquarters of the capital of even a small state.¹²

For Jenks, regime type provided a general way to gauge whether a host country can be trusted to refrain from influencing organizational activities. Democratic regimes are thought to demonstrate stronger respect for the rule of law, greater freedom of the press, and less oppressive censorship. As a result, the “manners and *mores* of a seasoned democracy afford the best guarantee that [an IGO] will be able to discharge its duties effectively, free from any undue local influence.”¹³

Thus from the start of postwar institution-building, Jenks had offered a set of principles for protecting IGOs against the influence of their host states. These principles manifest as testable hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 (Legal Protections): IGO headquarters will be located in states with strong legal protections for organizational inviolability or personnel immunity.

Hypothesis 2a (Great Powers): IGO headquarters will not be located in great-power states.

Hypothesis 2b (National Capitals): IGO headquarters will not be located in a state's national capital.

Hypothesis 3 (Attached Strings): IGO headquarters will not be located in states that demand particular IGO concessions in exchange for facilities or other resources.

¹¹ Ikenberry 2000.

¹² Jenks 1945, 22-23. The author acknowledges the concern that a leading state, whose participation may be essential for IGO success, could threaten to stay out of an IGO not located on the state's territory. However, he counters that this concern, “if valid at all, applies to very few of the international institutions which will be necessary” (16).

¹³ Jenks 1945, 23.

Hypothesis 4 (Democracy): IGO headquarters will be located in states that are seasoned democracies.

Of course, such protection was not Jenks' sole aim for headquartering decisions. To assess the extent to which actual outcomes support these four hypotheses, we also would need to control for two other aims.

Aim #2: Functionality

The first is IGO functionality. IGOs need a functional environment for their operations, and this entails at least four logistical considerations: transportation ease, communications ease, a high-quality local workforce, and potential synergies in governance.

For transportation ease, an attractive headquarters site would possess a nearby international airport with ample flights to and from cities throughout the world.¹⁴ Moreover, to further ensure ease of movement, transportation authorities would minimize travel constraints and/or provide plentiful migration-processing facilities.¹⁵ In this way government delegates, organizational staff, and visitors would be unhampered in carrying out or observing the work of an international intergovernmental organization.

Jenks noted that communications ease also enhances functionality. For productive international deliberations, the immediate area must be well connected to other parts of the world via a dense and reliable telecommunications network.¹⁶ In addition, countries whose official language is among the handful of recognized international working languages would be particularly attractive, because such alignment facilitates the visits of observers or government delegates, the recruitment of employees, and the publicity of IGO activities.¹⁷

Relatedly, location decisions should privilege countries offering a high-quality workforce. Although IGOs hire a core international staff that is subject to various civil service rights and responsibilities, they also rely on non-permanent local employees as administrative assistants, printers, facilities maintenance workers, drivers, and so on. In these positions, IGOs need people who are reliable, professional, thorough, and ethical. If a soundly educated, high-quality local workforce cannot fill these support roles, then international workers would need to be brought in, at extra expense.¹⁸

Last but not least, Jenks pointed out that the co-location of several international intergovernmental organizations in a single spot can boost IGO functionality by taking advantage of potential synergies in governance. At a mundane level, neighboring organizations can

¹⁴ Jenks 1945, 26.

¹⁵ Jenks 1945, 35, 37.

¹⁶ Jenks 1945, 26-27.

¹⁷ Jenks 1945, 30-31. In the past century, the number of recognized international working languages has grown from two to six. English and French constituted the main working languages in the first half of the 20th century and were institutionalized as such in a 1946 United Nations General Assembly resolution (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/2%28I%29). A 1948 resolution (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/262%28III%29) added Spanish. Subsequent resolutions added Russian in 1968 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/2479%28XXIII%29), then Chinese (http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=a/res/3189%28XXVIII%29) and Arabic (http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=a/res/3190%28XXVIII%29) in 1973.

¹⁸ Jenks 1945, 34-35.

coordinate and economize on supply purchases, conference venue bookings, library or research services, printing contracts, and temporary loans of support staff during major events.¹⁹ At a more consequential level, neighboring organizations can confer and collaborate more easily, with this continuous contact forging stronger shared objectives and improved policy implementation in service to their member-states.²⁰

Aim #3: Stability

In assessing how well real-world outcomes align with the aim of protecting intergovernmental organizations against host-state influence, we would need to control for another aim beyond IGO functionality: securing a stable environment. IGO stability entails inking a stable environment entails anticipating and avoiding three foreseeable and avoidable impediments to organizational operations: international conflict, domestic conflict, and economic upheaval.

