RESPONSIVENESS OR INFLUENCE? WHOM TO LOBBY IN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL NEGOTIATIONS

Carola Betzold · June 22, 2012∗

Abstract

Over the past decades, non-state actors have become an integral element of global environmental governance, and have attracted much academic interest. Yet, scant attention has so far been paid to behaviour of observer organisations within intergovernmental decision making. I seek to fill this gap by analysing patterns in non-state actor lobbying in environmental negotiations.

With limited resources, interest group need to strategically invest these resources so as to maximise their impact. A key decision here concerns the target of lobbying efforts. In other words, whom do non-govermental organisations lobby, and why? I contrast two possible pathways for deciding whom to lobby: influence and responsiveness. According to a influence logic, non-state actors have an interest in establishing contacts with large and influential delegations. In contrast, the responsiveness hypothesis would expect non-state actors to seek out delegations that most likely react to non-state input, be it because of similar preferences or a their democratic structure.

I test these two explanations based on a survey of observer organisations accredited with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Preliminary results indicate that interest groups do strategically target their advocacy, but that not a single logic is at play. Rather than putting all eggs in one basket, interest group talk to delegations that are likely to listen to them, but also to delegations that will be listened to at the negotiation table.

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1 Introduction

Interest groups have become an integral part of global environmental governance. In particular since the 1992 Rio Summit, multilateral negotiations on the environment have seen an unprecedented growth in non-state actor participation. Observer organisations spend considerable time, effort, and money on attending these negotiations with a view to incorporate their perspectives and positions into the negotiating process as well as its outcome.

While the enormous growth of non-state participation has attracted much academic interest, extant work almost exclusively focuses on assessing whether interest groups matter, and if so, to what extent (see e.g. Albin 1999; Arts 1998; Betsill 2006; Betsill and Corell 2008). This ex-post evaluation of interest group influence, however, neglects important questions on interest group behaviour at the negotiations themselves. Interest groups, as rational actors, seek to maximise their influence, and hence need to make strategic decisions on how to best spend their limited resources. A key choice here concerns the target of their advocacy efforts: Among the many governments represented in negotiations on global environmental problems, who should an interest group try to influence? Is time and money best spent on persuading decision makers with opposing interests to take positions more in line with the interest group's preferences? Or may it be the better choice to strengthen governments with similar positions? Power may also matter: Interest groups should seek out powerful countries whose voice matter in the negotiations, either because their high greenhouse gas emissions and economic weight, or because their position in the negotiation structure, as chairs of negotiation bodies or country coalitions.

With this paper, I seek to contribute to the existing literature on non-state actors in global environmental governance by opening the ‘black box’ of the intergovernmental negotiation process itself and analysing more closely the behaviour of different interest groups at the international level. I thus complement the existing ex post evaluation of interest group influence with an ex ante analysis of the strategic considerations of these groups in their endeavour to exert influence in global environmental governance. Based on a survey of over 100 NGOs active in negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), my analysis indicates that these organisations strategically lobby delegations, yet no single logic is at play. NGOs target responsive delegations, that is, delegations representing democratic countries; but also interact with influential delegations. Both wealthy countries and large greenhouse gas emitters are attractive targets for NGOs, as is the country presiding over the negotiation summit.

1Interest groups in global environmental governance are variously referred to as ‘non-state actors’, ‘civil society organisations’, ‘non-governmental organisations’ etc. For simplicity, I will use the terms ‘interest groups’, ‘observer organisations’, and ‘lobby groups’ interchangeably.
2 Existing Research

Although the question of whom interest groups lobby has, as yet, received scant attention in international policy making, many authors have addressed this question for the domestic level. In particular, there exists a large body of literature on the choice of lobbying targets in the context of the United States Congress (see e.g. Hall and Deardorff 2006; Hojnacki and Kimball 1998; 1999; Smith 1995). Even if international negotiations differ from policy making processes in national legislatures, mainly in that decisions are taken by consensus rather than by vote, this literature provides a good starting point for exploring patterns of interest group activity in global environmental politics.

2.1 Friends or Foes?

Within this literature, decision makers are typically distinguished according to their position relative to that of the interest group. Decision makers who \textit{a priori} share the interest group’s position can be said to be ‘friendly’ or ‘ally’ to the interest group, whereas those decision makers whose positions are \textit{a priori} in opposition to those of the interest group are termed ‘foes’ or ‘opponents’. Intuitively, it seems wiser to spend resources on persuading one’s opponents, rather than ‘waste’ resources on decision makers who anyway defend the interest group’s perspective. Yet, arguments can be made for both types of targets, friends and foes.

