

# Linking International Organizations and Domestic Policymaking: the Role of Bureaucratic Lobbying

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Working Paper: link to [latest draft](#)<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The extent of influence of international organizations (IOs) in member state's policymaking is contested, as are the potential channels of influence. I argue domestic bureaucrats play a primary role in disseminating IO norms to achieve policy goals and signal technocratic expertise. Contrary to current perspectives on bureaucratic autonomy, this argument emphasizes national legislatures as key sites to flex autonomy and promote IOs. But bureaucrats are strategic, and limit references to IOs to avoid alienating political actors who champion anti-globalism. However, public servants are inclined to reinforce each other during legislative hearings, even when led by nationalist and anti-globalist politicians, paradoxically resulting in increased references to IOs. The argument is supported using a text-as-data approach with 1500 public hearing from Brazil's permanent Senate Commissions from 2013 to 2022. In addition, I draw on evidence from interviews and ethnographic research in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies and Senate. The findings suggest an overlooked aspect of bureaucrats' political influence. Despite rising anti-globalism, I show how IOs can remain relevant for domestic policy even when country participation at IOs is inconsistent.

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# 1 Introduction

International organizations (IOs) have several channels of influence, such as treaty making and promulgation of norms. Yet, it is unclear how IOs and specifically the norms they seek to promote come to influence policymaking and legislation in member countries. Political scientists often refer to the trans-boundary expansion of norms as policy ‘diffusion’ (Dobbin, Simmons, and Garrett 2007), yet the autonomy and influence of IOs in member states is contested (Collins and White 2011). However, if some autonomy is assumed such that IOs have interests that might diverge from their members, it becomes a puzzle as to how these organizations promote their norms and achieve influence.

Diffusion of norms often implies a natural or non-agent driven process (Cortell and Davis Jr. 2000), yet we know that international norms do not always diffuse everywhere, raising questions about the channels of influence that IOs have. For example, even in the United States — arguably the most weighty domestic legislature that influences IO behavior — IOs like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank have been shown to try and conversely influence policy (Lavelle 2011). Beyond the US, the activities of IOs are less documented. Furthermore, as international institutions are facing legitimacy threats and less support from their members in recent years (Vreeland 2019), diffusion by affinity seems less straightforward.

In this paper, I investigate why IOs influence some legislatures and legislative processes more than others. I make the argument that high levels of domestic bureaucratic participation in the policymaking process can introduce more IO influence due to the shared norms between many IOs and domestic state bureaucrats, but also because of a strategy I call *dual legitimation*, by which bureaucrats mention IOs to boost their technocratic profiles amid partisan legislators. I build on international relations theories of constructivism (Dobbin, Simmons, and Garrett 2007), and frameworks of transnational epistemic communities (Jung 2019) to construct this argument. Moreover, I argue that bureaucrats are strategic, and will mention IOs less when they are in public hearings led by anti-globalist senators. But bureau-

crats are willing to reinforce each other, such that higher numbers of bureaucrats in far-right led public hearings will lead to, paradoxically, more IO mentions.

To test this proposed explanation, I analyze a novel dataset of 1500 public hearings from Brazil's permanent senate committees, as well as draw on insights from interviews and ethnographic work in Brazil's national legislature. These committees are one of the main arenas of public discussion, lobbying, and participation in the Brazilian legislative process. Any individual or organization can seek to participate as a speaker in public hearings (which generally have 4-5 speakers), but doing so requires costly travel to the capital of the country (Brasília), essentially making participation a proxy for groups that are most concerned about the topic of public hearings. Some participants are also invited.

I find that bureaucratic participation increases the likelihood and total reference of IOs. There is also significant support for the strategy of bureaucrats to avoid mentioning IOs in conservative public hearings absent more than two other bureaucrats. Robustness tests help limit concerns about the endogeneity of topics that inspire IOs and bureaucrat participation. Using a machine learning approach, I show that bureaucrats are likely to participate in all manner of topics.

This paper proceeds by identifying the past work on IO theory and the channels of influence they have on domestic legislatures. Next, I propose an explanation that links IO influence to domestic legislatures through domestic bureaucrats' participation. I then detail the methods and preliminary results.

## **2 Theories of IO Influence**

The debate in the established literature on IO influence is twofold. First, there is a division as to the autonomy of IOs, and second, there is little consensus on the most important channels of IO influence in domestic legislatures. Additionally, there is not much work on bureaucratic activism as it relates to discussions of the work of IOs in legislatures. Defining

International Organizations (IOs) is its own research endeavor (Archer 2014). For this paper, I borrow Archer's (2014) definition of IOs: "a formal, continuous structure established by agreement between members (governmental and/or non-governmental) from two or more sovereign states with the aim of pursuing the common interest of the membership" (p. 31). I make several amendments to this definition by excluding cases dealing with supranatural governing bodies (i.e., the European Union *is* not considered an IO), and trade unions.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding autonomy, the literature sees IO autonomy as one where IOs are instruments (Collins and White 2011), wielded by their member states, or runaway organizations having unshackled themselves and free to set international norms. Foremost, the autonomy of IOs is heavily debated, (Barnett and Finnemore 2019), though mission creep and agent-principal dynamics have led many IOs to maintaining policy positions far different from that of their members. It remains unclear what the boundaries of IO autonomy are, especially when they seek to influence member states. Schools of realist thought tend to conceive of IOs as instruments of their member states, whereby the causal chain of norm and policy setting is state-centric (Archer 2014). Critics to this doctrine of IOs point out that member states often delegate authority to IOs, and even give them power to sanction unruly members (Hawkins et al. 2006). The expectation from the theory for domestic legislatures is thus a one-way street, where IOs take their cues from members. However, this conception was made with powerful member states in mind; the IO should influence someone, otherwise the organization does not serve the strong member states. Thus, Global South countries, for example, even under some expectations of realism might it seem possible for IOs to have autonomy (relative to some countries).

Given the contradictions and perhaps outdated view of realists, I build upon the theory of constructivists, with a view of IOs which permits more autonomy and allows for building a more direct argument about IO influence in domestic legislatures. A core aspect of the constructivist paradigm is that agents and structures are co-manifested (Jung 2019). This fundamentally differs from realist approaches, for example, by indicating that cause and ef-

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<sup>2</sup>I exclude trade unions which may lobby abroad, for example.

fect in the international arena is not centered around nation-states as principals. Instead, IOs can serve as more than instruments or agents in a constructivist framework. Another core aspect is that international norms matter for outcomes, but that the creation of these norms comes from a variety of transnational actors. That is, a core goal of IOs is to socialize national actors around norms either conceived of or championed by the IO (Barnett and Finnemore 2019).

This leads to the second element of theoretical interest, that the channels of IO influence in domestic legislatures are not agreed upon. It is unclear how IOs go about instilling norms in domestic legislatures. The exact channels of norm diffusion remains without a clear consensus (Archer 2014; Dobbin, Simmons, and Garrett 2007). We know, for example, that IOs seek to establish themselves as technocratic experts (Schmidtke et al. 2024). Presumably, this goal is to stay above the fray of partisan or ideological disputes. But it also means that we can expect that IOs are intensely interested in policy too.

Several perspectives have emerged to explain why some international norms are adopted in certain localities over others (Acharya 2004; Cortell and Davis Jr. 2000; Deitelhoff and Zimmermann 2020). Theories invoke congruence with domestic norms and practices, the extent to which domestic groups ‘localize’ international norms, the prevalence of norm contesting, and how salient the international norms are considered. Others argue that transnational advocacy networks attempt to ‘socialize’ IOs (S. Park 2005), who then promote new norms to member states. In addition, some point to domestic government’s willingness and extent of engagement with IOs in a style that can be described as receptive diffusion (Broome and Seabrooke 2012). However, most approaches cannot offer the *site* of norm adoption, nor how these norms come to be *politically* relevant.

Work more closely related to IO and legislature relationships has found that even in the United States legislature, which arguably has a dominating effect on some IO’s, the relationship has still been found to run both ways (Lavelle 2011). For example, Lavelle’s find that national and transnational NGOs communicate with U.S. senators and representatives directly to subsequently influence IOs. She notes that the International Monetary Fund (IMF),

“has fostered a network of contacts on Capital Hill through which to provide information and work with organized interests to promote mutual goals [within the U.S. legislature]” (p. 7). Though Lavelle’s argument is meant to describe how domestic legislatures influence IOs, I adapt her theory to explain how IOs also come to influence domestic legislatures. Similarly, Henahan (2000) argues that the U.S. congress only focuses on foreign policy issues when a critical-enough issues arises, though the US Congress slips into passivity to other political branches once a winning side emerges, and until another grand foreign policy issue emerges. Yet, I argue that this cycle of foreign policy is more specific to industrialized Global North countries than many Global south contexts. Outside the US and perhaps the EU, parliaments (especially in the Global South) are less likely to influence IOs. However, what remains key is the importance of domestic societal groups inserting IO sourced norms into the legislative process.

