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Article — Published Version

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Regulation & Governance

Provided in Cooperation with:

John Wiley & Sons

Suggested Citation: Jankauskas, Vytautas; Knill, Christoph; Bayerlein, Louisa (2023) : More control-less agency slack? Principal control and the risk of agency slack in international organizations, Regulation & Governance, ISSN 330, John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd, Melbourne, Vol. 18, Iss. 4, pp. 1171-1192,
<https://doi.org/10.1111/rego.12525>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/306094>

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More control–less agency slack? Principal control and the risk of agency slack in international organizations

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Abstract

Principal-agent theorizing is based on the idea of a linear inverse relationship between principal control and agency slack: the higher the control over the agent, the less likely is the agent to slack. In this paper, we challenge this assumption by explicitly taking the varying nature of agents into account. While control may reduce the agent's room for maneuver, it does not explain the extent to which different agents are inclined to put efforts in circumventing these obstacles. Focusing on international organizations (IOs), we measure member states' as principals' control over IO administrations as their agents as well as the latter's intrinsic propensity to slack across eight major IOs. The analysis shows that low control by the principal is not necessarily associated with run-away agents, whereas high control is not necessarily associated with servant-like agents. The assumed control–slack relationship can thus be distorted and determining an ideal level of control is not possible without considering the agent's entrepreneurialism.

Keywords: agency slack, control, international organization, international public administration, principal-agent theory.

1. Introduction

Over the past decades, the principal-agent (PA) framework has evolved as one of the main analytical tools to study international organizations (IOs) and global governance. Member states as principals delegate authority to IO administrations as their agents to achieve delegation benefits such as efficiency, credibility, or legitimacy (Hawkins et al., 2006a: 13–20). However, agents are assumed to develop diverging interests and so the key concern for PA literature is how to ensure agents' faithfulness toward their principals and reduce the risk of agency slack, that is, an “independent action [from the agent] that is undesired by the principal” (Hawkins et al., 2006a: 8).

So far, the conventional explanation for this key delegation conundrum is based on the assumed linear inverse relationship between principal control and the risk of agency slack: the higher the control over the agent, the less likely the agent should be to slack (Abbott et al., 2016; Conceição-Heldt, 2013; Hawkins et al., 2006b; Heldt, 2017; Kassim & Menon, 2003; Kiewiet & McCubbins, 1991; Nielson & Tierney, 2003; Sobol, 2016). Of course, member states also need to consider the costs of control itself, but the general assumption is that agents as self-serving actors will slack if not properly controlled.

In this paper, we challenge this core PA assumption arguing that it should not always hold, because the intrinsic nature of the agent and how it actually behaves may vary despite formal characteristics of the delegation contract. While control may reduce the agent's room for maneuver, it does not explain the extent to which different agents are inclined to put efforts in circumventing these obstacles. There is thus a missing element in

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Accepted for publication 7 April 2023.

conventional PA theorizing, and it relates to the oftentimes neglected varying nature of the agent. Indeed, PA theory is known of its predominant focus on the principal side of the relationship (Tamm & Snidal, 2014: 138).

Hence, we test the assumed inverse relationship between control and the risk of agency slack empirically, focusing on international public administrations (IPAs)—IO secretariats—as agents and IO member states as their (collective) principals. Drawing on primary IO documents and original interview data, we conduct a congruence analysis measuring both member states' control and IPAs' risk of agency slack across eight major IOs. To provide a more in-depth picture of our measurement, we zoom into four cases displaying variation, focusing on the IMF, NATO, ILO, and UNHCR administrations. For one, our findings show that IPAs display pronounced differences in their risk of agency slack as indicated by the prevalence of behavioral routines in these organizations. While some IO administrations develop highly entrepreneurial routines demonstrating high risk to slack, others remain servant-like—regardless of the formal principal control under which they operate. Importantly, we thus find that the observed risks of agency slack are not always congruent with the expected levels of member states' control over these administrations.

These findings make a threefold contribution. *Theoretically*, the paper scrutinizes PA theory showing that the assumed inverse relationship between the level of principal control and the risk of agency slack can be distorted. Differently put, the risk of agency slack is not a mere by-product of (missing) principal control but is also related to the intrinsic nature of the agent. Two implications stand out from our findings. First, not all agents demonstrate high risk of agency slack if not harshly controlled. Second, control does not always automatically constrain the agent's behavior reducing its propensity to slack. This way, the article calls to put more focus on the agent side of the delegation relationship and contributes to existing accounts scrutinizing agents' and IPAs' characteristics (see Barnett & Finnemore, 1999, 2004; Bauer et al., 2017; Chwioroth, 2008; Ege, 2020; Hawkins & Jacoby, 2006; Jankauskas, 2022). It also offers venues for future research which seeks to determine adequate levels of institutional control in (international) organizations (Abbott et al., 2020; Long & Sitkin, 2018; Stone, 2011).