Jenks urged decision-makers to place organizational headquarters in spots sheltered from ongoing or recent inter-state war. In the context of World War II, for example, Germany and Japan were swiftly deemed non-conducive for hosting structures of postwar multilateral cooperation – instead, participants at the Bretton Woods and San Francisco conferences focused on countries likely to be cradles of “civilization” that could continue to weather future international political disagreements or realignments.²¹ All else equal, this privileges countries with fewer recent entanglements in inter-state conflicts.

Similarly, IGO stability benefits from a lack of internal conflicts in the host country. Shelter from inter-state war accomplishes little if an IGO would face serious impediments concentrated within the state in which it is headquartered. For example, Jenks warned against countries with hostilities among races, classes, or religions, and he counseled that there was “nothing to be gained by locating such a headquarters in an area where social disturbance and conflict are almost inevitable.”²² Conflict internationally or domestically jeopardizes the functioning of IGOs, and therefore headquarters locations must be selected with an eye toward both dangers.

Last, economic upheaval can be as damaging as political upheaval. In particular, when local economic troubles manifest as currency instability, this directly challenges international intergovernmental organizations. IGOs must operate in their host country’s currency for local expenditures but also cover many of those expenditures by converting the contributions that member-states make in numerous other currencies. Moreover, members’ actual outlays generally occur well after an IGO’s budget-planning process. In light of these related challenges, Jenks recommended limiting potential headquarters locations to countries whose currencies have not undergone substantial recent fluctuations.²³

Tensions with “Informal Governance”

Thus, since the start of postwar institution-building, deliberations over organizations’ headquarters locations have been exposed to three guiding principles. Headquartering in line

¹⁹ Jenks 1945, 15.

²⁰ Jenks 1945, 14.

²¹ Jenks 1945, 44-45.

²² Jenks 1945, 23, 29.

²³ Jenks 1945, 32-33.

with *protection against the influence of the host state* would entail the legal protections of extraterritoriality and immunity, the avoidance of great-power states or any capital cities, the minimization of strings that hosts attach to resources, and the preference for seasoned democracies. Seeking *functionality* would mean selecting locations with ample air connections and travel processing facilities; dense telecommunications networks and an official local language that is one of the major international working languages; an educated workforce; and existing headquarters for other IGOs. Aiming for *stability* would include choosing sites that are sheltered from militarized inter-state disputes, civil unrest, and currency fluctuations.

If those principles actually guide which cities and countries are chosen to host IGO headquarters, then we would see the correlations summarized in the final column of Table 1.²⁴

[TABLE 1]

But there are reasons to believe that headquartering outcomes less consistently reflect the aim of protection against host-state influence, compared to the aims of IGO functionality and stability.

It is costly and unusual for states to build and join international intergovernmental organizations with the sole intention of sabotaging them from within. Hence, a group of negotiating states probably would readily agree that IGO stability and functionality are key principles for determining headquarters sites. Yet states have less uniform views on protection against the influence of the host state. They may advocate this principle when applied to organizations they are not in a position to host, but not embrace it when applied to organizations they are in a position to host. After all, states appreciate having informal channels of influence for themselves.²⁵

Existing scholarship does not explore the possibility that hosting an organization's headquarters is a tempting way to attain informal channels of influence,²⁶ but it has amassed evidence of states using intergovernmental organizations in pursuit of individual rather than collective goals. For instance, research suggests that by using its influence within the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, the United States government has funneled financial assistance from multilateral coffers as enticements or rewards for particular countries that are important for American foreign policy.²⁷ Related research indicates that the U.S. government may be using similar tactics to sway activities in the UN Security Council.²⁸ But the empirical record is not constrained to the United States. Scholars have found political maneuvering by other states and in other contexts – such as by Japan in international trade negotiations,²⁹ or by particular European states within the European Union.³⁰

²⁴ For the number of other IGO headquarters in the same location, more may be better only up to a point. It is conceivable that synergies are greatest if a particular locale would host a only modest number of organizations, which could cooperate (rather than compete) in terms of employment, conference venues, etc. The squared term in Table 1 reflects this possibility.