The literature reveals a significant gap in understanding about how exactly IOs go about influencing member states in their domestic legislatures. In the next section, I turn to explaining how domestic bureaucrats are prominent channels that link the influence of IOs to domestic legislatures, as well as serving bureaucrats interests to appear as technocratic experts.

## **2.1 Theory**

The proposed theory helps answer the puzzle of how IOs might influence domestic policymaking without extensive lobbying. My argument centers on domestic state bureaucrats and their participation in legislative deliberations. Public servants could be from any level of government, but public servants in the federal ministries and agencies are of most importance. I argue that greater bureaucratic participation in legislative policymaking leads to higher references to and subsequently the potential influence of IOs in the policymaking process.

My argument begins by assuming that the legislative process is at least somewhat open to

participation to individuals beside politicians. This seems to be the case in most democracies and even hybrid regimes, especially since the 1990s, as civil society participation has generally increased across the world (Bernhard et al. 2015). There has been much research on the political influence of bureaucracies on legislation and policymaking (Bendor and Moe 1985; Carpenter 2002). There is resolute consensus that bureaucrats are not merely passive agents of politicians, but instead can be autonomous and important political agents themselves.

Next, I assume that while bureaucrats don't have complete control over their participation in the legislative process, as they might be subject to invitation, politicians don't have strict control over what bureaucrats say in legislative discourses. This is generally true in minimally free democracies with some civil service protections. Bureaucratic autonomy is a contested concept (Bersch and Fukuyama 2023), though Bersch and Fukuyama (2023) define it based on the ability of bureaucrats to implement policy by themselves, it's entirely consistent to imagine other types of autonomy related to the behavior of bureaucrats within other governing bodies. That is, bureaucrats can work toward their policy goals by influencing legislatures in addition to the chief executives they serve in presidential regimes.

Once in the legislature, I theorize that there are several reasons why bureaucrats would bring IOs into legislative debates. The first is that bureaucrats share norms with these organizations in promoting a variety of policy goals. The existence of epistemic communities, for example, often draws upon domestic bureaucrats and IOs. Participate in transnational epistemic communities (Haas 1992). These communities foster the promotion of norms through informal organizations, networks, and associations (MAI'AK 2013). The exchange of knowledge and expertise that occurs within these epistemic communities occurs at various levels and areas throughout the world.

The second reason that bureaucrats would want to steer legislative discussions toward IOs is that it is what I refer to as a *dual legitimization* strategy, which is the reference to IOs as an appeal to the technocratic expertise of both the IO and bureaucrat. Technocratic credentials are essential to IO to legitimation, comprising over 60% of normative commitments in IO communications (Schmidtke et al. 2024). Domestic bureaucrats also seek to stress their

technocratic expertise in pursuit of policy goals while avoiding partisan opposition. Mentioning IOs might be a route to technocratic legitimation if IOs are well regarded - which is highly plausible since IOs spend great resources signalling their technocratic expertise. Research on the public opinion of economic IOs finds that an individual's education, the country's macroeconomic outlook, and whether a country was receiving payments from or paying back influenced evaluations (Edwards 2009). Also, domestic governance effects matter for trust (Torgler 2008), but Global South countries with high levels of corruption are more likely to trust the United Nations (and potentially other IOs).

**Participation Hypothesis (H1):** Participation of bureaucrats from domestic ministries will lead to more mentions of IOs in public hearings.

I go further in this theory by arguing that the need of legitimation that inspires the reference to IOs is also the result of partisan dynamics. I expect that bureaucrats will feel the need to legitimate their technocratic and non-partisan credentials differently, depending on the partisan-leanings of a public hearing's parent commission. This is based on two well-founded assumptions. The first is that left-leaning politicians might be more interested in the international order and IOs, and thus preside over public hearings where more actors are inclined to mention them. Research has shown that those with more right-wing beliefs are more likely to hold anti-globalization sentiments than those with more left-wing ideology (Jedinger and Burger 2020; Walter 2021).

The other assumption is that bureaucrats are not partisan. For example, experimental survey evidence from Brazil shows that rank-and-file bureaucrats are extremely disapproving of partisan Ministers compared to technocratic non-partisan Ministers (Batista 2023). Thus, they are likely to temper ideological influence on the mentioning of IOs. To this effect, another reason for bureaucrats to mention IOs is to enhance their legitimacy when lawmakers may question their credentials. Logically, then, we should expect that commissions which are run by more ideologically extreme partisans will lead bureaucrats to seek to establish more legitimacy, and hence reference IOs, conditional on the fact that left-wing and right-wing ideologues might have different pre-dispositions to referencing IOs and international



issues.

**Partisan Hypothesis (H2):** Bureaucrat participation in a commission will lead to more mentions of IOs conditional on how right-wing a commission president is.

## 2.2 Alternative Arguments

Given that this is a new theory, I also consider several possible alternatives. First, I consider whether bureaucrats are activists. There are alternative views relating to bureaucrats and their potential influence on lobbying, especially with regard to partisanship. A prominent view is that some bureaucrats are keen to play an activist role, often possessing a more progressive ideological position than their governments, for example (Abers 2019). An analysis of municipal bureaucrats in Brazil who declare partisan affiliation reveals that (for the data available) most are affiliated with center or center-right parties, or the Workers' Party (see appendix). But many bureaucrats don't have a partisan affiliation. It seems unlikely that there is a clear and definitive partisan activism to most bureaucrats.

The second alternative argument is that actors other than bureaucrats are responsible for IO influence in domestic legislatures. For example, it's possible that civil society or Non-governmental actors (NGOs) are the conduit between international actors and domestic legislatures. In theory, NGOs partake in epistemic communities which occupy the same international stages as IOs (MAI'A K 2013).

## 3 Context: the Brazilian Senate

I test this argument with the case of Brazil using over 1500 public hearings from Brazil's senate between 2013 and 2023. Brazil is an ideal case to study as it does not enjoy a privileged position in the international order like the U.S. or E.U. in setting international norms, and yet as one of the world's most powerful countries outside the G7, many IOs might like to

influence the politics of a country like Brazil.

The public hearings are organized by Brazil's permanent commissions, of which this study covers 10.<sup>3</sup> Commissions tend to cover specific topics, and convene about two hearings on average per month (though some commissions organize three or four hearings per week). These public hearings are one of the few venues of civil society participation, and by some accounts, one of the main venues of open policy debate.

Who can participate in the public hearings is ultimately decided by the president of the committee. All interested parties can attend the hearing, but only those authorized by the debate administration are allowed to speak. The organizing body must provide advance information on how registration to participate will be conducted. Any group can seek to participate, and even individuals can make a case for participating if they are an expert, for example. Because public hearings are conducted in the capital of the country (Brasília) and this is not where most civil societies are headquartered, the costs of participation are actually quite high. As a result, the demand to be a speaker at public hearings rarely exceeds the number of slots. Yet, for federal bureaucrats who work adjacent to the Congress and are clued into policy processes, the ability to participate is much higher.

## **4 Empirical Strategy**

To test the framework of whether bureaucrats are responsible for increased influence of IOs in legislatures, I employ a mixed-method approach that analyzed an original database of public hearings from Brazil's senate, as well as interviews and ethnographic research in Brazil's national legislature. For the quantitative component, the identification strategy is a Differences-in-Differences (DiD) model that allowed me to isolate how the participation of bureaucrats changes IO mentions within the same commission, being that different commissions will have variant pre-dispositions to mention IOs on account of their very different

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<sup>3</sup><https://legis.senado.leg.br/comissoes/>

policy areas.

**Commission data:** The unit of analysis is a commission hearing, typed notes of which were webs-scraped from the Brazilian senate website. I collected public hearing records from the Brazilian Senate. Available records go back to 2013 for permanent commissions which hold the public hearings. The data are available in word or PDF formats. The documents were converted to plain text.<sup>4</sup> There are, 1518 cleaned commission hearings ranging from a length of 1 paragraph to over thirty pages of text. Generally, most commissions hold 1-2 public hearings per month, though there are exceptions.

