Authoritarian States and the Politicization of International Institutions

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Abstract

While emerging powers like China serve as a prominent example of an autocracy criticizing global governance arrangements, broader knowledge on authoritarian states and their views on global rule are clearly lacking. This is surprising, not least because autocracies constitute a significant share of the membership of various international organizations (IOs). The paper addresses this research gap by drawing on two strands of literature, whose insights it connects: research on the increasing authority of IOs and their consequential politicization on the one hand; and scholarship on autocracies in regional and global governance on the other. While building on the broad assumption that the growing capacity of IOs to encroach upon the sovereignty of nation-states generates their increasing politicization by state representatives, we further confine this thesis. More precisely, we expect politicization to differ among states’ of divergent regime type. Due to their greater sensitivity to infractions on sovereignty, we take autocratic states to be considerably more critical of IO’s authoritative regulatory competences than their democratic counterparts. We empirically test this assumption by conducting a qualitative content analysis of states’ discourse on the regulatory tasks of one specific IO, the IAEA, the debate on which took place in the 2011 IAEA General Conference Plenary. By means of statistical analysis we inquire, whether the IAEA’s more authoritative regulatory tasks are relatively more politicized among all states and whether autocracies’ politicization of these tasks is more critical than that of democracies. Our empirical evidence confirms both the existence of an authority-politicization nexus and the regime type’s impact on the specific form of states’ politicization of IOs.

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Introduction

The demands and criticism with which a growing number of actors address governance beyond the nation-state has acquired significant attention. However, some important “agents of contestation” have so far been completely neglected: authoritarian regimes. Not only emerging powers like China serve as a prominent example of an autocracy criticizing global governance arrangements, many other authoritarian regimes likewise voice their criticism of international institutions – as for instance Iran’s President Ahmadinejad who polemically accuses the nuclear nonproliferation regime for its purportedly severe discriminatory practices. However, broader knowledge on authoritarian states and their views on global rule are clearly lacking. This is surprising, not least because autocracies constitute a significant share of the membership of various international organizations (IOs). Yet, a series of questions about the role of regime type within international institutions has not been addressed systematically. For instance, how do autocracies cope with the increasing authority of international institutions? Do realist predictions about the irrelevance of the domestic regime type hold when it comes to patterns of the contestation of global governance arrangements?

The paper seeks to address this research gap by answering the following question: what are the consequences of regime type on the politicization of international authority? In line with recent contributions in the politicization literature we adopt as our baseline expectation that higher degrees of international authority will lead to politicization. We add to this literature insights from research on authoritarian regimes in international politics.

We argue that the association between authority and politicization varies for different domestic regime types. Authoritarian regimes, which are driven by an increased concern for safeguarding their sovereignty, are more likely to contest authoritative international institutions than democracies. More authoritative international institutions entail increased sovereignty costs and autocratic governments will argue against and try to avoid them.

In terms of research design we devise two new measures of politicization. The first refers to how states evaluate IOs, i.e. their institutional structure, functioning, and policy outputs. States might support or criticize IOs. The second measure addresses the kinds of demands states issue toward IOs. Here we discern demands calling on the IO to assume greater regulatory responsibilities and competences and demands requesting less IO involvement and more policy discretion for national decision-making in turn.

Based on this conceptualization, we expect democracies to positively evaluate authoritative international institutions, while authoritarian regimes will tend to be more critical of the same IOs. Second, we expect that authoritarian regimes will be significantly more reluctant than democracies to demand an expansion of IOs’ regulatory competences.
Politicization, International Authority, and Regime Types

Under the headline of “politicization” research, scholars observe that the last few decades have witnessed a considerable rise not only in the attention directed towards international institutions, but likewise in the demands and criticism they are subjected to (Binder, 2013; De Wilde, 2011; Ecker-Ehrhardt, 2012; Nonhoff et al., 2009; Statham and Trenz, 2012; Zürn et al., 2012; Zürn and Ecker-Erhardt, 2013). International institutions have clearly lost their status as remote and uncontroversial entities, as is proven by the focus attached to them in the activities and discourse of a plenitude of actors – among them nation-states’ publics, non-governmental actors, social movements and national governments alike. One important reason for this growing politicization of international institutions can be found in the rise of their authority (Zürn et al., 2012). If the idea that global governance possesses no authority was still an accurate observation a few decades ago, it is clearly outdated today when accounting for IOs’ heightened ability to impinge on the sovereignty of nation-states (Buchanan and Keohane, 2006, p. 407). International institutions now command considerable authority and with their decisions and regulations they intrude deeper into the former confines of national governments than ever before (Bernstein, 2004).

Consequently, rule beyond the nation-state has become the object of attention and normative scrutiny just like rule inside the (democratic) nation-state has been for quite a while. The link between the rising authority of global governance institutions and their politicization is established as a general one and does not yet compare the politicizing activities of different actors. However, we expect this nexus to take a particularly shape in the case of authoritarian governments. Up to now, autocracies’ requirements of rule beyond the state have not received much systematic attention. However, several accounts with particular focus on autocratic emerging powers and on the norms autocracies promote within their own regional organizations can provide first insights. An issue that surfaces in all of these studies is the special preoccupation of authoritarian states with the guarding of their own sovereignty. Autocracies are expected to be very sensitive when it comes to the issue of national sovereignty and to infractions on the latter – be it by other (particularly democratic) states or by authoritative international institutions (Zürn and Stephen, 2010, p. 97). We thus expect autocracies’ politicization of authoritative (aspects of) IOs to differ from that of democratic states. Autocracies should resist attempts to further international institutions’ authority. This resistance to greater international regulatory intrusiveness is likely to expresses itself in heightened criticism of IOs and a tendency to argue against their further empowerment.

In order to assess this proposition, we devise a quantitative study of the patterns of democratic and authoritarian politicization of international organizations. We thereby contribute
not only to the growing politicization scholarship, but likewise to research on autocracies in global governance. While the role of the regime type for the prospects of conflict and peace has already been considered extensively, its significance for states’ reaction to and requirements of (authoritative) international institutions is so far unexplored.

Our paper is structured as follows: We first introduce the concepts of authority and politicization and theorize the link between them. Second, we hypothesize on the role of regime type for states’ politicization of authoritative IOs by explicating these actors’ special concern for external constraints on their sovereignty. We then specify our operationalization of IO authority and its politicization (as a specific kind of discourse by which states address IOs) and measure the latter by conducting a qualitative content analysis of states’ speeches on the various activities of one specific international organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). After coding the speeches of 109 states within the 2011 General Conference Plenary Meeting of the IAEA, we use logit regressions to test, whether and how regime type influences the politicization of different layers of an IO’s authority. Moreover, we also assess whether the nexus between growing levels of IO authority and increasing politicization holds empirically. In the conclusion, we summarize our findings and draw attention to avenues for further research on the topic.