²⁵ Cox and Jacobson 1974; Abbott and Snidal 1998; Johnson 2014.

²⁶ But see Gray 2013 for a discussion of how the choice of headquarters location can affect an IGO's vitality later.

²⁷ See, for example, Thacker 1999; Oatley and Yackee 2004; Fleck and Kilby 2006; Gould 2006; Dreher and Jensen 2007; Johnson 2011; Stone 2011.

²⁸ See, for example, Voeten 2005; Dreher et al. 2009.

²⁹ Steinberg 2002; Davis 2004.

³⁰ Thomson et al, 2006; Schneider 2009; Kleine 2013.

Moreover, a recent, growing literature suggests that an extra-territoriality designation or other formal rules may denote how IGOs *ought* to operate, but “informal governance” describes how IGOs actually *do* operate.³¹ With informal governance, shared expectations and important-but-unwritten rules modify, substitute for, or override formal legal provisions.³² A state’s informal power, then, consists of its ability to go outside of formal channels, at some cost, in order to pursue outcomes it desires within an organization.³³ This, in turn, indicates that although leading states do not necessarily monopolize informal governance, they are advantaged in it. Powerful countries tend to enjoy superior information, keener attention to their requests, greater deference from other states, and more attractive outside options.³⁴ They cannot credibly commit to forego these advantages in the face of formal rules. The implication is that deviations from formal rules are built into IGOs as a way to safeguard the interests of leading states – and weaker states go along with such informal governance, because they want leading states’ continued engagement in organizational activities.³⁵

These concessions from the weak to the strong matter, in turn, because they are in tension with the aim to place IGO headquarters where they will be protected against the influence of their host states. And if informal governance is afoot, the patterns in headquartering outcomes would be quite different from the ideal of protecting IGOs against host-state influence.³⁶ Specifically, we should see correlations that are quite different from those predicted for Hypotheses 1 through 4 in Table 1.

First, although some formal protections for organizational inviolability and/or personnel immunity may be in place, these will not be universally strong. To prevent behind-the-scenes meddling from becoming routine, informal interference with an institution or its people must be made somewhat costly. Formal provisions for extraterritoriality and immunity do this but come with risks: they can prompt powerful states to disengage entirely, thereby diminishing the value of the IGO for other members.³⁷ If informal governance is at play, then legal protections for inviolability and immunity probably will not be made as impermeable as they could be.

Second, neither great powers nor national capitals will be avoided as hosting sites. To the contrary: they would arise often as IGO headquarters locations. If the pattern persists after controlling for attributes (such as transportation ease or shelter from economic upheaval) thought to promote IGO stability or functionality, this suggests deviations from pursuing international intergovernmental organizations’ protection against host-state influence.

Third, far from having no strings attached, winning bids for IGO headquarters will be made conditional on concessions from the organization. Host countries will make demands that benefit themselves. For instance, they could stipulate that provided resources must be spent on local staff, or local infrastructure, or other projects that serve policy goals of the host-state rather than those of the broader set of member-states.

³¹ Stone 2011; Koremenos 2013; Vabulas and Snidal 2013. More generally, see the 2013 *Review of International Organizations* special issue on informal governance.

³² Stone 2013, 123.

³³ Stone 2013, 125. Stone sees formal power, in contrast, consisting of “voting rights, veto power, membership on committees, or other control rights that are legally assigned to members of an organization.”

³⁴ Stone 2013, 125.

³⁵ Stone 2013, 124-125.

³⁶ Stone 2013, 132, 134.

³⁷ Stone 2013, 125-126.

Fourth, after accounting for confounding factors, seasoned democracies will not emerge as the most frequent hosts of IGO headquarters. Because international power projection capabilities do not rest on regime type alone – and indeed, arguably could be greater for states that do not answer to a widespread voting constituency – locations will correlate with the extent of a country’s power rather than with its type of polity. While it is possible for a great power to be a seasoned democracy, the tenets of informal governance would be corroborated if IGO headquarters also are prevalent among great powers that are not seasoned democracies.