**Dependent Variable:** Each commission hearing was converted to plain text format, with stopwords removed. The dependent variable is a count of identified mentions of IOs. To identify IOs, first, the commission text was parsed with a Named Entity Recognition (NER) algorithm trained on Portuguese newspapers from the open source Spacy Python library. This is important, as some IOs have titles that would appear as people or names, so distinguishing which words are entities helps avoid mistakenly counting erroneous terms. Once terms were identified as organizations, a fuzzy matching algorithm was then used to match each tagged organization entity to a list of IOs compiled by the Correlates of War (COW) database (Pevehouse et al. 2020). The final measure is a count of how many times each IO was mentioned in each commission document. Figure 1 plots the total mentions of IOs in each year for each commission. 30% of public hearings refer to at least one IO. The figure in the appendix graphs the 30 most cited IOs in the study period, with the European Union being the most referenced, followed by the United Nations, the Food and Agricultural Organizations (FAO), and the World Health Organization (Organização Mundial de Saúde).

The patterns suggest there are differences between commissions, but also, very clear political cycles that align with changes in presidential administrations. This dataset covers an election in 2014, an impeachment in 2016 and a presidential election in 2018. The most apparent differences are seen between 2016 and 2017, with a decline in IO mentions. This

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<sup>4</sup>Not all format were capable of being converted to plain text files, and will be converted in a future iteration of the project. Non-convertible texts represent about 8% of the available public hearing texts.

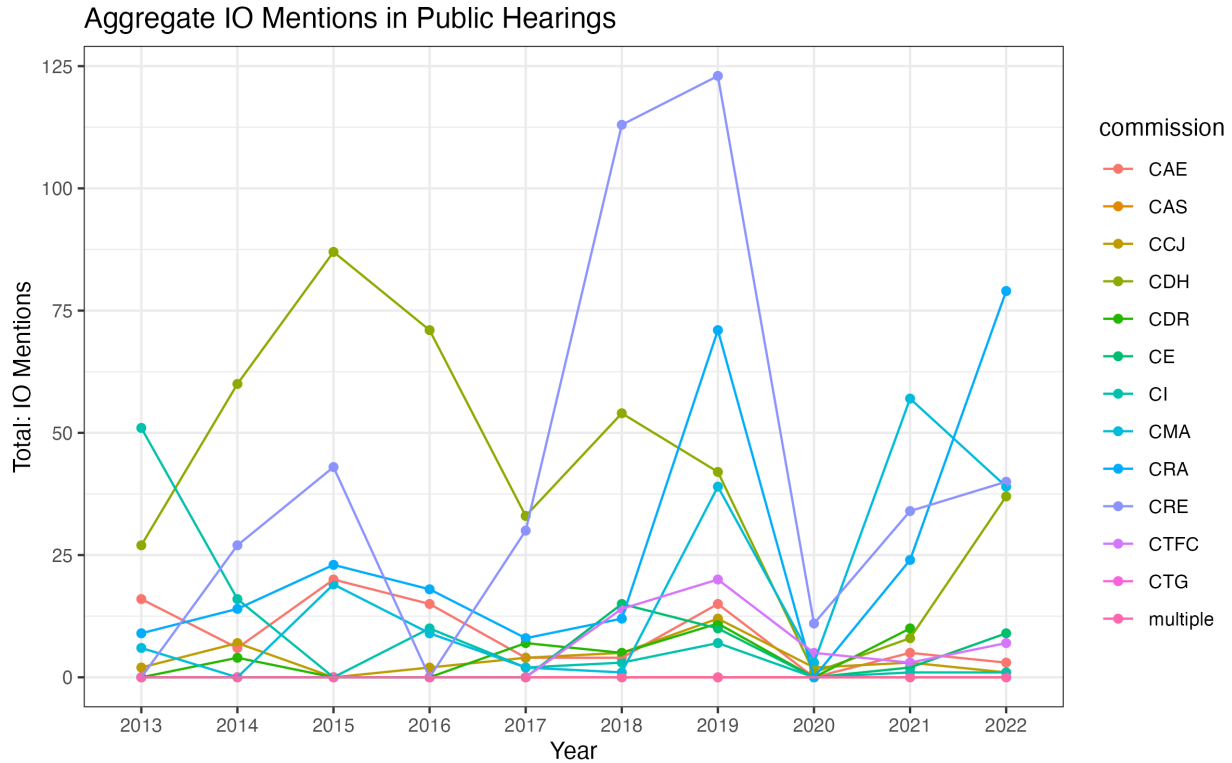


Figure 1: Aggregate mentions of IOs across public hearings for each Senate Commission. The CRE commission (Foreign Relations and Defense) is the highest between 2017 and 2019, though the CDH (Human Rights) also features many IO mentions.

might have been due to the internal political turmoil, which might have brought domestic issues to higher levels of importance compared to international issues.

This was sharply contrasted with a rise in IO mentions in almost every commission in 2019, when former President Jair Bolsonaro assumed office. We can also see effects of the pandemic in decreasing the number of public hearings and mentions to IOs.

**Bureaucrat Participation:** Participation in the public ministries is listed in a string, with varied formats by commission and year. This poses some difficulties in determining participation without manual coding. However, it's quite clear when a participant is from a Ministry in the executive branch of government. Such participants are civil servant bureaucrats, having needed to pass civil service exams except for the highest positions which are political appointees. Each unique mention of a Ministry is totaled into the number of bureaucratic participants. Future versions of this paper will compile a list of all Federal agencies and

count participants from these. Figure 2 plots the total number of bureaucratic speakers in each commission in the data.

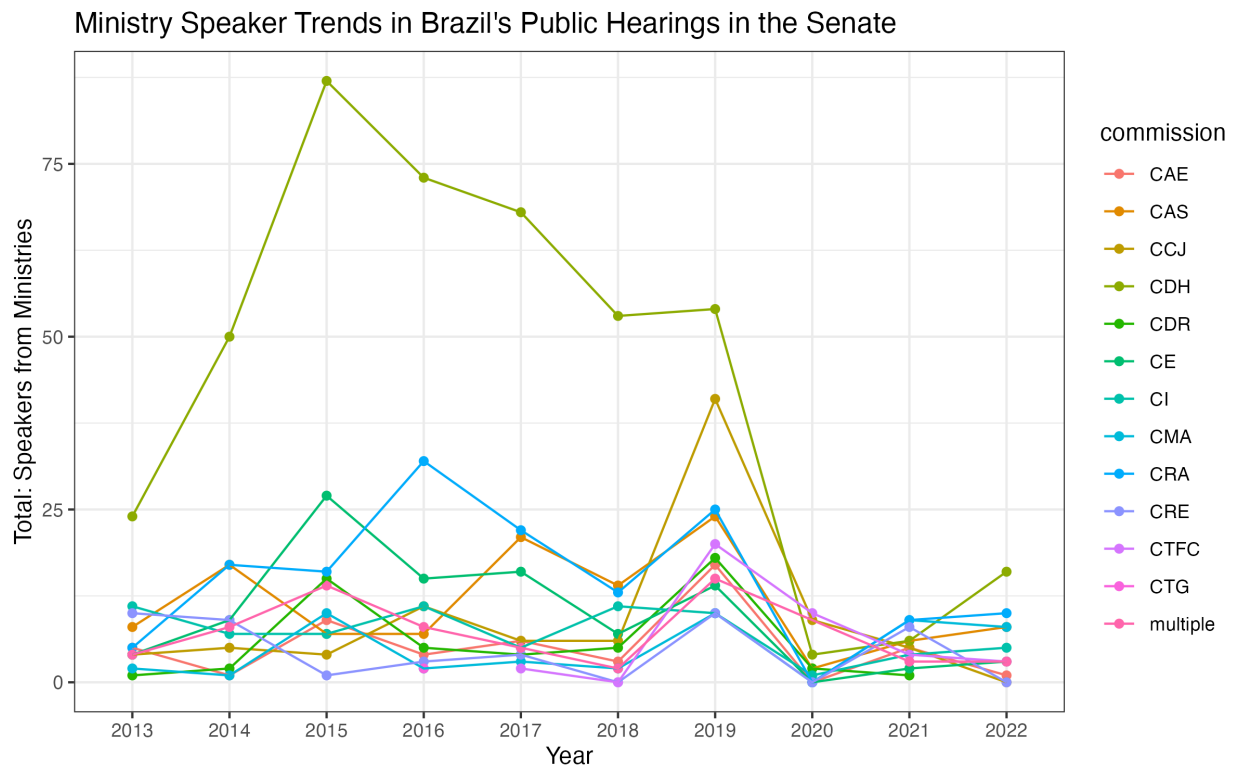


Figure 2: Total number of Ministry participants identified per commission-year. The CDH commission (Human Rights and Public Participation) features the most participants until 2020. Other notable commission include the CRA (Agriculture) which peaks in 2016. In 2019, when far-right President Jair Bolsonaro’s administration began, there is an increase in bureaucratic participation in almost every commission.