1 International Authority and its Politicization

1.1 The Authority of International Organizations

We follow Zürn et al. (2012) in their definition of international authority. Authority is given, when actors recognize that another body or collective actor is entitled to make binding decisions which they are expected to follow (p. 70). International institutions vary in that regard. Some have more competences and regulatory tasks delegated to them than others (compare for instance the United Nations with the International Coffee Organization) (ibid., 70). In addition, these tasks, for which the institutions claim the right to (exclusively) perform, may be implemented with differing sets of rules. The latter define, at least on the formal level, an institution’s range of maneuver to enact collective decisions and hence the degree of authority it can exercise toward its rule addressees.

International institutions have come to assume greater authority over state and non-state actors alike, as evidenced by their increasing capacity to directly affect international and national political outcomes and decisions (Zürn et al., 2012). Examples are the International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) structural adjustment programs or the European Central bank’s handling of the Euro crisis. Enhanced institutional authority is associated with an increased
capacity to “interfere” with state sovereignty. The more rule addressees defer policy and decision-making competences to international institutions, the easier it is for the international institution to commit its state parties to a specific course of action (Simmons, 2002; Simmons and Danner, 2010).

With an increase in international political authority, collective decisions taken against the short-term interests of member states become more feasible (Zürn et al., 2012). This feature of international institutions may provoke different reactions. Some governments might value strengthened IO authority, because they can use authoritative international institutions to credibly commit their country to a specific course of action (Pevehouse, 2003; Mansfield and Pevehouse, 2006). Additionally, powerful institutional arrangement may be appreciated for their contribution to the solution of global cooperation and regulatory problems, when the individual actions of states are more effectively coordinated at the international level. However, countries might also resist the increasing authority of IOs. The IMF serves as a case in point, whose conditionality provisions for loans accord it a high degree of intrusiveness into domestic economic and social policies, which in turn has provoked increasing challenges by societal, transnational, and state actors alike – mostly in the form of public protests and selective non-compliance.

In order to empirically grasp the authority of institutions, we refer to rules that govern collective decision-making and which delimit the competences of an IO. The more competences these rules defer from member states to an international institution, the greater its international political authority. Specifically, these comprise rules to monitor and enforce compliance, to solve disputes, and to vote on collective policy decisions. The more competences an IO possesses within those sets of rules, the more it is able to exercise its formal authority.

1.2 Politicization

Briefly, to politicize means to transport (or demand the transporting of) something into the ambit of politics (Schmidt, 2004, p. 650). Discursively understood, the essence of politics is the process of public deliberation in search for commonly acceptable compromises (Zürn and Ecker-Erhardt, 2013, p. 16f). Thus, politicization initially appears to be restricted to the public sphere. In the political sphere, one might say, issues are political per se. However, the concept applies here as well, for instance when a matter, which was temporarily dealt with rather bureaucratically, resurfaces into the hot and contested debate among politicians (Zürn and Ecker-Erhardt, 2013, p. 18). This is what the paper at hand focuses on, namely the debate on the activities of international organizations (IOs) among the diplomatic representatives of nation-states. In line with Zürn et al. (2012), we define politicization of
international organizations and their activities as composed of two aspects, namely a growing
critical awareness of international institutions and their activities, and, secondly, an increasing
mobilization of political preferences – here, demands – directed towards the latter (p. 71).

1.2.1 Critical Awareness

Awareness here refers to the critical attention state representatives direct towards an IO
and its activities. Among accounts of media analysis focusing on the public’s awareness of
international institutions, we find the terms “resonance” (De Wilde, 2011), “salience” (Kriesi
et al., 2012), and “visibility” (Rauh, 2012; Statham and Trenz, 2012), all of which point to
the intensity with which international institutions are discussed in the media. While these
aspects solely refer to the presence of specific topics in the public debate, other scholars require
their discussion to exhibit a critical or evaluative tone before considering it an instance of
politicization (Schneider, 2010; Schmidtke and Nullmeier, 2011).

This qualification is particularly useful for a study focusing on the political sphere, where
the mere “talking” of specific matters itself is not noteworthy, but a normal condition. In the
political sphere, the decisive question is often not “whether”, but “how” certain issues are
dealt with – whether they are dealt with rather bureaucratically or instead in a fashion of
critical debate and evaluation. We thus align with these authors in focusing on instances of
states’ “critical awareness” of an IO and its activities coming in the form of their (norm-based)
evaluation. Evaluative statements made by government representatives in the course of IO
debates can be positive and thus approving of the IO and its activities. By contrast, they can
also be negative and hence criticizing or devaluing the latter. Either way, by being evaluated,
an issue loses its depoliticized status as being taken for granted or being inscrutinizable and
comes to be critically dealt with by actors.

1.2.2 Demands

Apart from positive or negative evaluations, politicization is also a matter of (normative)
demands placed on international institutions and their activities. Accordingly, scholars of
politicization do not only observe a growing attention paid to international organizations,
they also note a formerly unknown plurality of requirements actors direct towards these
institutions (Zürn et al., 2007, p. 149). While scholars’ first and foremost interest is on
“legitimacy demands” (Bernstein, 2004, p. 2), that is, demands for the (better) fulfillment

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1 Instead of politicization, these authors prefer the notion of a ‘legitimacy discourse’, composed of evaluative
statements that serve to emphasize or question the legitimacy of the political order under debate. Just
like scholars of politicization, they assume public (and normatively challenging) discourse on international
institutions to have increased lately.
of central criteria of “good governance”, two other forms of requirement may be discerned. They are closely connected to what Zürn et al. (2012) term “utilization” and “resistance” (p. 71). On the one hand, these are demands for the greater use of IOs, be it for the solution of global problems or for the provision of global public goods, and demands for increasing IO competences. On the other hand, there are demands for restricting IO activity or for withdrawing central competences from these institutions.

While requirements for more (far-reaching) IO activity in a specific field of action is clearly indicative of appraisal, calls for less such activity, or for an IO’s (better) fulfillment of certain rule standards in the respective issue area are unambiguous instances of criticism and depreciation. Hence, the analysis of politicization not only needs to consider the number of demands an IO (activity) receives. It also needs to account for the direction they take. Are the demands issued inherently critical, calling for less or reformed IO activity, or are they appreciative in postulating an ever greater scope of action for these institutions?

1.2.3 Baseline Assumption: Authority Generates Politicization

In this paper we focus on the relationship between IO authority and the level of its politicization by states. In establishing this relationship we build on literature claiming that “the rise of political authority beyond the nation state (. . . ) leads to politicization” (Zürn et al., 2012, p. 70). It regards the increase in international institutions’ authority as the decisive explanatory factor for their growing politicization (Zürn et al., 2012). According to these scholars, the nature and functioning of global governance has been unequivocally altered within the past decades (see Bernstein, 2004; Buchanan and Keohane, 2006; Zürn et al., 2012).

International institutions now command considerable authority and with their decisions and regulations they intrude deeper into the confines of nation-states than ever before (Bernstein, 2004, p. 1). This, in turn, has not remained without consequences. Instead, it led actors around the globe to put global governance arrangements under levels of scrutiny well-known for rule and rulers inside of nation-states, but entirely new to governance at an international level. Once “[international] institutions are like governments” (Buchanan and Keohane, 2006, p. 406) in that they increasingly approximate vertical relationships of power – so the assumption behind the ‘authority-politicization nexus’ (Zürn et al., 2012, p. 70) – they will also invoke similar reactions as does rule inside the nation-state. In other words, these institutions will be politicized. One of the objectives of this study is to empirically assess this argument.