Why would an interest group lobby an ally whose positions are already in line with those of the interest group? At first glance, it makes little sense to invest precious time and effort to obtain someone’s support when this support can be expected without any costly intervention. However, a precondition for lobbying is access. Access is more easily obtained from policy makers with similar preferences, which makes these policy makers ‘natural’ targets (e.g. Bauer et al. 1963; Baumgartner et al. 2009; Denzau and Munger 1986; Mahoney and Baumgartner 2008; Milbrath 1963). Another, closely related, perspective is to conceive lobbying as a tool for mobilisation, or ‘legislative subsidy’ (Hall and Deardorff 2006). If the main purpose of lobbying is to enroll legislators as agents on behalf of the interest group, legislative allies are again the most appropriate target. By providing them with information and resources, friendly legislators become (more) active on issues of importance to the interest group, and hence have greater chances to influence legislation in line with the interest group’s preferences. From this point of view, lobby groups act as ‘service bureaus’ to their policy making friends (Bauer et al. 1963: 353; see also e.g. Baumgartner et al. 2009; Bolton and Nash 2010; Denzau and Munger 1986; Hall and Deardorff 2006; Richards and

\textsuperscript{2}for an exception, see Gullberg 2008a;b.
Austen-Smith and Wright (1992; 1994) take yet another approach. Although the authors argue that interest groups in principle lobby their opponents, organised interests may be forced to lobby their allies so as to counteract the lobbying activities of competing interest groups. All else equal, however, interest groups should focus on lobbying their opponents. In particular in cases of binary decisions such as simple yes/no votes, the aim of lobbying is to increase the size of the supportive coalition, for which it is necessary to address opponents rather than friends who already are in the supportive coalition (Austen-Smith and Wright 1994; Gullberg 2008a; Hojnacki and Kimball 1998). On the other hand, it is also most difficult and costly to persuade an opponent, and success much less certain, which is why it may be unwise to spend limited resources on opponents (Hojnacki and Kimball 1999: 1001).

The argument for lobbying opposing decision makers holds especially for votes, where it is important to have a large number of decision makers cast their votes for the option the lobby group prefers. In international negotiations, however, decisions are reached by consensus, not by vote. This procedure hence resembles early stages in national policy making, where discussions aim at defining and framing issues, setting the agenda, and changing the content of proposed legislation. Under these circumstances, it is more important to influence that discussion, rather than expand the size of the supportive coalition. If that is a lobby group’s policy objective, it seems more advisable to target friendly legislators when providing arguments, issue interpretations, and information that make the strongest case for the interest group’s position (see Baumgartner and Leech 1998; Hojnacki and Kimball 1998).

Empirical evidence supports arguments for lobbying allies rather than opponents. The literature focused on the US Congress mainly agrees that interest groups accord higher priority to lobbying allies than opponents (e.g. Hojnacki and Kimball 1998). These results were confirmed in the context of environmental governance. At the European level, Gullberg (2008a) finds that NGOs lobby mostly their friends, although especially business groups seem to extend their efforts to foes as well (see also Gullberg 2008b). In the same vein, Richards and Heard (2005: 32) note the importance of identifying ‘friendly’ politicians and decision-makers in their study of environmental NGOs active in European marine protection.

2.2 Strong or Weak?

Beyond classifying decision makers according to their policy position relative to those of the interest group, they may also be rated as strong or weak according to their power position in the decision making process. Again, arguments can be made for both types of decision
makers, the strong and the weak.

Theoretically, each decision maker, both at the domestic and international level, is equally important, nationally because of the one-man-one-vote principle, internationally due to the principle of consensus. In practice, however, some decision makers matter more than others and these influential decision makers are attractive targets for lobby groups. Several studies confirm that interest groups are more likely to lobby influential decision makers. Hojnacki and Kimball (1998; 1999) find that lobby groups in Washington prioritise legislators that lead committees or are member of sub-committees. According to Marshall (2010), interest groups in the European Union similarly prefer to lobby influential members of the European Parliament, mainly those with leadership positions in party groups or committees.