**Control variables:** I also include data on the partisan alignment of the commission president, as well as the ideological rating of each president’s party taken from an expert survey (Bolognesi, Ribeiro, and Codato 2022). This value ranges from zero to ten, where zero means most left-of-center and ten means most right-of-center. I also include the logged total of all tokens in each text of the commissions to control for the duration. Lastly, I include a variable for NGO speakers. To this, I also took a fuzzy matching approach. Brazil grants special tax status to NGOs, so NGOs were cross-referenced with the government’s official list of registered organizations.<sup>5</sup> To be classified as an NGO, the organization had to be registered in Brazil and not be an IO. Entities in the text of the public hearings were then fuzzy

<sup>5</sup><https://mapaossc.ipea.gov.br/mapa>

matched to the list of active NGOs that are registered in Brazil.

The model is as follows, where the dependent variable is assumed to have a Poisson distribution as a count variable, thus the link function is a log of the  $\Lambda$  statistic.

$$IO_{i,t} \sim \text{Poisson}(\lambda_{i,t}) \quad (1)$$

$$\log(\lambda_{i,t}) = \alpha + \beta_1 BUR_{i,t} + \beta_2 LEN_{i,t} + \beta_3 PARTY_{i,t} + \epsilon_{i,t} \quad (2)$$

In this model, *BUR* is the count of bureaucrats identified as participating in a commission. *LEN* is the logged token length of each commission hearing, and *PARTY* is the political party of the commission president. I run another model in which *PARTY* is swapped for the ideological rating of each party. *i* is the commission *t* refers to the year in which the particular hearing was held. In addition to this simple OLS model, I evaluate several variations with year and commission fixed effects.

## 5 Main Results

I find evidence that bureaucratic participation increases the total references to IOs in public hearings in Brazil's senate (support for rejecting the null of H1). I also find evidence that IO mentions are generally more likely in commissions led by more left-wing politicians, but the effect of bureaucratic participation on IO mentions is more potent in right-wing led commissions (support for rejecting the null of H2). The main models can be found in table 1 with predicted values in figure 3. Including all control variables like partisan and ideological control of the commissions, as well as commission length, increases the accuracy of the model but only slightly reduces the coefficient on the model of interest. In model 2, the coefficient is 0.0819 with  $p < 0.5$ , which is interpreted in figure 3. Overall, I don't find evidence of bureaucratic activism that sways to one ideology, nor do I find evidence of NGO influence.

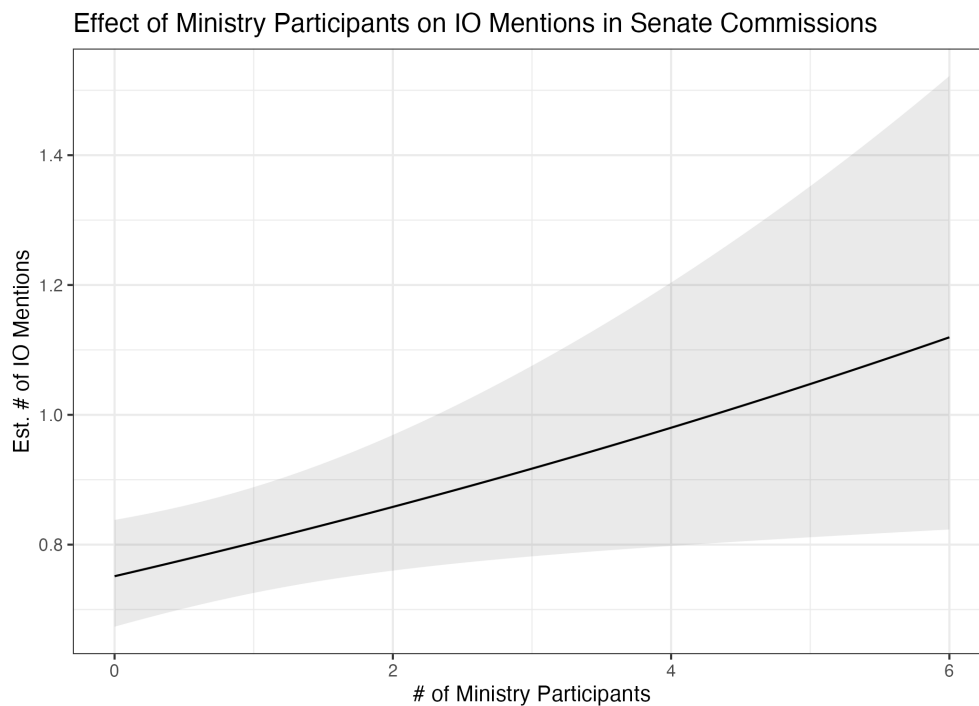


Figure 3: Predicted number of IO mentions in Brazilian Senate Commission Public Hearings based on the number of Bureaucrat (ministry) participants. Model 2 in Table 1 is used to generate this graph. Higher numbers of bureaucratic participation indicate more references to IOs.

Other findings from the main model include that the number of NGO speaker participants

Table 1: Main Regression Results

Dependent Variable: Model:	(1)	No. of IO Mentions		
		(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Variables</i>				
<b>No. of Bureaucrats</b>	0.1061*** (0.0307)	0.0819** (0.0383)	0.0826*** (0.0299)	-0.1520 (0.1037)
No. of NGOs		-0.0705 (0.0595)	-0.1009 (0.0621)	-0.1139* (0.0646)
Party Control: MDB		-0.1399 (0.2307)		
Party Control: PDT		1.022*** (0.3927)		
Party Control: PSDB		-0.1870 (0.3585)		
Party Control: PSL		1.191*** (0.1981)		
Party Control: PT		0.7504*** (0.2851)		
log(No. of Tokens)		0.9330*** (0.0413)	0.8833*** (0.0470)	0.8868*** (0.0468)
Commission Pres. Ideology			-0.1223** (0.0568)	-0.1468** (0.0578)
Bureaucrats × Pres. Ideology				0.0412** (0.0166)
All other parties (see appendix)		Yes		
<i>Fixed-effects</i>				
commission	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Fit statistics</i>				
Observations	1,518	1,415	1,415	1,415
Squared Correlation	0.16414	0.35218	0.33718	0.34204
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.19321	0.37397	0.35533	0.35733
BIC	5,824.2	4,409.7	4,446.6	4,440.6

*Clustered (commission) standard-errors in parentheses*  
*Signif. Codes: \*\*\*: 0.01, \*\*: 0.05, \*: 0.1*



leads to null-effects on IO mentions. Additionally, partisan control and commission president ideology are also important. Analysis of model 2 (the full model is available in the appendix), suggests a surprising pattern. The most programmatic and organized party in Brazil, the Workers' Party (PT) actually has less than the average number of IO mentions compared to the reference category (see figure in appendix). Senators from the far-right PSL, the temporary party of former President Jair Bolsonaro, presided over public hearings with more IO mentions on average. The general patterns from model three suggests that, on average, more conservative commission presidents oversee public hearings in which there are fewer mentions of IOs.

Next, I evaluate the partisan hypothesis (h2), model 4. Overall, I find that conservative-led commissions are less likely to have mentions of IOs, but that within conservative-led commissions, the effect of ministerial personnel on IO mentions is greatest (see figure 4). This likely reflects the assumptions in the theory and of findings regarding the globalization backlash, that more conservative-leaning individuals are likely to resist and steer debate in public hearings away from international issues and IOs. However, we see that as the number of bureaucrats in a meeting increases, it's much more likely that there will be references made to IOs. This is because having more than one bureaucrat will stimulate discussion. This analysis also suggests that referencing IOs for legitimation as technocrats in more conservative-led hearings could backfire, without the presence of more bureaucrats. The predicted effects of model 4 from table 1 can be found in figure 4.