Conceptually, the paper introduces a novel way to grasp the risk of agency slack by looking at the agent's behavioral routines. In contrast to existing accounts focusing on what an IPA could do given the formal structure, we go a step further by looking at how the IPA actually behaves beyond the formal constraints. To capture these agent's behavioral dispositions, we focus on organizational routines guiding IPAs' behavior, that is, informal and collectively internalized practices and processes characterizing the way an IPA engages in IO policymaking (Bayerlein et al., 2020; Knill, 2001; Knill et al., 2019; Mintrom & Norman, 2009). In this regard, IPAs can display a more or less pronounced entrepreneurial orientation. As we later discuss, the more entrepreneurial an IPA is, the higher the risk it will engage in a behavior that might be unwanted by member states.

Empirically, we offer two separate original measures of both the extent of member states' control and IPAs' risk of agency slack across eight major IOs. Especially the latter lacks comparative empirical evidence in IO research. The additional in-depth analysis reveals puzzling cases for PA theory, pointing to the IMF where high risk of agency slack exists despite high levels of control as well as NATO where low risk of agency slack prevails despite low levels of control.

In the following, we first revisit the core of PA theory and the assumed inverse relationship between principal control and the risk of agency slack (Section 2). In Sections 3 and 4, we outline our measurement concepts and operationalization for both concepts putting our theoretical challenge of the PA assumptions to an empirical plausibility probe (Section 5). The findings are discussed and concluded in Section 6.

2. Principal control and the risk of agency slack in delegation relationships

Delegation is defined as “a conditional grant of authority from a *principal* to an *agent* that empowers the latter to act on behalf of the former” (Hawkins et al., 2006a: 7). The resulting relationship structure is characterized by power and information asymmetries. While the ultimate power remains with the principal who can rescind the agent's authority, the expert knowledge favors the agent.

Essentially, PA theory assumes interest divergence between the principal and the agent, the latter assumed to be a self-interested utility maximizing actor. Although Hawkins et al. (2006a: 7) argue that PA theory “does not imply any particular assumptions about the preferences of the actors,” the authors at the same time assume that these preferences diverge, so there is a “natural and perhaps inevitable conflict of interest between the parties”

(Hawkins et al., 2006a: 24; see also Kiewiet & McCubbins, 1991: 24). Cortell and Peterson (2006: 256) also conclude that “PA approaches generally take agents’ preferences as given and assume they will conflict with those of principals.” Indeed, if there was no preference divergence, PA models would “lose their power” (Miller, 2005: 205).

This divergence creates incentives for the agent to pursue its own agenda and slack, that is, engage in an “independent action [...] that is undesired by the principal” (Hawkins et al., 2006a: 8). At the same time, the embedded information asymmetry creates opportunities for the agent to slack (Kiewiet & McCubbins, 1991). Hence, the risk of agency slack is assumed to be structurally inherent to all PA relationships.

The key concern of the principal, then, is how to minimize the risk of agency slack. In this regard, PA theory assumes that the main instrument for the principal is to establish control tools. Control is defined as mechanisms used by the principal to observe the agent’s behavior and direct it toward the principal’s interests (Kiewiet & McCubbins, 1991; Miller, 2005). These mechanisms are supposed to reduce the agent’s autonomy and thus “the range of potential independent action available to an agent” (Hawkins et al., 2006a: 8). The central goal of PA theory has therefore been to clarify “how particular institutional forms can be used to increase the likelihood of compliant behaviour by bureaucrats” (Huber & Shipan, 2002: 27), and, conversely, “minimize actual [agency] losses through control mechanisms designed into the P-A contract” (Hawkins & Jacoby, 2006: 226). As Hawkins et al. (2006a: 31) put it, “the principals can always reduce slack by tightening oversight.” Or in more relative terms, “the more closely the principal monitors the agent’s behaviour [...] – the lower the risk of agency slack” (Abbott et al., 2016: 723; Kassim & Menon, 2003; Lake & McCubbins, 2006). In theory, there should thus be a linear inverse relationship between control and the risk of agency slack: the tighter the former, the lower the latter (Fig. 1).