Illustration: Headquartering the United Nations in New York City

To view Jenks’ three principles in practice, and to see states’ ambivalence toward protecting IGOs from host-state influence, consider the headquartering process for the United Nations in the 1940s.

Certainly, IGO functionality was a key aim. For instance, at an initial stage when numerous cities were in play as potential headquarters locations, the Executive Committee of the Preparatory Commission for the UN generated specific criteria for an ideal site, and central considerations included the sites’ local workforce, transportation network, and communications infrastructure. The city of Boston, for example, was commended as a “business center” that was “tightly integrated into global networks of communication and transportation” and offered capable office workers and local publishing firms that could operate in 30 languages.³⁸

Beyond IGO functionality, negotiators sought IGO stability. Early on, the majority of states’ representatives decided that the United Nations should not be placed in war-torn, economically ravaged Europe.³⁹ A Chinese delegate expressed a common sentiment against locating the new organization in a place that had been party to so much international conflict and economic upheaval. “The memory of the seat where all the attempts to maintain peace have failed,” he said, “would influence the whole atmosphere.”⁴⁰ Shelter from domestic conflict also arose as an important consideration. For instance, British officials questioned the appropriateness of headquartering the UN in the United States, with its institutionalized discrimination against people of African or Asian descent. After all, the headquarters location would need to follow the principles in Article 1 of the UN Charter: “promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.”⁴¹ Ultimately this did not preclude the United States from hosting, but it did rule out sites in the American South and West.⁴²

Yet while states cohered on the principles of IGO functionality and stability, they exhibited some ambivalence about protection against host-state influence. Distribution of power within the United Nations was a contentious topic, particularly because the organization’s Security Council already had been formed.⁴³ Of the mere 11 seats on the Security Council, five were permanently dedicated to China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The headquarters location could be “further indication of where power would lie in the

³⁸ Mires 2013, 91-92.

³⁹ United States Department of State 1945, 1437.

⁴⁰ Mires 2013, 85.

⁴¹ United Nations 1945.

⁴² Mires 2013, 125, 131-133.

⁴³ Avalon Project 1945.

postwar world.”⁴⁴ France and the United Kingdom advised against placing the UN in any great power.⁴⁵ But Russia championed the United States, being outside of both Asia and Europe, as the best base for multilateral governance.⁴⁶ China and a majority of other member-states agreed.

Sounding much like Jenks, one U.S. editorialist explicitly attributed this to the trustworthiness of America’s seasoned democracy:

We believe the peoples of this earth have greater confidence in America’s strict adherence to its professed ideals and principles than they have in any other country... The greatest democracy in world history, [the United States] has developed an enlightened attitude towards smaller nations as evidenced by granting independence to the Philippines and its “good neighbor” policy in South America. Therefore it is most fitting that the home of the United Nations should be within our borders.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, states were wary about the new organization’s proximity to the national government apparatus in Washington D.C. When the 11-country, Uruguay-chaired Interim Committee on Headquarters met in late December 1945, it added a stipulation: at least three hours’ travel time from Washington D.C. would be “an appropriate buffer between the United Nations and American political interference.”⁴⁸

During much of the deliberations, the U.S. government maintained a position of “public neutrality,” devised by Edward Stettinius, the former Secretary of State who became the country’s chief delegate to the United Nations. Anticipating that an American city would be selected for the headquarters, Stettinius sent a memo to President Harry Truman and Secretary of State Dean Acheson, noting:

I think it is important that I be authorized to state that it is up to the United Nations themselves to decide the specific location in the United States they will choose as their permanent headquarters. While the suggestion has been made that it should be left largely to the U.S., I feel that the majority of the United Nations would want to make the decision themselves and that it might be embarrassing for us to control the decision. I presume you would prefer to place responsibility on the United Nations in any case in order to avoid political difficulties for yourself.⁴⁹

Privately, the State Department assured Congress and other U.S. political actors that public neutrality would not jeopardize the benefits of hosting the United Nations. Securing the headquarters was expected to enhance the leadership and prestige of the United States within the

⁴⁴ Mires 2013, 50.

⁴⁵ United States Department of State 1945, 1460-1461.