## **6 Robustness Tests**

Several robustness tests also show support for the main theory. First, I examine whether this pattern holds in the Foreign Relations and National Defense commission by subsetting the sample. Since this commission explicitly deals with issues of international relevance, it would be expected to have higher mentions of IOs; thus, this is a conservative test. The number of hearings in the commission with available texts is limited (64) but the regression

### Heterogenous Effects by Commision Leadership Ideology

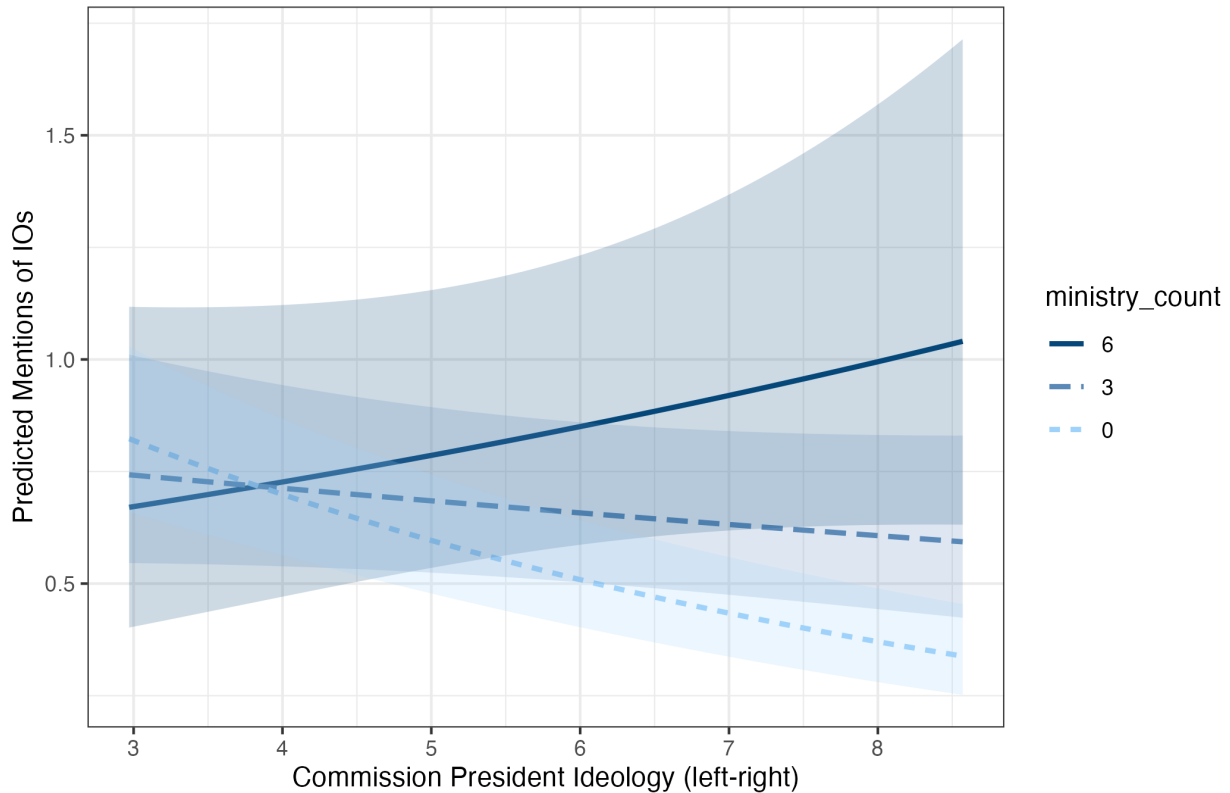


Figure 4: Predicted effects of the number of bureaucrats (ministry participants) in a public hearing conditional on the left-right ideology of the commission president. Model 4 from table 1 was used to plot. The effect of bureaucratic participation is greater in more conservative-led commissions.

results are consistent with the general findings of this paper: bureaucratic participation increases the number of IOs referred to. In fact, the coefficient size is greater (0.24,  $p < 0.01$ ) see appendix. The second robustness test aims to more intelligently correct for major events and time-trends. Specifically, I replace the year fixed effects with dummy variables for the different presidential administrations, which also coincide with electoral turnover in the Senate. In addition, I apply a pre and post-2019 dummy variable to account for disruptions in commissions and public hearings that occurred as a result of the 2020 Covid-19 Pandemic. The results, also in the appendix, are the same as the main model where the coefficient of bureaucratic participation is 0.067 with  $p < 0.5$ .

## 6.1 Topic Endogeneity

A major question that lurks in this project is whether ministry bureaucrats participate in specific commissions, and thus the relationship observed is essentially a self-fulfilling prophecy. In other words, certain hearings — irrespective of policy area — increase the number of bureaucratic participants *and* IO mentions. Unlike studies of US bureaucratic participation (Ban, J. Y. Park, and You 2023), I don't find a political cycle to bureaucratic participation in Brazil. Presidential administrations don't seem to directly explain bureaucratic participation (see appendix). Instead, the partisan control of public hearings explains the likelihood of having bureaucrats on a public hearing.

To address this concern, I take a semi-computational approach. The subject of each commission is set in advance, so the subject cannot be the result of the proceedings. While commission subjects might change slightly, it's assumed that all invited speakers and speakers who lobby in order to participate, are aware of the general commission subject ahead of time. First, I use an automated machine learning algorithm, K-means clustering, to identify and classify clusters of public hearings based on commission subject. Analysis using the 'elbow' method reveals that six is the optimal number of clusters (see appendix).

K-Means Clusters					
6	1	2	3	4	5
<i>n</i> = 1391	<i>n</i> = 2	<i>n</i> = 229	<i>n</i> = 4	<i>n</i> = 363	<i>n</i> = 2
debate, work, rights, education, situation	arbitration, arbitral, mediation, institute granting	brasil, debate, international, cycle, order	regulation, base, union, arrange/rule, administration	national, bill (projeto de lei), senate, federal, policy	health, plan, assitance, senator

Second, I analyze whether these clusters explain the participation of bureaucrats in the public hearings. Perhaps surprising to some, I find no major differences between the major clusters and bureaucratic participation. OLS regression (with commission and year fixed-effects with partisan controls included) reveals that regardless of topic clusters, bureaucrats tend to participate equally across policy areas and commission subject. While cluster group 2 contains the word "international", the likelihood of bureaucrats participating is not signif-

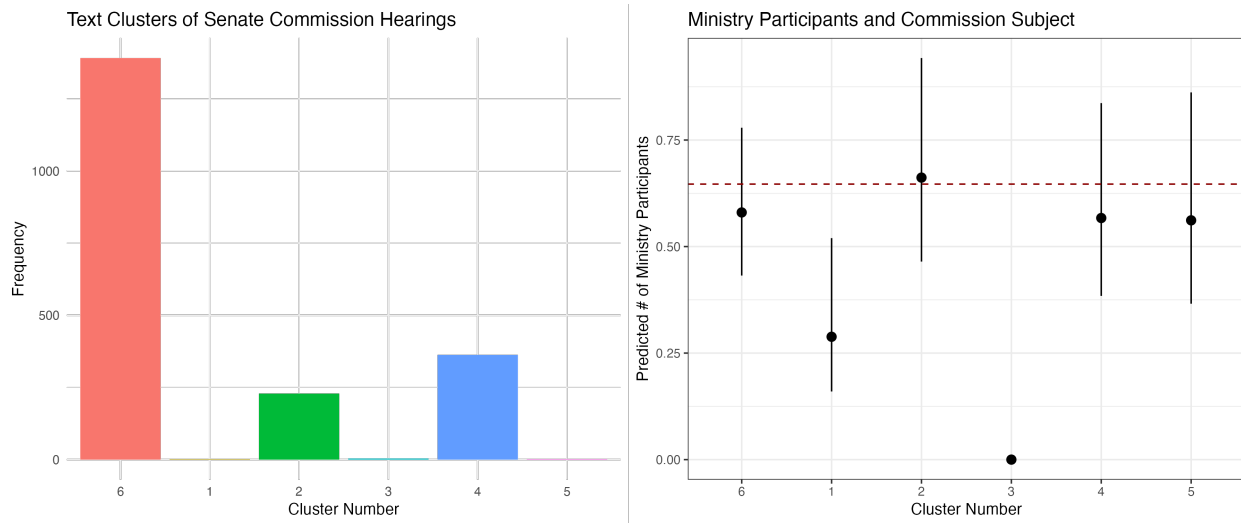


Figure 5: The figure on the left lists the proportion of public hearings sorted into each of the 6 topics from K-Means clustering. The figure on the right plots predicted participants bureaucrats participating in a public hearing with a GLM model that uses the factor clusters from K-Means. Ignoring those clusters with too few observations, there is no significant difference between clusters 6, 2, and 4. The horizontal red line indicates average bureaucrat participation.

icantly different from the other major clusters.