Although influential legislators thus seem attractive targets for lobby groups, some authors have argued for lobbying small and middle powers, as these are supposedly more susceptible to lobbying. In their review of international negotiations to ban cluster munitions, Bolton and Nash (2010) find evidence to support their argument that middle powers—relatively wealthy but small to medium-sized states—lack the capacity to coerce, and hence traditionally rely on ‘soft power’ that is, persuasion and attraction, as well as international law and international institutions to advance their interests. These characteristics make middle powers attractive for civil society actors, so that they have formed ‘high-impact partnerships’ (Bolton and Nash 2010: 174). Risse (2007) puts forward a similar argument. NGOs can augment the influence of smaller states by providing knowledge and information. Small states often lack negotiating capacity due to their limited human and financial resources and hence depend to a greater extent on external support—which often comes from non-state actors (e.g. Chasek 2001; Yamin and Depledge 2004).

3 Theory: The Logics of Responsiveness and Influence

What drives lobbying success at the international level from a theoretical perspective? For an interest group’s lobbying to be successful, that is, for its activities to have an impact on the negotiation process and ultimately its outcome, two factors play a role. First, the targeted delegation needs to respond to the interest group input, such that it brings the group’s ideas and interests into the negotiations. Yet, in multilateral decision making, it is not enough to have one or a few targeted actors bring in ideas and information into the debate. It is also the remaining, non-targeted, delegations that need subsequently to support the position of the targeted delegation(s) such that the final negotiation outcome reflects the interest group’s preferences. There are thus two dimensions to lobbying: Interest groups
need to ensure that their preferences are brought to the negotiation table through individual
delegations, but for the final outcome to reflect their preferences, they also need to ensure
that non-targeted actors react to the targeted negotiator(s).

Given this process, interest groups have two pathways for deciding whom to lobby. They
can focus on responsive targets that are likely to bring interest group input to the table; or
they can focus on influential targets, whose voice is heard at the negotiation table.

According to a responsiveness logic, the key determinant for choosing an appropriate
lobbying target is whether that target is a priori susceptible to lobbying by the interest group.
From this perspective, lobbying is targeted at delegations contingent on their likelihood
to respond (positively) to interest group input. A delegation’s responsiveness to lobbying
by a specific group presumably hinges on two factors. First, the delegation’s preferences
relative to those of the interest group play an important role. If a delegation advocates
positions similar to those of the interest group, it should be more open to information by
that group since this delegation can then use the information to play a more active role
in the negotiations. Second, democratic countries can be expected to be more willing to
engage with non-governmental actors. Civil society plays an important role in democratic
decision making, including for decisions taken at the international level. Since policy makers
in democracies depend on voter approval, they are sensitive to pressure from interest groups
that (at least claim to) represent voter preferences (see Keck and Sikkink 1998). These
considerations can be summarised in the following hypotheses:

**H1a** All else equal, an interest group is more likely to lobby delegations that represent
position similar to those of the interest group.

**H1b** An interest group is more likely to lobby delegations that represents a democratic
country.

In contrast, an influence logic suggests that interest groups choose targets whose voice
matters. When an influential decision maker prefers a certain policy position, it is likely that
the negotiation outcome reflects their preference. Hence, if the interest group’s preferences
are taken up by a targeted influential delegation, the likelihood that these preferences make
it into the final outcome is high. Interest groups should thus seek out influential delegations.
But which delegations are influential? First, negotiation theory suggests that countries vary
in (issue-specific) power resources. More powerful countries have more opportunities to
influence the content and fate of proposed text. Countries with considerable political and
economic resources tend to be included in consultations and final deal-making (see Yamin
and Depledge 2004: 457; Depledge 2005: 124ff), and further have the means to exert pressure
on other countries into supporting an agreement. In addition, the support of countries with
issue-specific resources is required for the successful implementation of an agreement. In the climate change negotiations, for example, large greenhouse gas emitters can contribute most to solving the problem, whereas without their support, an agreement is unlikely to be effective.

Second, delegations can also use their positions within the negotiation structure to exert influence. Substantive negotiations typically take place in smaller bodies such as committees or working groups. Decision makers presiding over these negotiations are responsible for drawing up the agenda of the respective body, for organising the debate, as well as for presenting substantive proposals and forging agreement on these proposals (Depledge 2005: 41ff). Presiding officers thus have some leeway when writing joint text and may use their role as a basis for exercising influence (see Depledge 2005; Lang 1989). Similarly, leaders of negotiation coalitions such as the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) or the group of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) have more opportunities to shape decision making. Leaders of such sub-groups are, just as chairs of working bodies, responsible for structuring internal debates within the sub-group and crafting joint positions. Furthermore, coalition chairs are more likely to be involved in case of consultations in small groups such as the so-called ‘Friends of the Chair’ (see Depledge 2005; Yamin and Depledge 2004; see also Hojnacki and Kimball 1998; 1999). Delegations that hold such positions should thus be particularly attractive lobbying targets for interest groups:

**H2a** An interest group is more likely to lobby a delegation the stronger the bargaining power of the country the delegation represents.