⁴⁶ Mires 2013, 85. Russia had been expelled from the League of Nations after invading Finland in 1939, and Russian delegates worried that a European headquarters for the new United Nations could jeopardize their government’s plans for expansion in Eastern Europe. A hope was that, with the UN placed in the United States, European countries would have less ability to curb growing Soviet influence (Mires 2013, 50).

⁴⁷ Stern 1945.

⁴⁸ Mires 2013, 130.

⁴⁹ United States Department of State 1945, 1454.

organization, showcase the American way of life to large numbers of influential foreigners, and annually garner jobs and purchases worth about \$20 million to the U.S. economy.⁵⁰

Deliberations concluded in December 1946, when former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Nelson Rockefeller convinced his father to give the new organization \$8.5 million to purchase several blocks of real estate along the East River in Manhattan. Both the Headquarters Committee and the UN General Assembly voted to accept the gift, and the City of New York contributed additional land, waterfront rights, and infrastructure alterations valued at more than \$15 million.⁵¹ After UN exploration found that further financing from other sources was impracticable, the U.S. Congress authorized a 32-year interest-free \$65 million loan for constructing facilities on the new campus. Partly to stave off other countries' demands that the money should be a gift, the U.S. government refrained from attaching strings to the loan.⁵²

Yet it also refrained from granting complete extraterritoriality and immunity to the UN. The *Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations* was approved in UN General Assembly Resolution 22(I) and entered into force in September 1946, prior to Manhattan's selection as the headquarters site. Its Article II makes many guarantees to the IGO: freedom from lawsuits and other legal proceedings (Section 2), inviolability of premises and archives (Sections 3-4), insusceptibility to financial controls (Section 5), exemption from taxes and some import/export regulations (Section 7). Meanwhile, its Articles IV, V, and VI endow personnel with immunity from legal processes.⁵³ But the 1947 *Agreement between the United Nations and the United States Regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations* seems to curtail things not explicitly spelled out by the Convention.

For instance, Article 3, Section 7(a) acknowledges that the "headquarters district shall be under the control and authority of the United Nations." But then it immediately goes on to stipulate that, "except as otherwise provided in this agreement or in the General Convention":

(b) the federal, state, and local law of the United States shall apply within the headquarters district.

(c) the federal, state, and local courts of the United States shall have jurisdiction over acts done and transactions taking place in the headquarters district as provided in applicable federal, state, and local laws.⁵⁴

In short, as one legal scholar notes, "the 'control and authority' to be exercised by the United Nations under this agreement is very restricted."⁵⁵

In the end, parts of the process reflected Jenks' ideal of protection against the influence of the host state: the United Nations was installed in a place other than the capital city (Hypothesis 2b) in a seasoned democracy (Hypothesis 4) that largely refrained from demanding particular IGO concessions in exchange for resources (Hypothesis 3). Proponents did point to the United States' long democratic history as evidence that it would be a global role model and trustworthy

⁵⁰ Truman Presidential Library 1948, 12.

⁵¹ Truman Presidential Library 1948, 5.

⁵² Truman Presidential Library 1948, 4, 6, 11.

⁵³ United Nations General Assembly 1946.

⁵⁴ Avalon Project 1947.

⁵⁵ Kelsen 2000, 350.

host.

Nevertheless, not all inroads were blocked. The chosen base did not avoid a great-power host (Hypothesis 2a) and did not offer especially strong legal protections for organizational inviolability or personnel immunity (Hypothesis 1). Such ambivalence about IGO protection makes sense because self-interested states appreciate having in-roads of influence for themselves within intergovernmental organizations – but are simultaneously wary about letting other states possess similar in-roads. Thus, one researcher summarizes the UN headquartering process like this:

[D]iplomats, who saw the world in terms of nations, continents, and the balance of power, had no experience to guide them through the tangle of local factors that complicated finding a location to do business in the United States... [They] could not separate the task from international intrigue as their nations jockeyed for influence in the postwar world.⁵⁶

Yet it is possible that ambivalence about IGO protection was more prevalent in the early postwar period, prior to the development of more standardized and transparent processes for choosing headquarters locations. So, have subsequent outcomes also looked like this? Or have they adhered more closely to Jenks' ideal, displaying an overall pattern of headquartering decisions in line with the aims of IGO functionality, stability, and protection against host-state influence?