In line with the above, we hypothesize the degree of politicization of international institutions and their activities by states to depend on the degree of their authoritativeness.²

²Two other versions of the authority-politicization nexus may be analyzed in future extensions of this
While preliminary accounts focus on the degree of authority of an IO as a whole, we assume that different fields of IO competence may also exhibit different levels of political authority. An IO’s field of action can encompass a plurality of activities, within some of which the IO may act more authoritatively than in others. Consider again the example of the IMF. When it comes to loan agreements, the IMF possesses high enforcement and monitoring competences toward debtor countries. By contrast, when it comes to macroeconomic forecasts and analyses, the IMF cannot sanction states that did not submit their economic data. Thus, we analyze the relationship between levels of politicization and intra-IO variation in the degree of authority exercised.

2 Authoritarian Regimes and International Institutions

2.1 Authoritarian Regimes in International Politics

Autocracies’ role in international politics and – more generally – the role of regime type for states’ behavior in the international realm has been most extensively analyzed in studies of international conflict and cooperation. Most notably, the democratic peace literature set a precedent in this regard (Oneal et al., 1996; Russett and Oneal, 1999). Since then, it extended this initial focus to include questions about regime type and the onset of inter-state conflict (Garfinkel, 1994; Peterson, 1996), alliance formation (Lai and Slater, 2006; Leeds et al., 2009), international economic cooperation (Mansfield et al., 2002), and commitment to international treaties (Leeds, 1999).

However, few studies in IR dealt explicitly with authoritarian regimes in global governance arrangements. Hence, we aim to contribute to this research gap by this paper. In that regard, politicization research constitutes a useful starting point to fill this gap. Its focus on the kind of reactions increasingly authoritative international institutions provoke among a plurality of actors is what this study builds upon. However, as politicization scholarship is still in project. They regard the relationship between the degree of politicization and the form of authority exercised by an IO on the one hand side; and between the degree of politicization and the issue area subjected to IO authority on the other. All else equal, existing accounts expect political authority to be less politicized than epistemic authority. To be considered worthy of acknowledgement, epistemic authority only needs to be regarded as trustworthy. Political authority, on the other hand, has to live up to a range of normative requirements associated with the entitlement to issue collectively binding rules. As the fulfillment of those expectations is clearly more demanding, politicization is more likely (Zürn et al., 2012, p. 86-88). Secondly, it is likely to matter whether an IO regulates a field of high or low politics. The possibly detrimental effect of intrusion into the competencies of nation states as entailed by high levels of IO authority differs between various policy fields. In security politics, the detrimental consequences of an overriding of state by IO authority can – in the worst case – compromise the very sovereignty of the state. This outcome, in turn, is an unlikely scenario in low politics. Hence, in fields of high politics we expect high levels of IO authority to translate into greater degrees of politicization than in fields of low politics.
its infancy, empirical accounts of the politicizing activities of different states in particular are rare (for few examples see Nullmeier et al. (2010), Binder and Heupel (2012), Zürn and Stephen (2010)) and insights into the impact of regime type differences are completely lacking. However, the assumption that states’ politicization of IOs increases with the degree of authority these institutions exercise is most useful. That is, because we assume a country’s regime type to determine its sensitivity to sovereignty-encroachments by authoritative IOs.

2.2 Authoritarian Regimes and Sovereignty

While no comprehensive account of autocracies’ requirements of international institutions exists, several studies offer starting points for our hypotheses-building. On the one hand, this concerns scholarship with a focus on autocratic emerging powers and their attitudes towards the structures and functioning of the current global order. On the other hand, this refers to research on the norms upon which autocracies base their regional organizations and which they promote within these frameworks. Here, ASEAN and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) have received a fair amount of scholarly attention (Acharya, 2003; Ambrosio, 2008). These accounts' insights allow us to assume that, compared to democracies, autocracies are much more sensitive to external encroachments upon their national sovereignty – be it by democratic states or by IOs that are often dominated by the latter. Hence, autocracies’ politicization of international institutions’ authoritative aspects is likely to take a much more critical tone than that of democracies.

One group of states which comprises autocracies and which has come to receive a great deal of scholarly attention is that of the so-called emerging (or rising) powers. Based on the assumption that these states are increasingly able to challenge the global governance architecture built by the US and other Western states, scholars are particularly concerned with rising powers’ requirements and ideas of acceptable international institutions. One issue that surfaces in their studies is emerging autocracies’ particularly strong efforts to preserve and reinforce the norm of national sovereignty. These states “tend to favour national sovereignty as the primary norm of international society” (Zürn and Stephen, 2010, p. 97), which goes so far as to scholars’ labeling of China and Russia as an “axis of sovereignty” (Stephen, 2011, p. 20). Because they associate IOs with Western interests – including that for liberal interventionism and for relaxing the principle of sovereignty –, authoritarian powers contemplate these institutions’ increasing authority with considerable skepticism (Johnston, 2003; Wang and Rosenau, 2009; Zürn and Stephen, 2010). Hence, global governance arrangements, which do not respect emerging autocracies’ concerns for non-interference and the preservation of autonomy, are likely to meet their resistance (Johnston, 2003; Lynch, 2007).

While not primarily focusing on autocracies’ requirements of international institutions,
scholarship on authoritative regional organizations confirms the above. Both ASEAN and the SCO, two regional organizations predominantly composed of autocratic member states, enshrine the principles of sovereignty and non-interference into domestic affairs (Acharya, 2003; Albright, 2009; Ambrosio, 2008). Judging from the kind of organizations they themselves create, authoritarian states seem to prefer institutions that guard them against encroachments into their autonomy – rather than those that interfere with their sovereign competences. Certainly, such concerns for sovereignty may primarily relate to the right “to determine the form of government for their country” and may just be meant to thwart off external pressure for democratization (Ambrosio, 2010, p. 376). However, we assume autocracies’ wariness of international institutions’ restrictions on their sovereignty to be more general – not least because powerful IOs are often regarded as tools of Western democracies (Wang and Rosenau, 2009, p. 33).

On the basis of their strong sensitivity to notions of autonomy and non-interference, we assume autocratic politicization to differ from that of democracies. We expect authoritarian regimes’ evaluations of authoritative IOs and their activities to be more critical and the demands put forward by them to be in favor either of reform or of a withdrawal of IO competences.

3 Research Design

This section presents the general research design. We start with the choice of IO, describe the operationalization of the dependent variable(s), continue with the choice of explanatory factors, and conclude with a presentation of the estimation methods.

3.1 Choosing the IAEA

Our analysis focuses on one specific IO from the field of security politics, namely the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Instead of comparing across IOs, we have chosen to conduct an analysis of intra-institutional variation. This offers the benefit of keeping constant the broader issue area, in which the IO operates – in our case, the field of security politics and, more precisely, of nuclear governance. Moreover, we do not have to account for the effect of variation in the specific problem of cooperation different IOs may be built upon. In addition, the IAEA provides ample variation in authority over its different policy tasks.