Given that agency slack is seen as a direct function of principal control, it is hardly surprising that much scholarship on IO delegation puts its predominant focus on the principal’s side of the relationship (Tamm & Snidal, 2014: 138). Yet, taking agents and their potentially varying nature seriously has profound consequences. First, it challenges the assumption that agents will slack if only given the opportunity to do so. From a conventional perspective on delegation, the extent to which a given agent might develop and act upon diverging preferences is a constant that is seldomly explicitly theorized. If agents’ intrinsic slack propensity varies, however, a loosely controlled agent does not necessarily need to slack, while a tightly controlled agent may not automatically become “a perfect handmaiden” (Cortell & Peterson, 2006). Second, even when controlled similarly tightly, agents may vary in whether and to what extent they try to work around their principals’ rules.

Indeed, while formal control arrangements are primarily explained against the background of principals’ preferences, institutional path-dependencies, and functionalist reasoning (Hawkins et al., 2006a; Koremenos et al., 2001), the risk of agency slack relates to agents themselves, that is, their intrinsic propensity to engage in slacking behavior. As we argue in the following section, such slack propensity is rooted in agents’ behavioral routines which develop over time depending on factors like common professional beliefs and normative orientations of organizational staff (*esprit de corps*) as well as administrative perceptions of external challenges related to organizational fields or political threats (Bayerlein et al., 2020; Knill et al., 2019).

In this regard, a number of studies have purposefully drawn attention to agents’ characteristics (see, for instance, Barnett & Finnemore, 1999, 2004; Elsig, 2011). Nascent IPA research has shown that—over time—IO administrations develop a life of their own beyond the IO’s delegation contract and controls that bind them

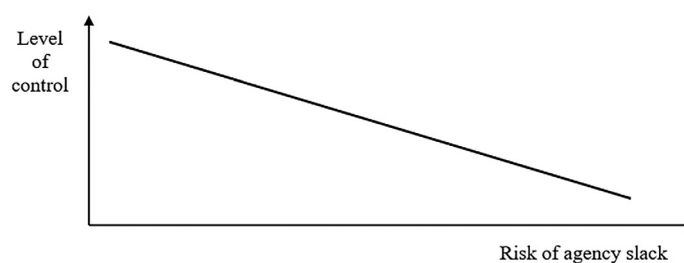


Figure 1 Assumed inverse relationship between the risk of agency slack and control according to principal-agent theory.

(Bauer et al., 2017; Chwioroth, 2008; Eckhard & Ege, 2016; Ege, 2020; Knill et al., 2019). While these studies clearly speak against a principal- or state-centric perspective when studying IOs, a comprehensive empirical test of the core P-A assumption regarding slack–control relationship is still needed. After all, if we accept the argument that we cannot deduce the risk of agency slack from control alone, the implication is that the inverse relationship between the level of control and agents' slack propensity should be tested rather than taken as given. In the sections to come, we investigate these issues empirically.

3. Conceptualizing and operationalizing the risk of agency slack

Grasping the risk of agency slack conceptually is not an easy feat. Especially if we do not want to treat it as a mere by-product of (missing) control. To determine the risk of agency slack, we must turn our attention to the agents themselves. Agency slack as such, that is, agents' actions undesired by the principal, can only be observed after the fact (Conceição-Heldt, 2013; Heldt et al., 2022). From the outside, we can only know for sure whether an agent slacked after observing whether there has been a policy output that the principal did not desire (see, e.g., Cortell & Peterson, 2006). Additionally, there is the problem of observational equivalence (Dür & Elsig, 2011). When looking not at the outputs as such but whether the agent's behavior had repercussions, we cannot say for sure if control and sanctioning mechanisms were not triggered because the agent slacked “smartly” or because the anticipation of sanctions prevented slacking (Delreux & Adriaensen, 2017). Also, to capture agency slack empirically or conceptually, the researcher would need to infer the (collective) principal's specific preferences—as well as the agent's—in order to determine how much of a gap there is between them. This, in turn, would depend on case-by-case preference measures for separate policy issues. Therefore, in PA theorizing (and for our purposes here) the focus is on the risk of agency slack, that is, the likelihood that an agent will deviate from the member states' instructions.