Research Approach

Finding out will involve a large-N statistical approach. After all, states may disavow their interest in informal governance even when that interest actually informs their behavior. Therefore, instead of putting faith in governments' claimed reasoning behind headquartering decisions, it is more telling to scrutinize overall patterns: how closely real-world outcomes match outcomes predicted by a pure focus on ensuring intergovernmental organizations' stability, functionality, and protection against host-state influence.

The two hypotheses concerning great powers and democracy are the most straightforward to investigate on a broad scale.⁵⁷ Doing so entails expanding the organizational data from the Correlates of War (COW) 2.0 project. The COW 2.0 project defines an IGO as 1) consisting of at least three members of the COW-defined state system, 2) holding regular plenary sessions at least once every ten years, and 3) possessing a permanent secretariat and corresponding headquarters.⁵⁸ According to the COW project's three-part definition and its exclusions, 495 IGOs have existed in the time period 1816-2000, and 334 of these were still operating as of the year 2000.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Mires 2013, 124.

⁵⁷ The goal is to examine all hypotheses eventually, but that will require harder-to-attain data on the legal and financial terms of headquarters agreements.

⁵⁸ The project's original and subsequent coders made efforts to exclude "organizational progeny" or "emanations" – organizations that are descendants of other IGOs and that interact in an increasingly complex family tree (Wallace and Singer 1970; Shanks et al. 1996; Johnson 2014). Subsequent data collection efforts can expand to organizational progeny.

⁵⁹ Pevehouse and Nordstrom 2003, 2. This makes the year 2000 the cutoff for other variables as well.

To investigate the headquarters attributes of IGOs in contemporary multilateral governance, these 334 organizations constitute the relevant population.⁶⁰ Then the dataset – which in its original form focused on coding state-membership in organizations – is expanded to encompass the host state for each IGO, as well as whether the host state is a great power and/or a seasoned democracy.⁶¹ Great-power states are defined per the COW classification, which identifies seven great powers as of the year 2000: China, France, Germany, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.⁶² Seasoned democracies are defined per the Polity IV classification, which identifies 32 “full” democracies as of the year 2000.⁶³

Eventually, the dataset will be expanded even further to permit comprehensive tests of the extent to which protection from host-state influence predict the location chosen for IGO headquarters. In addition to capturing additional aspects of the key explanatory variable, the expanded dataset will need to control for factors related to IGO stability or functionality, as summarized earlier in Table 1.⁶⁴

Data on Headquarters in Contemporary Multilateral Governance

Consider some summary statistics from the data on the population of 334 IGOs. Based on the expansion of the COW dataset so far, Table 2 displays states hosting five or more IGOs as of the year 2000.

[TABLE 2]

Note that about 50 percent of the total IGO population is headquartered in just 17 states – and more than 25 percent of the total IGO population is headquartered in just five states, all in Western Europe or North America. Only two great powers, China and Japan, are absent. Many

⁶⁰ Understanding why a minority of IGOs die, merge, or are replaced is an interesting question but beyond the scope of this article.

⁶¹ Host states are listed in the online *Yearbook of International Organizations*. Coding the specific host city within the host state is underway but not complete yet.

⁶² More specifically, the COW classification indicates the start (and end date, if applicable) of great-power status for nine countries: Austria-Hungary (1816-1918), China (1950 to present), France (1816-1940, 1945 to present), Germany (1816-1918, 1925-1945, 1991 to present), Italy (1860-1943), Japan (1895-1945, 1991-present), Russia (1816-1917, 1922 to present), United Kingdom (1815-present), United States (1898-present) (Correlates of War Project. “State System Membership List, v2008.1,” available at: <http://www.correlatesofwar.org/COW2%20Data/SystemMembership/2008/System2008.html>). According to the COW classification, Austria-Hungary and Italy never regained the great-power status they lost after World War II. Also note that it was not until 1971 that the People’s Republic of China (PRC) began to occupy the seat of “China” in the United Nations and other organizations – previously, the seat had been occupied by Taiwan (“Republic of China”).

⁶³ Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mauritius, Mongolia, New Zealand, Norway, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Uruguay, United States (Integrated Network for Societal Conflict Research (INSCR). “Polity IV Annual Time Series 1800-2012,” available at: <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/inscr.htm>).