The IAEA occupies a pivotal position in global nuclear governance. Since its creation in 1953 it is tasked with a double mandate: to both promote and control nuclear energy for the benefits of its member states. The promotional aspect translates into assisting member states
with specialized knowledge and/or material in developing their own nuclear power programs. Another facet is the application of nuclear technology in public health or environmental matters. Here, the IAEA regulates the technology and knowledge exchange between member states in order to advance the peaceful application of nuclear energy. At the same time, the IAEA controls the uses of nuclear science, and particularly guards against its potential military misuse, by applying so-called safeguards to the nuclear material and facilities of its member states. This double mandate creates a specific incentive structure that helps to overcome the underlying problems of cooperation in nuclear matters, which are mainly problems of enforcement of nonproliferation and distributional problems regarding access to technology (Keohane, 1982; Morrow, 1994; Koremenos et al., 2001).

Accepting international control comes with the benefit of increased assurance that nuclear material remains in peaceful activities and is not used for military purposes. The promotion of nuclear energy gives states willing to invest in nuclear power access to resources and applications, which would otherwise be more costly to acquire. It is this incentive structure – access to technology conditional on peaceful use intentions – that we keep constant by focusing on one specific IO. This is important because a particular incentive structure may generate specific forms and intensities of evaluations and demands.

The adoption of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968 established the IAEA’s authority to verify NPT state party compliance with nonproliferation obligations. However, the IAEA’s enhanced verification and sanctioning capacity in this policy task has not been matched by an increase in its authority within other fields of competence – for instance in its task to ensure the safe use of civilian nuclear energy. This variation in political authority across policy tasks constitutes another advantageous institutional feature that justifies the choice of the IAEA. In order to empirically assess the impact of different degrees of IO authority, we need variation in this variable without confounding its effect with that of idiosyncratic incentive structures and related cooperation problems. The IAEA exhibits a considerable degree of intra-IO variation in political authority over its various policy tasks, while the basic bargain establishing the organization and sustaining institutionalized cooperation remains fixed.

The general debate at the IAEA General Conference 2011. In order to evaluate our propositions about IO authority and politicization we chose to analyze the general debate at the IAEA General Conference of 2011, which is the most recent fully documented IAEA debate available. The General Conference is the plenary of the organization’s member

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3 Safeguards are rules and instruments, such as accountancy reporting obligations and inspections, whose purpose is to inhibit the diversion of nuclear material from civilian applications to military ends.
states and a statutory policy-making body. During its annual regular meetings, the General Conference discusses all issues relevant to the IAEA’s work, decides upon the budget of the organization, and raises topics for inclusion in the IAEA’s program of work. This gathering of member states allows us to assess how states evaluate the work of the IAEA, what topics they consider important, and which specific demands they make.

In short, it is the most comprehensive data source covering all issues states consider relevant of nuclear governance and the IAEA. There is, however, a peculiarity of the 2011 debate. It has been held in the wake of the nuclear catastrophe in Fukushima, and is thus likely to produce a considerable flow of statements on nuclear safety and emergency preparedness, which are unlikely to have occurred during “normal” times. This might create an imbalance between the attention accorded to “safety” as compared to other regulatory or policy tasks of the IAEA. Empirically, we hope to level out those differences by including an issue salience variable in our models.

3.2 Dependent Variables: Evaluations and Demands

We operationalize politicization as country statements that are either evaluations of or demands towards the IAEA, its tasks, structure, or policy choices. Both demands and evaluations are usually made with reference to a specific issue area covered by the IAEA’s regulatory functions. For example, a state might evaluate affirmatively the IAEA’s measures with regards to nuclear safety, but criticize it in relation to nuclear safeguards.

Evaluations. We define evaluations as statements that assess the IAEA. At the most basic level, they may be of two sorts: those that appraise and those that criticize the organization. An example of a positive evaluation is the following statement issued by Japan:

“The Agency was the sole international organization with expertise relevant to all issues associated with nuclear energy (…).”

The phrase ‘sole international organization … with expertise relevant’ qualify the statement as a positive evaluation. The addressed issue area is that of ‘nuclear energy’ in general. We proceed in the same manner to code negative or critical evaluations, as the following Iranian statement shows:

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4In contrast to the NPT, topics at the IAEA General Conference extend beyond safeguards, disarmament, and technical cooperation. IAEA Member states also address development issues related to secure nutrition and cancer treatment, fields in which the IAEA became more involved in recent years.

5We do not code demands or evaluations that appraise or criticize the IAEA’s assistance for one’s own country, that is, country-specific statements.

6The passage is to be found in IAEA Document GC(55)/OR.1 on page 13f.

7The passage is from IAEA Document GC(55)/OR.1 on page 20.
“The Agency’s selective attitude, especially toward certain developing countries, had paved the way for economic sanctions followed by military attacks on those countries...”

Iran criticizes the IAEA for its purportedly ‘selective attitude’. While the negative bent of this statement is unambiguous, the specific issue area referred to is less so. We assigned such statements to the category ‘general-IAEA work’, since they concern more general assessments of how the organization conducts its work.

**Demands.** Demands are statements directed toward the IAEA that request the organization to change something about the status quo. They may refer both to the institution’s policies and to its structures. We define two kinds of demands. First, those for an extension of the competences or activities of the respective institution, and, secondly, those for less or for reformed IO action or competences. An example of the first type is issued by Cuba and refers to the regulatory task of nuclear disarmament:

“The Agency’s role in verification regarding nuclear disarmament should be strengthened.”

Cuba calls for the IAEA to develop competences for controlling the disarmament of nuclear weapons. While this demand certainly is a call for more IO action and enhanced responsibilities, the issue area addressed – disarmament – is not part of the IAEA’s regulatory functions. Although the organization may initiate talks on disarmament, it possesses no legal capacity to impose verification measures. Nonetheless, we code this as a demand for strengthened IO activity within an issue area, in which the IAEA has no substantial political authority. The following statement of Lebanon is an example of a demands for less IO action. Here, Lebanon calls the IAEA to exercise greater self-restriction in the application of safeguards:

“The Agency should exercise caution in interpreting the standards laid down in safeguards agreements in order to ensure that its assessments did not exceed the bounds of the objectives for which the standards had been devised.”

**Coding and Final Sample.** The records of the IAEA General Conference of 2011 contain member states’ speeches in English language. This allows us to systematically screen these speeches for indicators of politicization by means of qualitative content analysis. Our coding

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8The passage is from IAEA Document GC(55)/OR.6 on page 11.
9GC(55)/OR.6 on page 2.
unit is the statement, that is, a semantic unit that constitutes either an evaluation of or a demand placed on the IO or on one of its regulatory tasks. In most cases, these units correspond to formal sentences. However, if several sentences are grouped together that do not contain more than one evaluation or one demand – e.g. because they only serve to elaborate on or emphasize the main statement – they will not be coded separately.