Following studies that disentangled IOs highlighting their bureaucracies as the actual agents (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999, 2004; Biermann & Siebenhüner, 2009; Chorev, 2012; Chwioroth, 2008), we focus on prevalent behavioral routines of IO administrations to capture their propensity to slack. Influenced by their organizational environment and functional pressures, IPAs establish sticky informal working routines through socialization.¹ Yet, stickiness does not mean that administrative routines are static features of an organization. Stickiness does not completely exclude the possibility of change. We rather assume that changes in organizational routines are less likely than for less institutionalized features of an organization, and only unfold over longer periods of time.

Variation in organizational routines implies that some IPAs regularly push for their own agenda, while others willingly follow member states' commands and orientate toward mandate implementation (Bayerlein et al., 2020; Biermann & Siebenhüner, 2009; Jankauskas, 2022; Knill et al., 2019). Such behavioral routines, or administrative styles (Knill, 2001; Knill et al., 2019: 85–86), can be defined as “an institutionalized informal *modus operandi* that materializes as a guiding principle over time and by repetitions, routinization, and subsequent internalization.” This relates to a wider notion of “organizational culture” but is different from the basic macro-level understanding of historically emerged administrative systems (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999, 2004; Chwioroth, 2010) or roles and behaviors of IPA individuals at the micro-level (Yi-chong & Weller, 2008). Conceived of as standard informal operating procedures, administrative styles refer to the lesser explored meso-level of behavioral routines.² These informal patterns capture what makes public administrations “tick” when it comes to their role in initiating, formulating, and implementing the policies of their respective IOs.

Such behavioral patterns “correspond to an ideal typical characterization of IPAs' ‘styles’ as entrepreneurial or servant-like” (Knill et al., 2019: 85). In general, IPA behavior can be shaped primarily by the goal of fulfilling their principals' wishes and needs (prevalence of servant routines) or reflect more entrepreneurial orientations toward developing and pursuing own bureaucratic interests to strengthen institutional consolidation and enhance policy effectiveness (prevalence of entrepreneurial routines).³ Accordingly, the extent to which an IPA displays more or less entrepreneurial orientations has strong implications for its likelihood to engage in agency slack. While a less entrepreneurial, servant-like IPA can be generally expected to routinely align its behavior with the preferences of the principal even in the absence of tight control, a more entrepreneurial IPA is more likely to follow its own interests and work around even tight political oversight.⁴

Yet, one might argue that the risk of agency slack cannot be judged by merely looking at behavioral routines of the agent, but in addition has to take into account the degree of autonomy given to the agents by design (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004). If an IPA is designed as being entrepreneurial from outset, as it is the case for the EU Commission, for instance (Knill et al., 2016), entrepreneurial routines should hence hardly come with agency slack. Yet, apart from the fact that the supranational EU Commission is fundamentally different from conventional IPAs, the mere presence of entrepreneurial orientations comes with a generally higher risk for agency slack, even if increases of highly autonomous IPAs. In other words, the more entrepreneurial routines are dominant, the higher is the probability that IPA behavior differs from the principals' intentions.

Approaching the risk of agency slack via IPAs' entrepreneurial routines has several benefits. It does not capture actual agency slack as a *fait accompli* but looks at the propensity for such outputs to emerge out of IPAs' day-to-day work. Thereby, it grasps IPAs' behavior beyond their structural features and institutional characteristics, such as mandates and control. It does not discriminate between different issues the IPA works on and case-specific principal or agent preferences (which hinders comparative empirical research) but considers general IPA working procedures throughout the cycles of typical IO policymaking. It does not assess preference divergence or IOs' outputs as such, but the basis for "own bureaucratic" goals to be formed and routinely pursued. We can thus capture *how* IPAs fulfill their tasks as opposed to (and in relation to) their mandate which specifies *what* they are asked to do. As noted above, such entrepreneurial routines emerge over long time periods and—once established—tend to be highly sticky. IPAs' entrepreneurialism is thus not determined by the initial mandate and a set-up of an IO, but it is developed independently as an IPA's "life of its own." This allows us to measure IPAs' entrepreneurialism and hence the risk of agency slack separately and then compare its levels with the extent of control.

In measuring the level of IPAs' entrepreneurial behavior, we draw on six indicators (Table 1) which are commonly employed for grasping administrative routines (Kingdon, 1984; Knill et al., 2019; Mintrom & Norman, 2009). These indicators cover core informal administrative routines during all stages of policy-making, that is, policy initiation, drafting, and implementation. Less entrepreneurial, servant-like administrations follow a more passive and reactive role in each of the activities, operating "by the books" and refraining from attempts to intervene with politics beyond their formal mandate. More entrepreneurial administrations, by contrast, develop more active informal routines along the six policy-making activities, thereby increasing the chance of deviation from the formal delegation contract.