⁶⁴ Like any approach, this has limitations. For instance, the dataset captures the outcome but is not well suited to identify and incorporate counterfactuals such as locations that were considered but ultimately rejected. Furthermore, it cannot necessarily capture the extent to which negotiators specified criteria by which potential headquarters locations would be evaluated. Therefore, this article is a useful first cut, and future research may need to follow up with case studies.

seasoned democracies also are absent, and the list includes several countries (Burkina Faso, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Thailand) that are not seasoned democracies.

If the IGO population is further limited to only global – rather than regional or cross-regional – organizations, then the list of relevant states shrinks much further, as shown in the table’s final column. Just nine countries, all “seasoned democracies” in Western Europe or North America, host 49 of the world’s 55 global IGOs. Of these, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States are contemporary great powers who, as a group, host about half of the world’s global IGOs.

Thus, summary statistics support Hypothesis 4: a significant number of international intergovernmental organizations are located in states that are seasoned democracies. But the data simultaneously challenge Hypothesis 2: repeatedly, IGO headquarters are installed within great-power states. Of course, the hypotheses will need to undergo further scrutiny after controlling for confounding factors, including potential correlation between great powers and seasoned democracies. This is planned for future research. But the data so far show a striking imbalance in the placement of the world’s IGOs. Future analyses can investigate patterns in such outcomes.

Why This Matters

In the mid-1940s, three broad principles were disseminated to inform deliberations over where to headquarter new IGOs: functionality, stability, and protection against host-state influence. This article posits that headquartering outcomes less consistently reflect the third aim, compared with the other two. After all, the third aim is in tension with states’ interests in informal governance, for states may seek to host IGOs because proximity permits additional, informal channels for influencing international policy or achieving other individual political objectives. States that host multiple headquarters gain access to more of these channels. And indeed, both the UN illustration and the preliminary examination of the expanded COW dataset exhibit headquartering outcomes that diverge from the three-part ideal that ILO bureaucrat C. Wilfred Jenks laid out at the end of World War II. For instance, the data reveal a remarkable concentration of international intergovernmental organizations in just a few states – particularly in some, but not all, of the world’s great powers.

Understanding headquartering decisions matters because new IGOs continue to be created, and therefore locational choices continue to arise. But it also matters because although locational choices may be stable, they are not completely static. IGO headquarters can move, and have moved. For instance, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) shifted its base from Washington D.C. to Rome, partly due to the Secretariat’s frustration with the American government’s ease and persistence in meddling with organizational activities.⁶⁵ Shifts can be proposed by states as well – and sometimes that ends in costly tussles over the proposed move and its broader implications.

In 2013, for example, Qatar made an aggressive bid to relocate a United Nations agency, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), from Montreal to Doha. The government promised to pay for the construction, ongoing maintenance, insurance, and security of new and state-of-the-art premises, as well as the costs of staff relocation, healthcare, and educational

⁶⁵ Johnson 2014.

benefits.⁶⁶ In briefing notes circulated to ICAO member-states, Qatar disparaged Canada for high taxes, a tedious visa process for delegates, and scarce flights connecting Montreal with national capitals in Asia and elsewhere.⁶⁷ The public argument was that the Canadian locale impeded ICAO's functionality. But the private rationale was very different. In confidential meetings with fellow Middle Eastern countries, Qatar called for solidarity in humiliating Canada's Conservative government, as retaliation for ostensibly pro-Israel and anti-Palestine policies.⁶⁸

Three levels of Canada's contentious federal system – Montreal's mayor, Quebec's international relations minister, and the Conservative Party-led national government – united to fight back. The Conservative Party attracted even more surprising allies among the international labor movement, who feared the political influence that the Qatari government would exert over ICAO if the proposal went through. The general-secretary of the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) condemned Qatar for trying to use a UN agency as a "political football."⁶⁹ Meanwhile, the ITF president seethed: "Emerging out of the poisonous cloud of allegations of corruption and vote-buying surrounding the World Cup decision... can the Qatari government really expect to transplant a vital United Nations organization and its staff to a nation that is a byword for democratic deficit?"⁷⁰ Following an international lobbying junket by the Canadian government,⁷¹ Qatar withdrew its bid, and Canada "won" the battle by preserving ICAO's headquarters in Montreal, albeit at a much higher cost. Political goals motivated Qatar's bid, and fears of Qatar's host-state influence motivated the reaction.