Our approach to coding and operationalization resulted in two distinct measures of politicization. These two measures constitute our dependent variables, which will be regressed on a set of explanatory factors respectively. Both variables are dichotomous. The first dependent variable, evaluations, expresses whether state parties are supportive or critical of the IAEA’s work. It takes the value 1 if states positively evaluate the IAEA. The second dependent variable captures state parties’ demands toward the IAEA. Demands might entail calls for more IO competences or for less. Consequently, we assigned the value 1 to all statements that demanded an expansion of IO activity or competences.

As we included all countries that made a speech at the General Conference, our final sample comprises 109 states. However, the number of observations (i.e. statements) exceeds the number of countries by far, since we coded the evaluations and demand per issue area addressed. For that purpose, we identified 12 issues areas that states referred to during the general debate. We subsumed them under six categories, including five policy tasks the IAEA attends and one structural issue: safeguards, disarmament, safety and security of nuclear energy, technical cooperation, general matters and, lastly, matters concerning the organizational structure of the IAEA.

Briefly, safeguards comprise regulations and policies to prevent the spread of nuclear material conducive to nuclear weapons construction. Disarmament refers to all measures to reduce the number of nuclear warheads. The category of safety and security of nuclear energy is about adequately protecting power plants and preventing accidents and theft. Assistance in developing nuclear energy and applying this technology to agriculture, health, and environmental protection are subsumed under technical cooperation (TC). This area represents the transfer of knowledge and material from industrialized countries to developing ones. The category general matters refers to nuclear policies that do not fall within one of the above categories, such as awareness-raising, technical training, and educational aspects. Finally, we

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10 We excluded three states, based either on very small populations or due to missing values on the independent variables of primary interest: the Holy See, Malta, and Cyprus.
11 Within those 12 groups, several sub-divisions exist. An example is the issue of technical cooperation, which comprises statements referring to the budget of the IAEA’s technical cooperation program and to the organization’s economic and social development activities.
12 How these regulatory tasks correspond with different degrees of IO authority will be outlined in the section on the explanatory variables.
Assigned issues relating to how the IAEA works (budget, representation, voting, etc.) to the category of organizational structure.

This coding approach results in an unbalanced panel data set, where issue areas are nested within states – since it is the latter who choose the topics to address. Hence, our data-set comprises 1012 ‘issue area-state’ observations, which comprise 710 evaluations and 302 demands.

**Distribution of Evaluations and Demands.** In order to show how strongly an issue area is politicized in comparison to others, we calculated different metrics. We divided the sum of evaluations or demands per issue area by the sum of all statements made during the General Conference in 2011. This calculation results in a relative frequency measure and allows to compare the respective discoursive attention accorded to a specific topic across all states. Figure 1 presents the respective data.

As becomes apparent, safety & energy receive the greatest attention with about 30% of all evaluations addressing safety issues and 15% of all demands referring to the safety of nuclear energy. This is of course an outflow of the Fukushima accident of March 2011 that became a prominent topic at the General Conference in September 2011. The safety&energy complex is followed by the issue area of Technical Cooperation (TC) and safeguards, which produced most of the demands and evaluations.

Within the broader nuclear nonproliferation regime, some countries of the Non-Aligned Movement criticize nuclear-weapon states’ lacking willingness to accelerate global disarmament initiatives and to reduce the nuclear weapon stockpile. Often, some non-aligned states portray unequal disarmament and nonproliferation burdens as a legitimacy problem of the nonproliferation regime (see Müller, 2010; Clarke, 2010). As our data show, however, disarmament is less politicized than often assumed. It only receives around 5% of evaluations and 2.5% demands.

### 3.3 Explanatory Factors: Regime Type and IO Authority

This section introduces our independent variables. We first present the variables pertaining to our core hypotheses about the role of regime type for states’ politicization of international institutions. Second, we outline our coding of the political authority the IAEA exercises in each of its six areas of regulatory functions. This yields an approximate measure of the intra-IO variation in authority. Finally, we introduce a set of control variables that completes our explanatory models.
### Figure 1: The relative frequency of evaluations and demands across issue areas.

The y-axis expresses how much evaluations or demands have been accorded to one issue area as a share to all statements made during the conference (N=1012). Source: IAEA and own data.
3.3.1 Regime Type

In order to assess the relationship between a country’s regime type and its politicization of international organizations, we operationalize the regime type with the help of the Polity IV project (Marshall et al., 2010). Polity IV offers several variables on the institutionalization of specific authoritarian or democratic regime features, such as the freedom of political competition between various domestic groups or the regulation of access to the executive. It consists of two aggregated measures, termed **DEMOC** and **AUTOC**. **DEMOC** represents the degree of institutionalized democracy in a given country and ranges from 0 to 10, where 10 denotes a consolidated democracy. Likewise, **AUTOC** expresses the extent to which a given polity’s domestic institutions are authoritarian. Here, a value of 10 indicates a strong autocratic government with few institutional constraints on the executive and virtually no political competition between diverse political groups. The two component measures may be summarized into a composite indicator, termed **POLITY2**. It ranges from -10 to 10, with -10 being the value for strongly autocratic regimes and 10 denoting fully consolidated democracies. Our operationalization of a country’s regime type builds on the composite indicator **POLITY2**. However, we test whether our results hold when using two further measures of democracy and autocracy. Therefore, we employ a dichotomous measure of democracy, where all countries are assigned the value 1 if they have a score of 7 or higher on the component measure **DEMOC**, and 0 if they do not. We label this recoded variable **DEMOCRACY**. By means of it we can ensure that only mature democracies enter our sample. Finally, we also use the component measure **AUTOC**.

Our hypotheses are the following:

H1: More democratic political regimes are likelier to positively evaluate IOs.
H2: More democratic political regimes are likelier to demand more IO competences and action.

3.3.2 IO Authority

Political authority finds its empirical expression in rules and procedures governing institutions as well as their policies. The more competences these rules defer from member states to international organizations, the greater the potential for the IO to exercise authority over its member states. However, operationalizing IO authority is not as straightforward as in the case of the regime type. Earlier, we assigned the 12 issue areas states address in their speeches to six broad regulatory functions the IAEA performs. These functions exhibit different degrees of regularization or institutionalization. That is, the rules governing these functions accord different degrees of responsibility and competences to the IO.
In this regard, we identify four sets of rules that affect an institution’s formal authority: rules on monitoring, enforcement, interpretation, and voting on collective decisions and commitments. Monitoring rules specify whether and to what extent an institution or international organization is entitled to collect, process, and evaluate information from member states on compliance with binding decisions and institutional rules. The more intrusive monitoring provisions are, the greater the authority of an IO. Enforcement rules detail what costs an IO may impose upon noncompliant member states. These can range from naming and shaming strategies to outright military sanctions – the latter clearly indicating the highest possible level of authority. Rules of norm interpretation govern conflicts arising between member states and/or IOs and typically comprise dispute settlement procedures. Here, certain IOs are solely entitled to initiate non-binding bilateral negotiations to resolve conflicts, while others may set up international courts that issue directly binding rulings. Finally, voting rules specify how the rule addressees arrive at decisions. Some institutions foresee simple majority voting to decide about policies, while others require unanimity or consensus among all actors. When an IO is authorized to intervene into ‘state affairs’ and when it can make binding decisions across various policy functions, its authority is higher.