First, during policy initiation, the analytical focus typically lies on an administration's efforts to identify and shape new policy problems (*issue emergence*). This relates to the origin of IO policies—while more entrepreneurial IPAs tend to develop own policy items (hence, potentially deviating from the initial delegation contract), in IOs with less ambitious administrations, policies usually emerge from the outside of the IO bureaucracy (top-down). Moreover, IPAs differ in their efforts to understand the principal's preferences during policy initiation phase (*mapping of political space*). As studies on the European Commission demonstrate (see, e.g., Knill

Table 1 Indicators for measuring international public administrations' (IPAs) entrepreneurialism

Indicator for IPA activity	Description
Issue emergence	IPA identifies new policy problems on its own and initiates own (bureaucratic) solutions and procedures
Mapping of political space	IPA uses political facilitation mechanisms to bypass political "red lines" when initiating own policies
Support mobilization	IPA uses mobilization activities to gain support for its policy proposals from political or societal actors
Political anticipation	IPA anticipates member state interests to ensure its policies circumvent political discord during policy drafting
Strategic use of bureaucratic powers	IPA uses its bureaucratic powers in the policy implementation phase to foster or defend bureaucratic interests
Policy promotion	IPA engages in capacity-building and policy promotion of its policy agenda and implementation

et al., 2016), administrations can be highly strategic in dealing with their political principals at a very early stage (e.g., through informal diplomacy). This, in turn, may allow IPAs to formulate policy proposals that favor their preferences yet without crossing political “red lines.” Finally, IPAs vary in their involvement in mobilizing necessary support for their initiatives from other actors (*support mobilization*). More entrepreneurial IPAs tend to build coalitions with relevant stakeholders (e.g., other IOs or NGOs) to increase external support for their policy proposals (Stone, 2008).

Second, during the stage of policy drafting, IPAs vary as to how responsive to member states’ preferences they are (*political anticipation*). In line with functional politicization arguments (see Aberbach et al., 1981), less entrepreneurial administrations tend to avoid politically sensitive issues, formulating policy proposals in a more conservative manner without risking political drawbacks. More entrepreneurial IPAs, by contrast, put more effort in strategic anticipation of member states’ preferences, which allows them to exploit potential interest heterogeneity and frame or re-frame relevant policies accordingly (see Hustedt & Salomonsen, 2014).

Third, IPAs also differ in their behavioral routines during the implementation stage. For one, IO administrations can employ different approaches as to how they use their bureaucratic powers vis-à-vis the member states (*strategic use of bureaucratic powers*). More entrepreneurial administrations may actively use their bureaucratic powers such as sanctioning the member states to defend their bureaucratic interests during policy implementation. Other administrations, on the contrary, may seek to avoid any potential conflicts with their political principals and remain more cautious as to how they interpret and use their delegated authority. Furthermore, IPAs may differ in how actively they promote their policies to build pressure for their implementation (*policy promotion*). Here, more entrepreneurial administrations regularly engage in information dissemination and branding, sometimes even enlisting third-party intermediaries to advocate for their policy targets (see Abbott et al., 2015). More servant-like administrations see less need to actively promote their agenda.

In line with our research interest, the underlying question is thus how active an IPA’s behavioral routines in the described activities are. If an IPA engages in a certain activity on a regular basis, the indicator value is high and coded 1; if its engagement is occasional or uneven across organizational units, the indicator value is medium and coded 0.5; if an IPA’s engagement is rare and passive, the indicator value is low and coded 0. For instance, if an IPA actively interacts with third parties (e.g., NGOs) and uses communicative strategies to mobilize their support for its own proposals, the chance that it will leverage its authority and resources regardless of states’ preferences increases (see Abbott et al., 2015). Accordingly, the indicator “Support Mobilization” would be coded 1. Similarly, if an IPA puts significant efforts in regular identification of new policy problems and then actively initiates its own bureaucratic solutions, the risk of agency slack increases as the IPA is better able to steer the IO agenda toward its own bureaucratic preferences. In such cases, the indicator “Issue Emergence” is coded 1.