## 7 Interview & Ethnographic Evidence from Brazil’s Senate and Congress

**Interviews:** I conducted interviews between March 2022 and August 2023 in Brazil’s Senate and Chamber of Deputies to provide further insight into the theory and findings of this paper. First, given that many of the rules for public hearings are determined by each Senate presidency, I interviewed a number of staff and legislative aids to understand the general informal institutions which govern the commission hearings. As was repeated by more than seven interviewees, one a congressional staffer for a Workers’ Party (PT) Deputy said that there was an unspoken rule that commission presidents *don’t* refuse anyone who seeks to participate in the public hearing (interview 1; March 17, 2023). Out of courtesy, and similar to U.S. hearings, the Commission Leadership was cited as allowing opposition politicians to

nominate other speakers without limit (interview with Deputy Nilto Tatto; March 21, 2023). It was also said that at times, commission presidents would invite their own speakers in response to opposition initiated public hearings.

None of the individuals I spoke to could remember an instance when a participant, either invited by an opposition member or an outside individual wishing to participate, was denied. The only selection mechanisms appear to be constraints on the number of participants, such that individuals who sought to participate after five or six confirmed participants were usually not accommodated. However, interviews struggled to mention times when commission hearings were at capacity; most agreed that the public hearing was usually expanded in response to extra requests (interview 2; May 11, 2023). Analyzing the reason that this informal mechanism persists in organizing speakers comes from the fact that participation in these public hearings is logistically costly; most civil society groups don't have offices in Brasília, the capital. Instead, most have offices in far away cities like São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, and even Belo Horizonte. The need to fly to Brasília for in-person commission hearings cuts down on some civil society participation. Whereas larger and more resourceful groups are willing and able to pay for roundtrip flights in the same day between São Paulo and Brasília on days of commission hearings (interview with Brazilian Wind Association spokesperson, André Themeoteo; July 20, 2023).

These insights help support the idea that domestic bureaucrats, especially from the federal ministries situated next to the Brazilian Senate, can pursue participation in the Senate, and are unlikely to be denied participation. Indeed, interviews with bureaucrats from Brazil's Environmental Ministry said they felt a routine part of their job was to lobby lawmakers about complex policy issues, and that the public hearings were important sites to do this as they brought a level of visibility to issues (interview 3 and 4; July 18, 2022). Furthermore, these bureaucrats also mentioned the importance of being aware of the party and ideology of public hearing presidents; as one bureaucrat mentioned, "the left isn't all that environmentalist, and the center doesn't want to be seen as supporting our agenda. So we have to work in Congress and the Senate carefully" (interview 4; July 18, 2022). While this interviewee

didn't mention IOs in our conversation, the idea that bureaucrats seek to lobby in Congress is strongly supported, and there is an evident strategy to their lobbying.

Interviews with members of NGOs who participate and lobby in the Brazilian legislature help provide an important comparison. In an interview with an NGO concerned with ocean issues and international ties, I was told that their invitation and willingness to participate in the public hearings came after developing close relationships with lawmakers and commission presidents (interview 5; June 7, 2022). This particular activist was extremely concerned with maintaining strong relationships with the lawmaker, and also said that they felt it was necessary to limit how hard they pushed in hearings to not alienate other lawmakers. This activist also said they felt it was necessary to stress domestic issues in addition to international issues. Bureaucrats did not express this concern, which I suggest is likely because the federal bureaucrats face much lower costs to participate (they simply walk to the Senate) and also enjoy civil service protections. It's incredibly difficult to fire a Brazilian bureaucrat, which helps explain why they have the highest agreement among public servants it would be hard to dismiss them (Fukuyama et al. 2021).

**Ethnographic Evidence:** I attended 23 public hearings in the Brazilian Senate and Congress between March 2022 and August 2023, covering five unique commissions (Human Rights, Environment, Social Issues, Infrastructure and Agriculture). Some of these commissions I attended in-person, and others I watched the live broadcast on the Brazilian Government website. These public hearings are incredibly formal affairs, and tend to have a full audience made up of journalists, lobbyists, visitors, and tourists. Typical public hearings lasted 1–3 hours, and featured anywhere from 3-5 public speakers on average. More than 60% of the public hearings I attended featured at least one bureaucrat.

The style of bureaucratic participation was very different from that of other participants. Bureaucrats seemed much more comfortable than other speakers, and I observed on many occasions they were on a first name basis with the commission president and or public hearing organizer. It was common for the bureaucrats to mention their technical backgrounds when they introduced themselves, as well as to reference their experience in their Ministry

or agency. It was also common for bureaucrats to mention IOs or at least international conventions.

One commission public hearing stands out as exemplary. This particular commission was held in the Senate - the Commission of Social issues - and the theme was about bureaucratic protections during the administration of far right President Jair Bolsonaro. The commission was organized by a member of IPEA, Brazil's state-sponsored research and think-tank, José Celso Cardoso Jr. — who was also the director of IPEA's public servant association. The public hearing was meant to air grievances about the attacks from the President on public servants in recent years, especially in regard to the erosion of democratic norms. In an interview, Cardoso Jr. said the public hearing was a joint idea between him and the Senator Fabiano Contarato (PT - Espírito Santo) (interview with José Celso Cardoso Jr., August 10, 2022).

During the event, I noted several instances in which several bureaucratic participants brought up IOs. For example, Ricardo Magnus Osório Galgvão (employee with the National Council on Scientific Development and Technology, CNPQ, part of the Ministry of Science and Technology and Innovation) brought up the work of the Science Ministry in relation to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). He also mentioned the Global Meteorological Organization in a reference that is exactly as one would expect my theory of dual legitimation to occur:

“My very close friend who you might be someone you know who was the Vice-Director, Dr. Antonio Divino Moura, was President of Inmet [Brazilian meteorological authority] for 13 years. In June 2019, he won the prize of the Global Meteorological Organization, which is equivalent, in metrology, to the Nobel Prize. Any decent government of any political ideology would have immediately congratulated this great icon of Brazilian science. What did this Government do? When he asked to leave to go and receive the prize in Switzerland, the Ministry of Science waited until the last day and didn't give its permission. He, in order

to receive the prize from this organization, he had to travel, and I personally authorized him due to the importance of this for our country. What did this Government do? It immediately, as he left, fired him, and launched a disciplinary administrative process against him" (CAS - Public Hearing, August 2, 2024).

This testimony shows the use of an IO to legitimate the technocratic expertise of a bureaucrat(s) in the face of incredible partisan or political opposition that was inherently anti-globalist. This was not the only instance. Later, another speaker, a bureaucrat of Brazil's environmental agency (IBAMA), part of the Ministry of the Environment, made references to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* to criticize the actions of the administration of Jair Bolsonaro. This is the direct infusion of IO norms into the legislative process.

While this public hearing was unique in that it was partially organized by bureaucrats to discuss attacks on bureaucrats, it helps to highlight (in vivid form) the legitimation strategy that I observed first-hand in these public hearings. In other public hearings run by more right-wing leaning politicians, there was a more quiet participation from bureaucrats. However, this dynamic changed when more than one bureaucrat participated, and the participants appeared more comfortable.

## 8 Conclusion

When do IOs influence domestic legislatures in the absence of direct lobbying? I argue that bureaucratic participation is a key element linking IO influence to the policymaking process of legislatures, especially in the Global South and non-North American or non-European contexts. Specifically, I make the claim that bureaucrats are willing to mention IOs to advance similar policy goals due to norm sharing, but also through a *dual legitimation* strategy in which the bureaucrat seeks to boost her technocratic credentials in the face of a partisan landscape.



Using an original database of over 1500 public hearings in Brazil's senate from 2013-2022, I find evidence to support this theory. Broadly speaking, greater bureaucratic participation increases the references to IOs. But also, I find a strategy to bureaucratic participation in light of partisan control of commissions. Left-leaning run public hearings are more likely to mention IOs, and so the effect of bureaucratic participants is smaller. However, the more right-wing and ideologically extreme a public hearing is run, the effect of bureaucratic participation is stronger on the likelihood of references to IOs. I suggest this is because bureaucrats are willing to reinforce each other and push back against right-wing anti-globalism; the adage of there is strength-in-numbers seems to be true for public servants in Brazil's senate.

These findings shake up our understanding of bureaucratic autonomy. At a minimum, we should see bureaucrats as actors willing to influence the legislative branch, and not just tin their own offices as they seek to stretch executive powers. Moreover, my ethnographic and interview evidence suggests that bureaucrats are willing to go on the offensive against antagonistic executive administrations, and do so through the legislative branch. These aspects have yet to gain accurate attention from scholars in political science. These findings also flip the script on the principal-agent problem, injecting the fact that bureaucrats might seek to influence policy directives diagonally by working in opposition between the legislature and the executive branch.