**H2b** All else equal, an interest group is more likely to lobby delegations that chair meetings or coalitions.

Finally, the two factors, responsiveness and influence, are not necessarily independent. Delegations may be influential in the negotiations as well as responsive to lobbying by an interest group. Put differently, groups may have weak friends as well as strong friends. Clearly, strong friends should be more attractive for interest groups than weak friends. I therefore expect an interaction effect between responsiveness and influence: The effect of a delegation’s responsiveness on the probability of it being lobbied should be conditional on the delegation’s influence on the negotiations.

**H3** An interest group’s probability of lobbying a responsive delegation should—*ceteris paribus*—be higher the more influence that delegation has in the negotiations.

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3 This argumentation applies to the domestic as well as the international level. For readability, I will focus on the international level.
4 Data and Method

In order to test the expectations lined out above, I use data from a survey among accredited observer organisations in the international climate change negotiations. The questionnaire asks participants about their activities at the yearly climate summits, the Conference of the Parties (COP). The survey was sent to all accredited observer organisations in May and November 2011; 123 fully completed questionnaires were obtained and are used for the analysis in this paper.

The questionnaire asks respondents to specify with which governments, if any, their organisation had contacts during the last UNFCCC COP their organisation attended, as well as during the year preceding that COP. Based on this question, I can construct a dataset with the respondent-country pair as the unit of analysis. The dependent variable is then a simple dummy variable that takes a value of 1 if country \( j \) was mentioned as contacted by organisation \( i \) at the last COP or the preceding year, and 0 otherwise.

In order to measure the similarity of positions between respondents and countries, I ask respondents which of the major negotiation groups have positions similar to those of their organisation. The variable similar position accordingly is a binary variable that takes a value of 1 if country \( j \) is in any coalition mentioned as having similar positions to those of organisation \( i \). To measure countries’ democratic status, I use data from Cheibub et al. (2009) and Freedom House as reported in the Quality of Government Dataset (Teorell et al. 2011).

To obtain information on the bargaining power of countries, I use countries’ per capita gross domestic product (GDP), as well as greenhouse gas emissions for issue-specific power resources. Economic data is from the World Bank’s World Development Indicators and the International Monetary Fund’s World Economic Outlook Database. Data on carbon dioxide (\( \text{CO}_2 \)) emissions is from the World Bank and the United States Energy Information Administration. To capture whether a country presides over of a negotiation body or coalition, I include a dichotomous variable, chair, that takes a value of 1 if a country is

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4 Universities were excluded from the sample based on the assumption that they mainly attend negotiation sessions for research purposes and not for lobbying.
5 The negotiation groups in the questionnaire include the African Group; the Alliance of Small Island States; the Bolivarian Alliance of the Peoples of our Americas (ALBA); the Central Asia, Caucasus, Albania and Moldova group (CACAM); the Coalition of Rainforest Nations; the Environmental Integrity Group (EIG); the European Union; the Least Developed Countries (LDCs); the oil producing and exporting countries (OPEC); and the Umbrella Group. Respondents could also specify other groups or single countries.
6 For yearly data, I use the year in which the COP that the respondent indicated as the last that their organisation took place. In case no data is available for that year, I use data from the closest available year.
president of the COP; chair of one of the two subsidiary bodies of the Convention; rapporteur or member of the COP bureau; or president of one of the main coalitions. Data on the chairmanships of the UNFCCC subsidiary bodies was retrieved from the official UNFCCC COP reports.\(^9\) While the Group of 77, the European Union, and the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) provide a list of all coalition chairs on their websites,\(^10\) the COP reports were used to obtain that information for the group of Least Developed Countries and the African Group.\(^11\)

The questionnaire also asks where the organisation has its headquarters, as well as additional offices, if any. This allows me to control for geographical presence, as organisations may simply extend contacts and lobbying efforts from the national to the international level. I also include an organisation’s experience with the negotiations, as well as the number of representatives attending the COP as control variables, as more experienced and large groups should be able to interact with more delegations. Finally, I also ask respondents directly which factors play a role in the decision to contact a specific delegation: similarity of positions, the delegation’s influence, whether it chairs meetings or coalitions, personal acquaintance with delegates, and whether the organisation is from the country in question. With this item, I am able to cross-check results obtained in the regression analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>contact* position*</th>
<th>similar FH status</th>
<th>chair* status</th>
<th>GDP/cap (1000 USD)</th>
<th>CO₂ presence* (mio mt)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mean</td>
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<td>1.80</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>11.40</td>
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<td>0.28</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.06</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>122.27</td>
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</table>

* Variables marked with an asterisk are dichotomous.