There is much to learn about how initial headquartering decisions are made, or how relocations proposals are considered – and what this means for intergovernmental organizations' effectiveness and legitimacy. Clearly, the headquarters of intergovernmental organizations are valuable enough to prompt states to scramble to obtain or keep them. Yet we observe inconsistency in headquartering IGOs where they would be best protected from host-state influence. This raises the possibility that considerations to enable informal governance win out, and at a cost: being privileged over other aims, such as ensuring IGO functionality or stability. The work so far points to the need for continued research.

⁶⁶ McGinley, Shane. May 2, 2013. "Transport Union Slams Qatar Bid To Host UN Aviation Body." *Arabian Business*. Available at: <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/transport-union-slams-qatar-bid-host-un-aviation-body-500332.html>

⁶⁷ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). May 2, 2013. "Baird Fighting 'Tooth and Nail' To Keep UN Aviation Office in Montreal." Available at: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/baird-fighting-tooth-and-nail-to-keep-un-aviation-office-in-montreal-1.1311536>

⁶⁸ Clark, Campbell. May 4, 2013. "U.S. Won't Support Qatar's Bid To Move UN Agency." *The Globe and Mail*. Available at: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/us-wont-support-moving-qatars-bid-to-move-un-agency/article11717197/>

⁶⁹ International Transport Workers Federation (ITF). May 10, 2013. "ITF and ITUC Condemn Qatar ICAO Bid." Available at: <http://www.itfglobal.org/itf-asia/news-online.cfm/newsdetail/8969>

⁷⁰ McGinley, Shane. May 2, 2013. "Transport Union Slams Qatar Bid To Host UN Aviation Body." *Arabian Business*. Available at: <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/transport-union-slams-qatar-bid-host-un-aviation-body-500332.html>

⁷¹ Clark, Campbell. May 4, 2013. "U.S. Won't Support Qatar's Bid To Move UN Agency." *The Globe and Mail*. Available at: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/us-wont-support-moving-qatars-bid-to-move-un-agency/article11717197/>

Table 1: Operationalization

Broad Aim	Specific Aim	Operationalization	Expected Correlation
PROTECTION AGAINST THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOST STATE	Legal Protections	Hypothesis 1: Extraterritoriality for IGO, or immunity for IGO staff	+
	Trustworthy Host	Hypothesis 2a: Great-power state	-
		Hypothesis 2b: Capital city	-
		Hypothesis 3: Resources come with strings attached	-
		Hypothesis 4: Extent of democracy	+
CONTROL VARIABLES			
STABILITY	Shelter from international conflict	Militarized inter-state disputes	-
	Shelter from domestic conflict	Civil unrest	-
	Shelter from economic upheaval	Fluctuations in value of currency	-
FUNCTIONALITY	Transportation ease	Number of air connections	+
		Travel processing facilities	+
	Communication ease	Level of telecommunications connectivity	+
		Official language includes one of the major international working languages	+
High-quality local workforce	Percentage of population with high school education or equivalent	+	
Potential synergies in governance	Number of other IGO headquarters [and squared]	+ [-]	

Table 2: Headquartering Patterns

State Name	State Region	Great Power (Hypothesis 2a)	Seasoned Democracy (Hypothesis 4)	Number of IGOs Headquartered	Number of Global IGOs Headquartered
France	Western Europe	✓	✓	27	11
United Kingdom	Western Europe	✓	✓	20	4
Switzerland	Western Europe		✓	19	11
United States	North America	✓	✓	18	9
Belgium	Western Europe		✓	12	3
Italy	Western Europe		✓	10	4
Austria	Western Europe		✓	7	2
Germany	Western Europe	✓	✓	7	0
Mexico	Latin America			7	0
Canada	North America		✓	6	2
Denmark	Western Europe		✓	6	0
Russia	Eastern Europe	✓		6	0
Senegal	Africa			6	0
Burkina Faso	Africa			5	0
Netherlands	Western Europe		✓	5	3
Saudi Arabia	Middle East			5	0
17 States	7 Regions	5 Great Powers	12 Seasoned Democracies	171 IGOs (of 334 IGOs)	49 Global IGOs (of 55 IGOs)

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