Also, this research shows how IOs can stay relevant even when national executives are anti-globalist, as was the case with Brazil from 2019-2022. Even as former President Jair Bolsonaro shunned the international community and limited Brazil's participation in IOs, bureaucrats were keen and eager to lobby Brazil's legislature and promote IO norms. As I noted, trends of IO mentions suggested a surge in the first year of Bolsonaro's administration in all but one commission. At the same time, bureaucratic participation in these commissions also surged.

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## 9 Appendix

Draft Appendix.

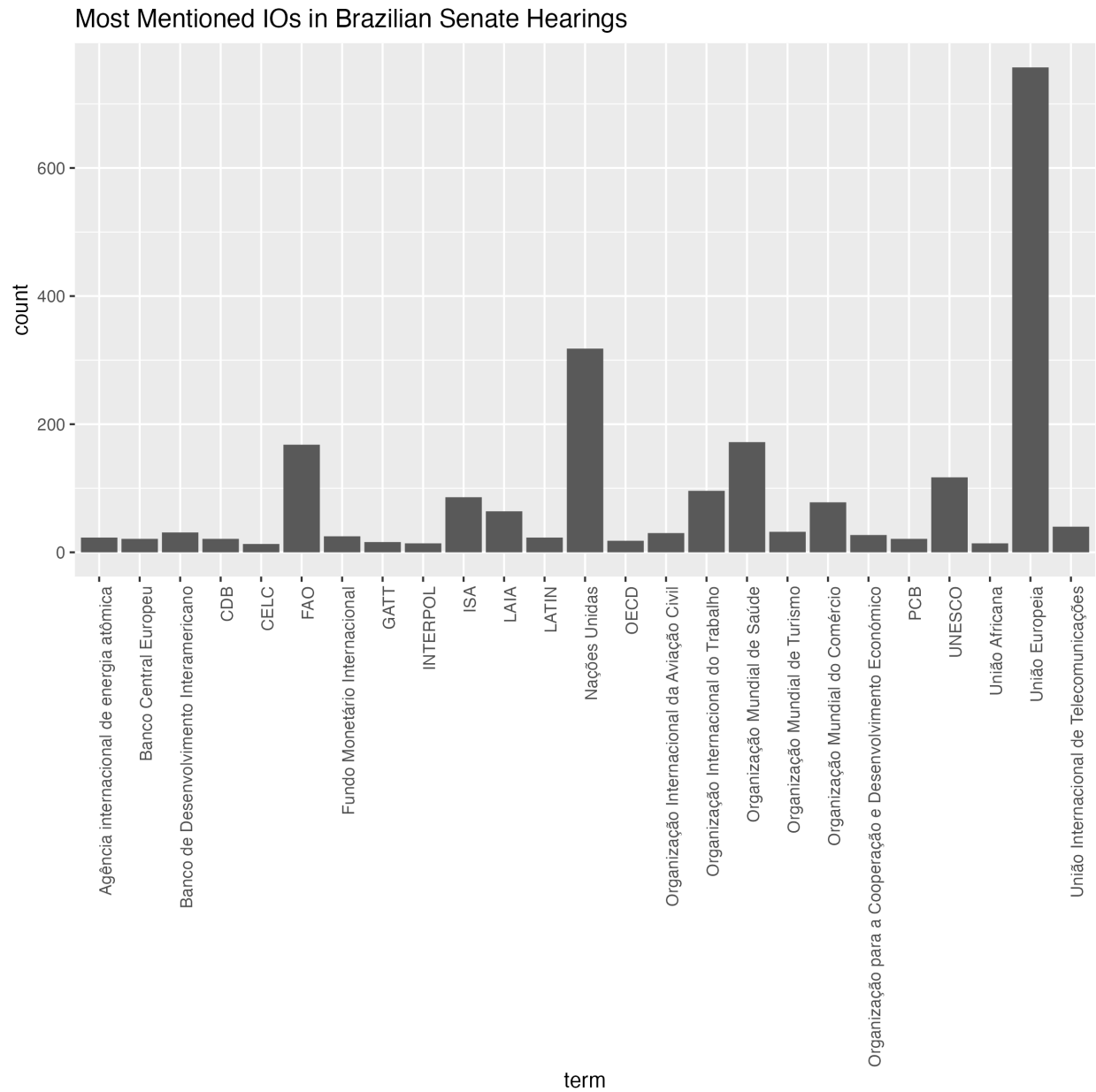


Figure 6: Most common IOs mentioned in original Portuguese.

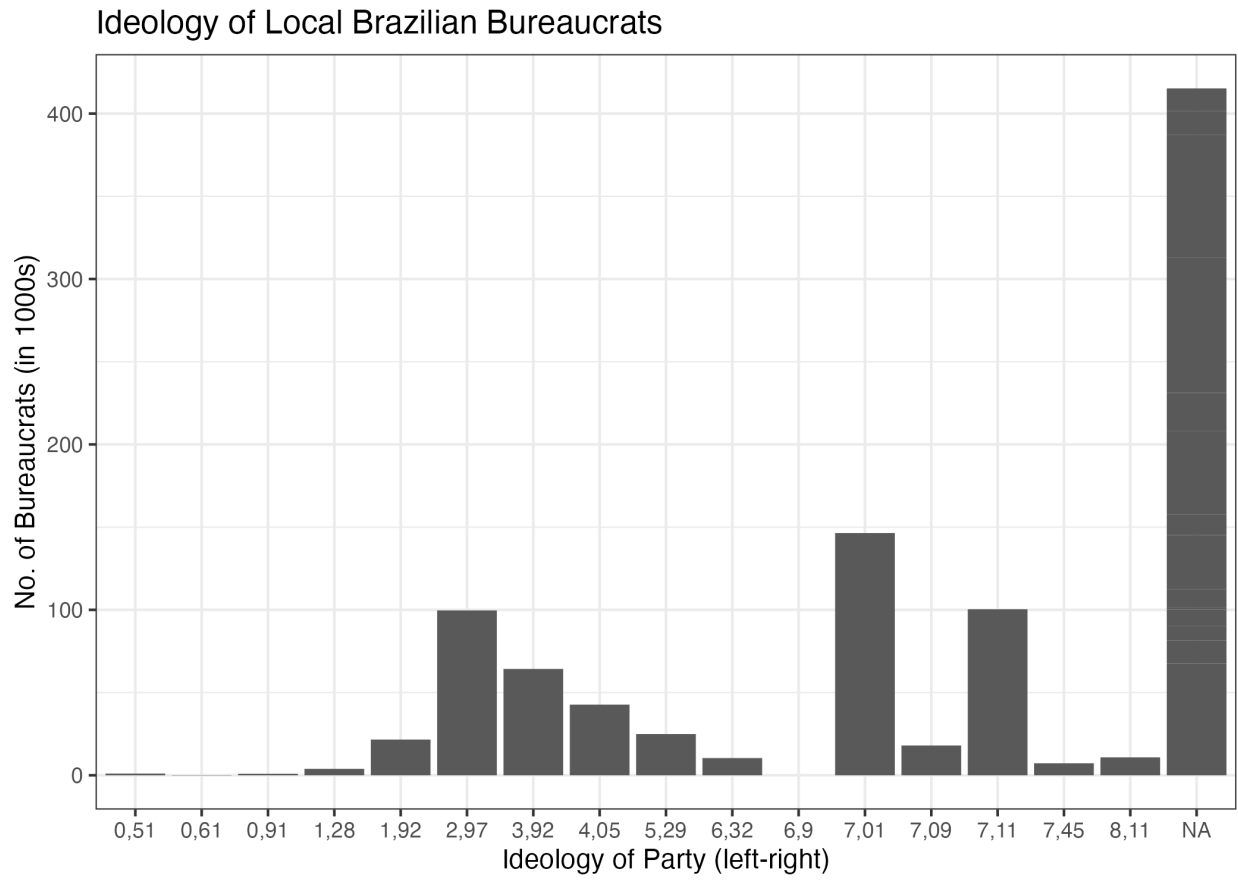


Figure 7: Political ideology of municipal bureaucrats in Brazil. Data courtesy (frey2023politicization)

Table 2: Within Foreign Relations Commission

Dependent Variable:	io_88
Model:	(1)
<i>Variables</i>	
Constant	-1,770.9*** (273.2)
ministry_count	0.2454*** (0.0740)
ngo_count_88	-0.0797 (0.0899)
party_oneMDB	4.209*** (0.7205)
party_oneProgressistas	-1.783*** (0.3280)
party_onePSDB	3.500*** (0.6280)
party_onePTC	1.669*** (0.2677)
log(NumTokens+1)	0.9440*** (0.0967)
year	0.8736*** (0.1353)
<i>Fit statistics</i>	
Observations	64
Squared Correlation	0.27413
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.39632
BIC	576.94

*IID standard-errors in parentheses*  
*Signif. Codes: \*\*\*: 0.01, \*\*: 0.05, \*: 0.1*

Table 3: Model with administration and covid year dummies.