Table 1: descriptive statistics (N = 26618)

5 Preliminary Results

Before testing the above hypothesis, I graph in figure 1 with which countries respondents reported to have had most contacts, either during the last climate summit their organisation attended, or the year prior to that summit. At first glance, it seems likely that power and being COP president play a role. The United States and the European Union are named

\(^9\)The reports are available from the UNFCCC website at http://unfccc.int/documentation/documents/items/3595.php.


\(^11\)The report lists the countries delivering group statements, which are usually the coalition chairs. No information on presidencies could be found for some coalitions, notably for the Umbrella Group and OPEC.
most frequently, followed by several large and powerful countries like the United Kingdom, Germany, Canada and Australia, as well as the presidents of the past climate summits, Mexico and South Africa. Further down the ranking, however, there are also a number of more unexpected countries, such as Indonesia, Congo (Kinshasa), or Finland.

To test more systematically which factors explain NGOs’ choice of lobbying targets, I use logistic regression, given that the dependent variable is a binary variable. Model (1) combines the measures for responsiveness—similarity of positions and a country’s level of democracy—with the measures for influence—whether a country chairs a coalition or meeting, its economic power and its greenhouse gas emissions—as well as an interaction term. Model (2) replaces the dichotomous variable for chairmanship with the COP presidency. Model (3) controls for whether an organisation is present in the country it contacts, as well as for characteristics of the organisation, namely its delegation size and its experience with the UNFCCC process (both logged).

The results first show that, overall, organisations report only few contacts with government delegations in the questionnaire. The average respondent contacted 3.3 country delegations at the last UNFCCC COP they attended, and had 2.7 country contacts during the preceding year, mostly with the same countries. With 196 parties and observer states, then, the probability for any country to be lobbied by one of the responding organisations is just below 2 percent. As table 2 shows, however, the odds of being lobbied increase significantly with the degree of responsiveness and influence.

12In order to avoid highly correlated predictors, I use GDP per capita to measure a country’s economic performance, and its overall greenhouse gas emissions to measure its issue-specific bargaining power. For a complete correlation matrix, see figure 3 in the appendix.
**Table 2: Estimation results for logistic regression.**

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<td>dependent variable: contact with gov. delegation</td>
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<tr>
<td>responsiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>simpos</td>
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<td>1.235</td>
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<td>1.354***</td>
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<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
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<td>(0.23)</td>
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<td>6.665***</td>
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<td>1.000***</td>
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<td>0.003***</td>
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Exponentiated coefficients (odds ratio) and standard errors in parentheses. N=26618.

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

The more democratic, the more likely a country is contacted by observer organisations. All else equal, a change from not free to partly free, or a change from partly free to free according to the Freedom House rating, is associated with an increase in the odds of being lobbied by about 1.4; the odds of being contacted for a delegation from a free country is almost double those of a delegation from a country rated as not free (not reported). As hypothesis 1b predicted, NGOs tend to target their advocacy efforts at democracies, rather than autocracies.

Whether a country has similar positions to those of the NGO, on the other hand, does not seem to play such an important role per se, contrary to hypothesis 1a. The odds increase for ‘friends’ with similar positions, but the main effect is not significant.

What about influence? The data suggest that governments with both general and issue-specific bargaining power are attractive lobbying targets. The odds of being lobbied increases with per capita GDP and the overall level of CO₂ emissions. Although relatively small in size (odds ratio of 1.01 for per capita GDP and 1.0003 for CO₂ emissions), the effect of bargaining power is significant. The effect of CO₂ emissions increases slightly and remains
significant when rerunning the model without the world’s three largest emitters—China, the United States, and the European Union—that each emit over two billion megaton CO₂ per year (not reported). Observer organisations, as predicted in hypothesis 2a, primarily contact delegations from rich countries, as well as those that represent large greenhouse gas emitters.

In contrast, delegations chairing a coalition or a UNFCCC subsidiary body are not a priori attractive lobbying targets. The delegation that hosts or presides over the entire COP, however, is a very attractive target. Although a dummy variable for chairmanship is significant, the effect is driven by the the COP presidency. For the COP president, the odds of being lobbied is about six to seven times greater than for other countries, which indicates the considerable leverage that the president has over the negotiation process. I find thus only partial support for my expectation that the probability of lobbying depends on delegations’ chairing meetings or coalitions (hypothesis 2b).