The IAEA’s authority varies across its regulatory functions. To capture this variation in the degree of authority we constructed an ordinal variable, ranging from 0 to 5, with the value 5 denoting the highest degree and 0 indicating a complete lack of political authority. We proceeded as follows: For each regulatory area, such as safeguards or safety, we assembled all the relevant IO rules pertaining to that area and examined the specific provisions concerning monitoring, enforcement, norm interpretation, and decision-making. The more constraints and binding obligations these rules imposed upon states, the higher values did a specific regulatory function receive.

The highest value has been assigned to the regulatory field of safeguards, because in any of the four dimensions, the IAEA had the greatest leverage over the state, meaning that it could issue binding decisions and take binding measures upon its own discretion (i.e. on-site verification without notice of the concerned state party). To further detail this example, monitoring provisions in the field of safeguards were the most intrusive, allowing for on-site inspections and remote surveillance measures; the enforcement rules in instances of non-compliance foresee IO-internal sanctions and the referral of the case to the UN Security Council; the norm interpretation or dispute settlement mechanisms specified binding arbitration procedures and even the referral of disputed cases to the ICJ, whose judgments directly bind the concerned states.

We proceeded likewise in coding the degree of authority of the other regulatory areas the IAEA covers. More precisely, safeguards received the highest value of authority, that is
5, organizational issues received a 4, technical cooperation a 3, nuclear safety & security a 2, general matters a 1, and disarmament – with virtually no authority – received the value 0.

We assume the degree of authority, with which the IAEA governs its regulatory task, to impact the latter’s politicization by member states.

Our hypotheses are the following:

H3: Higher degrees of authority should lower the probability of positive evaluations.

H4: Higher degrees of IO authority should lower the probability of demands for more IO action or involvement.

3.3.3 Control Variables

Issue Salience. Due to the higher number of statements we are likely to expect in the issue area of nuclear safety in response to the nuclear accident at Fukushima, we control for the relative frequency with which particular issues are addressed during the General Conference debate in 2011. We hence construct a variable called SALIENCE that accounts for the uneven distribution of statements across issue areas. Since our main interest does not lie in estimating the effect of this variable, we take the natural logarithm of SALIENCE in order to capture the proportional differences in salience across the various issues addressed. Higher issue salience should increase the probability of positive evaluations and demands, respectively.

Nuclear Activity. Some states show no nuclear activity at all, while others invest considerable amounts of money in the development of nuclear power. These groups of states are likely to develop different stances on the IAEA’s work and will probably issue different demand on the latter. For instance, nuclear active states will most likely appreciate the IAEA’s support for strengthening their safety measures, while states that do not invest in nuclear power might care more about IAEA assistance in environmental and health applications of nuclear energy. We control for possibly different motivations by introducing an indicator variable termed NUCLEAR ACTIVITY that takes on the value 1 if the particular country shows any nuclear activity on its soil and 0 if otherwise. The IAEA Annual report provides information about the nuclear activities in IAEA member states (IAEA, 2010).

Nuclear Weapon State. To control for the influence of being an NPT nuclear weapon state, who is likely to request more IAEA competences and activity in matters relating to safeguards and nuclear security – and possibly less IAEA involvement in the field of disarmament – we construct a dichotomous variable which takes the value 0 if the particular
state is a non-nuclear weapon state and 1 in the case of the USA, Russia, the UK, France and China.

**GDP.** Finally, we use the GDP to control for possible influences of a country’s economic strength on its evaluations and demands. Most often, in GDP captures a multitude of influences. Therefore, we do not further hypothesize the direction of the possible effect at this stage. Data is taken from the IMF’s World Economic Outlook database. Its GDP variable is measured in current international dollars at purchasing power parity. We use the log of GDP.

### 3.4 Method

We use logit regression methods to assess our hypotheses on regime type and politicization. In particular, we estimate the probability that a given country statement is a positive evaluation or not. Similarly, we estimate the probability of a demand for more IO competences in a second set of regressions. We expect those probabilities to be conditional on regime type, IO authority, and further explanatory variables.

Two sets of estimations are made. The first refers to evaluations as the dependent variable. The dependent variable of the second estimation is the probability that a demand entails a request that the IO should be equipped with more competences or engage in more action – thus, an empowerment demand. In order to ensure the results’ robustness for various combinations of independent variables we alter the model specification and examine the effect of a state’s regime type and of the degree of IO authority on the probability of a positive evaluation (or an empowerment demand respectively). In addition, we estimate the models with different regression methods, among them the logit and probit regressions for panel data. Because doing so did not change the substantive and statistical results, we do not report the results from those regressions here.

A basic property of nonlinear regression models is that the estimates are not directly comparable to each other and that each variable’s effect is conditional on the values of the other independent variables in the model (Long and Freese, 2006). A common way to interpret results from logit models is to calculate predicted probabilities and to plot them. With this approach we can show how the predicted probability for a demand requesting IO empowerment changes as the values of an independent variable changes, holding all other factors fixed at their mean values. The effect signs of the estimated logit coefficients and their levels of significance can be interpreted as in usual linear regression. We calculate robust standards errors clustered by country to account for heteroskedasticity.
4 Results

4.1 The Evaluation of IO work

When can we expect IAEA member states to positively evaluate the organization? In order to assess whether and how regime type is associated with IO evaluations, we devise three distinct measures of regime type. This serves to assess whether any detected relationship is driven by a particular coding of the main explanatory variable or by a substantive process. The estimated models are grouped according to the metric for the main explanatory variable used. Within each group, we first fit a simplified model, consisting of the regime type and the IO authority variables. Then, we estimate the coefficients for the full model including all covariates we presented.\textsuperscript{13}

More democratic states are more likely to positively evaluate the IAEA’s work, all else being equal. By contrast, increasingly more autocratic states are associated with a low likelihood of favorable IAEA judgments. As the results for each of the three model groups in table 1 show, this association holds across different measurements of the main explanatory variable.

The results for the models with the DEMOCRACY indicator variable do not reject the assumption that democracies are more likely to support the work, structure, and functioning of the IAEA. Being a democracy increases the odds of issuing a positive evaluation of the IAEA by a factor of 7. The final model group, based on Polity’s AUTOC variable, is likewise consistent with the overall finding. More autocratic regimes tend to issue less supportive evaluations about the IAEA. Being a more autocratic country – i.e. one with a higher AUTOC value – reduces the odds of supporting the IAEA by a factor of .67 or 32.5%. This suggests that authoritarian regimes are more likely to criticize the IAEA than democratic polities.