Dependent Variable:	io_88	
Model:	(1)	(2)
<i>Variables</i>		
ministry_count	0.0863*** (0.0298)	0.0670** (0.0336)
post_covid	0.3019 (0.3167)	-0.1090 (0.2164)
adminBolsonaro	-0.2084 (0.3360)	-0.0689 (0.2246)
adminTemer	-0.2740 (0.1702)	-0.2333** (0.0919)
ngo_count_88		-0.0693 (0.0559)
log(NumTokens+1)		0.9357*** (0.0487)
Party Leadership (see appendix)		Yes
<i>Fixed-effects</i>		
commission	Yes	Yes
<i>Fit statistics</i>		
Observations	1,518	1,415
Squared Correlation	0.13029	0.31221
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.17201	0.36552
BIC	5,921.9	4,422.4

*Clustered (commission) standard-errors in parentheses*  
*Signif. Codes: \*\*\*: 0.01, \*\*: 0.05, \*: 0.1*



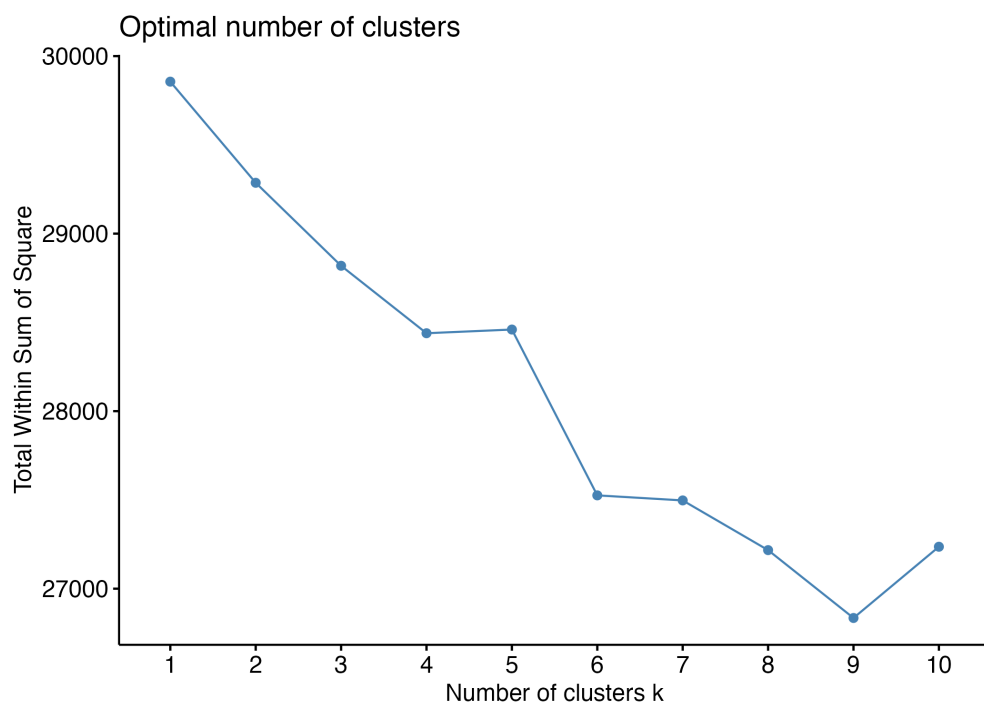


Figure 8: Elbow method cluster analysis using factoextra R library package.

Table 4: Explaining Ministry Participation

Dependent Variable: Model:	ministry_count (1)
<i>Variables</i>	
adminBolsonaro	-0.0957 (0.1921)
adminTemer	0.0492 (0.1547)
pres_ideology	0.3466*** (0.0862)
party_oneMDB	0.9996*** (0.3227)
party_onePDT	1.339*** (0.3120)
party_onePR	-1.036*** (0.2898)
party_oneProgressistas	-0.1410 (0.1176)
party_onePros	-0.0156 (0.2680)
party_onePSB	1.579*** (0.5955)
party_onePSD	-0.0691 (0.3067)
party_onePSDB	0.4508 (0.4201)
party_onePSL	0.3399* (0.1877)
party_onePT	0.9621*** (0.2568)
party_onePTB	1.369*** (0.4153)
party_onePTC	-0.6222*** (0.0623)
ngo_count_88	0.0607 (0.0482)
log(NumTokens+1)	0.0221 (0.0370)
<i>Fixed-effects</i>	
commission	Yes
<i>Fit statistics</i>	
Observations	1,415
Squared Correlation	0.05984
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.03282
BIC	3,243.0

*Clustered (commission) standard-errors in parentheses*  
*Signif. Codes: \*\*\*: 0.01, \*\*: 0.05, \*: 0.1*

### Bureaucratic Participation by Presidential Administration

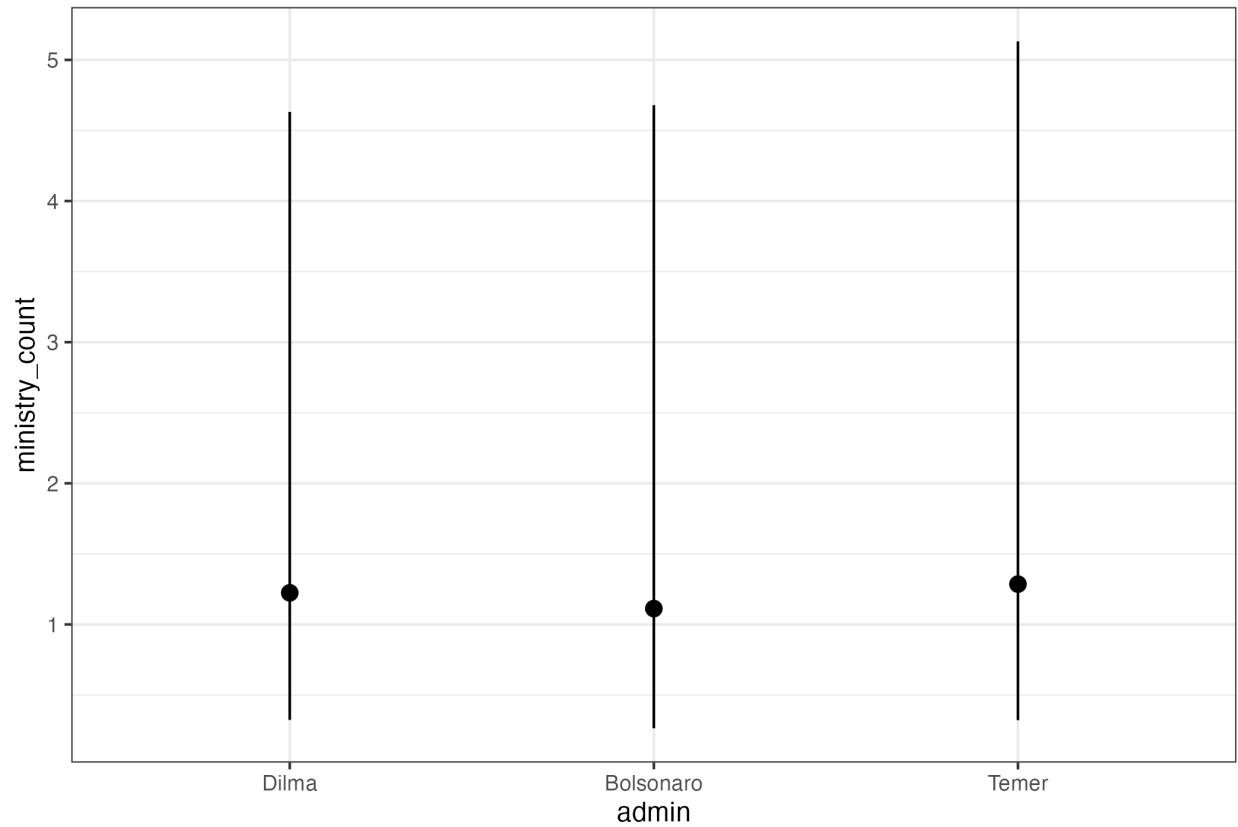


Figure 9: Table 4