There is no robust evidence for a significant interaction effect, against my expectations (hypothesis 3). The effect of greenhouse gas emissions is higher for ‘friends’, delegations that represent similar positions, as compared to ‘foes’ that are not seen as representing similar positions, yet this difference is significant only for large emitters (see figure 2). When the three largest emitters—China, the United States, and the European Union—are excluded, the interaction term is no longer significant. Similarly, when interacting the similarity of position with per capita GDP, I find no significant effect of that interaction term.

![Figure 2: probability difference between ‘friends’ (with similar positions) and ‘foes’. Co-variates at their median (dichotomous variables) or mean (continuous variables).](image)

In terms of effect size, the control variable presence has the largest effect on NGOs’
decision to approach a government delegation. Interest groups target their advocacy efforts at countries in which they are active. If an observer organisation has its headquarters or a subsidiary office in a country, the odds of being lobbied for that country increases about tenfold. The international level hence seems to be first and foremost an extension of the national sphere.

Finally, NGO characteristics also have an impact on the organisation’s advocacy behaviour. The more delegates an observer organisation sends to a negotiation session, the more country delegation it can contact. Therefore, the odds of being lobbied increases with more representatives, yet this effect diminishes as the delegation size increases. A similar effect holds for experience. The longer an organisation has been involved in the negotiations, the more contacts with government delegation the organisation reports, yet again, the effect decreases as experience increases.

A similar picture emerges when respondents are directly asked for factors that play a role when their organisation decides to approach a specific delegation. As can be seen from figure 3, interest groups tend to contact delegates that they know personally. For over 70 percent of respondents, personal acquaintance is very important or important. It is thus not surprising that NGOs interact with delegations from the country in which their organisation is active. About as important as presence is how influential a country is. NGOs address delegations that are thought to have a lot of influence—two thirds of the respondents rank influence as very important or important for their organisation’s advocacy. In contrast, whether a delegation is chairing negotiation meetings or coalitions, or whether a delegation represents positions similar to those of the organisation are not as important. Just under

![Figure 3: Importance of different factors for lobbying (relative frequency per category.)](image-url)
or over (chairmanship) half of the respondents perceive these factors to be very important or important. Respondents could also specify additional factors that they take into consideration when approaching delegations. Here, respondents referred to delegations’ ‘willingness to communicate with environmental NGOs’; their having opposite positions; and their taking ‘a popular (negative or positive) stand in the negotiations’.

6 Discussion and Conclusion

With limited resources at their disposal, interest groups need to be selective in their advocacy. In order to maximise their impact, lobby groups should strategically seek out government delegations among the almost 200 parties and observer states that participate in international climate change negotiations. Two ‘logics’ for deciding whom to lobby are theoretically plausible. On the one hand, interest groups may aim at responsive countries that are likely to take up the lobbyist’s arguments and information. On the other hand, they may rather seek out influential delegations whose voice is heard at the negotiation table.

So whom do observer organisations lobby in international climate negotiations? When testing the two logics empirically, the results suggest that both factors—responsiveness and influence—matter. Most importantly, interest groups seem to simply extend their domestic activities to the international level by primarily addressing their home countries, countries in which they have their headquarters or a subsidiary office. But interest groups also contact delegations that are responsive, because they are democratic; as well as countries that are powerful in the negotiations, because of their economic power and/or their being large greenhouse gas emitters. Finally, the COP presidency seems to provide the host country with a lot of leverage over the negotiation process—which is why many observer organisations seek contacts with the COP president. Interestingly, however, I find no robust evidence that a country’s position relative to that of an observer organisation has an effect on the organisation’s advocacy behaviour. In part, this may be a result of the data structure, as I asked for the (perceived) similarity of positions at the level of the country coalition, while the regression models build on the NGO-country level as the unit of analysis. On the other hand, with so many items on the climate change agenda, it is presumably difficult to identify clear positions, and ‘friends’ in one area may become ‘foes’ with regard to other agenda items.

In sum, it appears that interest groups do strategically target their lobbying efforts, yet there is no single logic at play for choosing appropriate targets. Such a diversification of efforts appears rational. Rather than putting all eggs in one basket, interest group talk to delegations that are likely to listen to them, but also to delegations that will be listened to.
References


### Appendix

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Table 3: correlation matrix