States will issue fewer positive evaluations of the IAEA the more regulated – or authoritative – a particular issue area of the IAEA is. This resonates with the politicization literature, which takes higher degrees of political authority to generate more skeptical reactions particularly if the respective institution is not seen to possess “sufficient stocks of legitimacy” (Zürn et al., 2012, p. 70). However, within this study it is difficult to tell which IAEA functions and issue areas state parties consider to be less or more legitimate. Doing so requires new and more data. Moreover, interpretive caution needs to be paid to the fact that less positive evaluations mean – first and foremost – less positive evaluations and nothing more. Due to the low overall number of negative evaluative statements, we may not assume that fewer praises automatically indicate the predominance of depreciation. Besides, the coefficient on

\textsuperscript{13} In a stepwise manner, we added each control factor to the simple model and the results did not change for the IO authority and political regime variables.
Table 1: Explaining supportive evaluations of the IAEA. Results from logit regression.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Polity II Simple</th>
<th>Polity II Full</th>
<th>Democracy Simple</th>
<th>Democracy Full</th>
<th>Autocracy Simple</th>
<th>Autocracy Full</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polity II</td>
<td>.123** (.0385)</td>
<td>.170*** (.0479)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.340** (.582)</td>
<td>1.942** (.691)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autocracy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-2.211** (.880)</td>
<td>-1.756* (.954)</td>
<td>-2.524** (.909)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IO Authority</td>
<td>-.233** (.116)</td>
<td>-.162 (.136)</td>
<td>-2.233** (.124)</td>
<td>-1.89 (.131)</td>
<td>-.219* (.117)</td>
<td>-.148 (.140)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear Active</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-2.211** (.880)</td>
<td>-1.756* (.954)</td>
<td>-2.524** (.909)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>log GDP</td>
<td>-.0341 (.229)</td>
<td>-.116 (.218)</td>
<td>-2.233** (.124)</td>
<td>-1.89 (.131)</td>
<td>-.219* (.117)</td>
<td>-.148 (.140)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>log Salience</td>
<td>-.0528 (.339)</td>
<td>-.0666 (.316)</td>
<td>-2.233** (.124)</td>
<td>-1.89 (.131)</td>
<td>-.219* (.117)</td>
<td>-.148 (.140)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.347*** (.423)</td>
<td>4.724** (.467)</td>
<td>2.867*** (.766)</td>
<td>4.271*** (.163)</td>
<td>4.297*** (.399)</td>
<td>6.089*** (1.691)</td>
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<td>-130.9 -113.7</td>
<td>-123.8 -105.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$</td>
<td>13.27** 16.17**</td>
<td>8.012** 12.14**</td>
<td>19.08*** 18.54**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>698 683</td>
<td>710 683</td>
<td>698 683</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust standard errors clustered by country.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
IO authority is not statistically significant. While the more IO authority still leads to a lower probability of positive evaluations, this association is not systematic and robust to the inclusion of further variables.

Being a state with a nuclear infrastructure (Nuclear Active) decreases the probability of issuing a positive evaluation of the IAEA. The log GDP as well as the log Salience, by contrast, have no systematic impact on the probability of a state issuing a positive evaluation. However, it is still advisable to include the salience variable in the model to account for the varying frequency of references to different issue areas in the IAEA General Debate.\textsuperscript{14}

### 4.2 Demand for more IO competences

When will state parties demand more operative and regulatory responsibilities from the IAEA? In order to respond to this question, we estimate the probability of issuing a demand for more IO competences, conditional on the same set of explanatory factors as in the evaluation models.

We employ the same estimation procedure as above and group the models according to each of the regime type variables chosen. A baseline model and a full model are displayed in each model group in table 2.\textsuperscript{15}

Democracies are more likely to issue a demand that calls the IO to assume greater regulatory competences. This is illustrated by the positive sign of Polity II’s coefficient. As states are more democratic, they are more likely to call on the IAEA to strengthen its regulatory functions and assume a leading role in the governance of global nuclear issues. For example, strongly democratic states are more likely to voice requests for regular international inspections concerning the safety of nuclear power plants or strengthened enforcement provisions in technical cooperation programs – areas that have been under-regulated in the past due to the disproportionate focus on nuclear safeguards (nonproliferation).

This positive association between democratic polities and demands for more IO activity and competences holds also for our dichotomous Democracy variable. For the Autocracy variable, however, the results are mixed. More authoritarian regimes are less likely to demand an empowerment of the IAEA. However, the effect is no longer statistically significant in the full model specification. More precisely, Autocracy does no longer systematically affect the probability of an empowerment-demand to occur when we include the log GDP in the model. In that respect, the log GDP’s coefficient loses its significance as well. This result might be due to the smaller sample (N decreases to 290) or to the coding of our GDP variable as a

\textsuperscript{14}Concerning the dummy variable for Nuclear Weapon State we dropped the variable from the model, since it predicted some cases perfectly.

\textsuperscript{15}Consider the Annex for more estimation results.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Polity II</th>
<th>Democracy</th>
<th>Autocracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Full</td>
<td>Base</td>
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<td>.0624</td>
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<td>(.0249)</td>
<td>(.382)</td>
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<td>Democracy</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autocracy</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IO Authority</td>
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<td>-.269**</td>
<td>-.298**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.0977)</td>
<td>(.108)</td>
<td>(.0957)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>log GDP</td>
<td>-.298*</td>
<td>-.405**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.171)</td>
<td>(.167)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nuclear Weapon State</td>
<td>3.109**</td>
<td>3.301**</td>
<td>3.014**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.312)</td>
<td>(1.321)</td>
<td>(1.251)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear Active</td>
<td>-.159</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>-.200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.375)</td>
<td>(.450)</td>
<td>(.377)</td>
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<tr>
<td>log Salience</td>
<td>.819***</td>
<td>.841***</td>
<td>.830***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.146)</td>
<td>(.162)</td>
<td>(.149)</td>
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<td>Constant</td>
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<td>4.688***</td>
<td>3.102***</td>
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<td>(.541)</td>
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<td>(.565)</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>302</td>
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</table>

Robust standard errors clustered by country.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
natural log transformation.\textsuperscript{16} However, the association between more democratic political systems and a higher probability for empowerment demands is clearly established and holds over some specifications.

The results concerning the IO AUTHORITY variable is in line with our expectations. Demands for strengthening IO competences will be lower in issue areas that are highly regulated and intrusive. This association is statistically significant throughout all models. Because empowerment demands are clearly more illuminating than positive evaluations – especially because the appreciative specification of the latter most likely comprises a great deal of “diplo-
matic” language – this finding resonates with the assumption that states will demand fewer IO competences as the institution’s authority increases. Again, this resonates with the politi-
cization literature’s propositions about the conditions for growing contestation as detailed in (Zürn et al., 2012). However, alongside varying degrees of the IAEA’s authority across its different regulatory tasks, a country’s regime type proves influential as it consistently affects the probability with which states will demand more (or less) IO involvement.

In contrast to the evaluation models, some of the coefficients on the control variables attain conventional statistical significance levels, while others lose their significance. For instance, nuclear weapon states are more likely to demand enhanced oversight and implementation capacities of the IO than countries without nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapon states are strongly concerned with controlling nuclear energy and preventing its hostile use. As a consequence, they push for even stricter nuclear safeguards regulations. Moreover, higher issue salience clearly raises the likelihood of the occurrence of a demand for more IO activity or competences. Finally, economically more powerful countries tend to not issue requests for IO empowerment.

As has been noted previously, results from nonlinear regressions are more appropriately analyzed by calculating predicted probabilities (Long and Freese, 2006; King et al., 2000). We therefore plot the predicted probabilities for increasing values of the POLITY II variable from the baseline model in table 2. Figure 2 demonstrates that more democratic political systems will more likely request the augmentation of IO competences in its regulatory tasks, all else being equal. A strong democracy will demand an expansion of an IO’s activities with a probability of about .80. By contrast, strongly autocratic regimes – states with a POLITY II value of -10 – will speak up for enhanced IO responsibilities with a probability of only about .50. However, the 95% confidence interval shows that the uncertainty of the prediction decreases as the political regime becomes more democratic. Hence, for autocracies

\textsuperscript{16}Collinearity was not a problem and replacing the log GDP with the normal GDP turns the coefficient on the AUTOCRACY variable significant.
the predicted probabilities are less certain and more variation is to be expected among them than for democratic states.

![Probability of Demands for More IO Authority](image)

**Figure 2:** The predicted probability of a demand for more IO competences at increasing POLITY II values.

**Regime Types, IO Authority, and Demands**

The results allow us to analyze how different degrees of IO authority influence the prospects of politicization depending on regime type. To answer this question, we calculated the predicted probabilities at increasing POLITY II values for different levels of IO authority. We plot the predictions in figure 3.

What becomes apparent is that democracies are more likely to demand increased IO involvement and competences. However, states in general are less likely to issue empowerment demands when an IO’s regulatory area already exhibits a high level of authority. In the regulatory field of safeguards, the issue area where the IAEA has the greatest level of authority, the probability of a demand for more competences is clearly the lowest. This finding echoes the results from the logit regressions in table 2.

However, what was not apparent from the regression results table, but becomes visible here, are the strong differences between autocratic and democratic governments. Even with
regard to already highly authoritative regulatory areas, a democratic country will be more likely to demand strengthened IO responsibilities and competences than its authoritarian counterparts. A look at figure 3 reveals that when IO authority is at its highest (i.e. 5), strongly democratic polities will still call for the IO to be strengthened in its political authority with a probability of about .7 (or 70%). For strongly autocratic regimes, by contrast, the probability is below 40%. Hence, with 30 percentage points the difference is quite considerable. This tells us that democratic states, as compared to autocracies, are more inclined to accept even very intrusive monitoring, enforcement, and decision-making rules by international institutions. Apparently, democracies do not shy away from heightened sovereignty costs – but autocracies do.

The difference in probabilities between democracies and autocracies are less strong for less authoritative regulatory areas. Consider the case of statements on disarmament - IO Authority is at zero - the task empowering the IAEA with least authority. With a probability of about 70% stable autocratic regimes will demand more empowerment in those weakly regulated issue areas, whereas even here, consolidated democracies (Polity 2 = 10) show a higher predicted probability of issuing such demands, namely of about 85%. Hence, while the difference between both regime types is less pronounced in low authority issue areas and

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**Figure 3:** Predicted probability of empowerment demand for increasing values of Polity II at different levels of IO Authority.
higher in fields of high IO authority, democracies remain overall more inclined to require the expansion of IAEA competences and activities.

The data reveal yet another interesting finding. For strongly democratic states, the probability of calls for increasing IO competences across regulatory tasks is less spread out than it is among strongly authoritarian regimes. The end-points of the predicted probability lines at the upper end of the Polity scale are closer to each other - the highest is at .85 and the lowest at .75 - while for the lower end of the Polity scale they range from .38 to .75. Strongly autocratic states avoid demands in areas that bear the potential to impose high sovereignty costs upon them. Democracies, in turn, issue demands for the expansion of international regulatory competences with a more or less comparable probability across the IAEA’s different regulatory areas. Hence, the degree of authoritativeness with which an IO governs its various tasks seems to matter more for autocracies. This finding can be considered first empirical evidence of a greater sensitivity of authoritarian regimes towards the increase of international institutions’ authority.
Conclusion

The paper set out to contribute to the nascent literature that inquires into the conditions of the contestation of and support for international institutions by various actors. In this regard, we built upon and combined two literatures: research on the politicization of increasingly authoritative international institutions on the one hand, and research on autocracies in global governance. Consistent with politicization scholars, we assumed the rise of IO authority to generate both an increase in the attention (primarily in the form of evaluations) directed towards these IOs, as well as a growth of demands addressed towards the latter. However, we refined this broad assumption by hypothesizing that the nature of the authority-politicization nexus depends on the regime type of the politicizing state. More precisely, in light of their greater sensitivity to infractions on state sovereignty, we expected autocratic regimes to not only be considerably more critical in their evaluations of authoritative IO regulations. We also assumed that their demands issued towards these institutions entail less calls for increased IO activity or competences.

We tested our assumptions by analyzing states’ discourse on the IAEA and its various regulatory tasks during the 2011 General Conference. Our findings suggest that regime type significantly affects the ways in which states perceive and address the IAEA. Autocracies are less likely to positively evaluate the IAEA as compared to their democratic counterparts. Likewise, in contrast to democracies, authoritarian regimes are in general less inclined to issue demands for enhanced IO competences and activities. Moreover, increasing authoritativeness of the IAEA’s regulatory tasks lowers the prospects of calls for a transfer of competences and responsibilities to the institution. While this general trend is observable for all states, it is comparably stronger among autocracies than among democracies. This finding resonates with our basic assumption that less democratic states are more likely to challenge interferences into their sovereignty by international institutions. Concerning the operationalization of politicization as demands, the association between authority and politicization holds.

By contrast, the findings are less straightforward when accounting for states’ evaluations of an IO – the second measure of politicization we applied. Given their low occurrence during the debate, negative assessments barely mattered in countries’ speeches. This might be due to states’ need to resort to diplomatic language, which should ‘soften’ their tone. Moreover, while indeed higher levels of IO authority in a specific regulatory task seem to decrease the overall probability of supportive or positive evaluations, this effect is not statistically significant.

These results constitute but a starting point for further research. While autocracies’ heightened sensitivity to additional sovereignty costs might be a viable explanation for the
detected statistical associations, the precise causal mechanisms leading to this association need to be further researched and elaborated. Likewise, it could be insightful to expand the analysis to also encompass other IOs, namely those that exercise a different type of authority (epistemic instead of political) or that regulate another issue area (from the field of “low” instead of “high” politics). Varying these features may influence the authority-politicization nexus and its interaction with the regime type. In any case, the study at hand provides first empirical evidence that further investigating the effect of regime type on states’ assessment of international institutions constitutes a worthwhile endeavor.
## Annex

The Annex contains some additional regression results of the demands models. We present the results for each regime type variable separately. The table 3 shows the results for the model where we include the POLITY II variable as an indicator for regime type. It is followed by the robustness checks for the DEMOCRACY variable, and finally for the AUTOC operationalization of regime type.

### Table 3: Logit Regression Results for the demands models with the Polity II variable.

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Robust standard errors clustered by country.

* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.001
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Robust standard errors clustered by country.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$
Table 5: Logit Regression Results for the Demands Model with the AUTOC Variable

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Robust standard errors clustered by country.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$
References