Together, the values of six indicators constitute an additive index of IPA entrepreneurialism. While high values reflect entrepreneurial IPA routines which are likely to deviate from the principal’s wishes, low indicator values reflect servant-like agent behavior and thus lower risk of agency slack. The different indicators are treated as equally significant, as we have no prior theoretical knowledge on their exact causal weight. We assume complete substitutability among the indicators as the underlying logic of concept formation (Goertz, 2006). While the substitutability of different dimensions might blur conceptual boundaries, concepts of so-called “family resemblance” have a higher capacity to capture the complexity of political and social reality (Barrenechea & Castillo, 2019). For more details on measurement, see Table A1 in the Appendix.

4. Conceptualizing and operationalizing IPA control

The challenge of conceptualizing and measuring principals’ control over agents has been approached from different angles, yet most studies focused either on a single type of control or conducted case studies without offering a generalizable metric of principal control. Regarding the former, Parízek (2017), for instance, focused specifically on staff nationalities, while Grigorescu (2010) measured bureaucratic oversight. Regarding the latter, Nielson and Tierney (2003) described in detail how member states controlled the World Bank, yet their control assessment remains case-specific.

Against this backdrop, we propose an additive control index which allows for comparison of member states’ control across IOs. Conceptually, scholars usually differentiate between three main types of principal control:

oversight and monitoring, screening and selection, and sanctioning (Conceição-Heldt, 2013; Hawkins et al., 2006b; Heldt, 2017; Kiewiet & McCubbins, 1991; Nielson & Tierney, 2003). To operationalize the extent to which these control types are employed in a given IO, we disaggregate them into distinct control mechanisms (indicators), which may be either specific and *direct* or broader and *indirect*.⁵

First, to measure *direct oversight and monitoring*, we include two indicators which provide for variation across IOs and account for reporting lines. For one, oversight can be conducted through centralized evaluation units, which assess IO performance. These units assess IO performance, highlight both successes and failures and thereby fulfill learning and accountability functions. Evaluation reports are usually discussed by IO management and member states. Research shows that varying reporting lines (to member states vs. IPA) affect the extent to which evaluation function serves member states' control interests (Eckhard & Jankauskas, 2020). Hence, the indicator value is coded 1 if evaluation unit reports directly to member states (as in the IMF), 0.6 in case of dual reporting as in the FAO, or 0.3 when reporting only to the administration head as in the IOM (see also Eckhard & Jankauskas, 2019).⁶ Also, direct oversight can be conducted through advisory oversight units which oversee IOs' general functioning and, similarly to evaluation units, report primarily either to member states (coded 1), both member states and the IPA (coded 0.6), or only the IPA head (coded 0.3).

To measure more *indirect* oversight, we focus on the functioning of IO executive governing bodies which make key policymaking and oversight decisions. The more often they meet and discuss issues with each other and with the IPA, the more careful their attention to IPAs' day-to-day functioning and the more intensive IPAs' reporting to member states as part of these meetings. In this line, we code the frequency of governing body meetings (see Table 2). For instance, if a governing body meets weekly, oversight is higher than if such meetings occur only twice a year (like in the IOM). Since control issues are only one part of such meetings' agenda, we treat the intensity of governing body meetings as more indirect control tool.

Second, to measure *direct screening* efforts in IOs, we code formal member states' involvement in appointing IPA staff. Selection of favorable staff members is a well-established control mechanism in PA literature (Hawkins et al., 2006b). If the head of the organization appoints their team in consultation with member states, control is higher (coded 1) than if the IPA head appoints the team unilaterally (coded 0).

Similar to staff appointment, yet less directly, member states may seek to control IO administration staff using nationality (see Parizek, 2017). For this, member states may seek to install their nationality staff into the administration. If, however, staff nationalities are equally distributed across executive governing body member states, such control potential diminishes. To measure *indirect screening* in IOs, we thus consider the extent to which few member states in executive governing bodies have monopolized nationality ties in IPA staff. In particular, we use the ratio of (professional) staff nationals of five main state donors relative to the total (professional) staff. The higher the percentage, the higher the indirect control over IO staff by the (biggest) member states.

Finally, to measure member states' *direct sanctioning* capabilities, we consider formal obstacles for them to agree on sanctioning the IPA. Generally, in order to sanction the IPA, a collective decision among the membership is needed (e.g., to close an IO's field mission). The easier it is for member states to make such decisions, the better this control tool functions. While consensus-based decisionmaking might be easily hindered by a single state, majority voting simplifies such procedures. Hence, such control is higher in IOs where the voting system in the governing body is weighted (coded 1), because fewer states can make the decision. In contrast, control is coded 0.5 if unweighted majority voting is needed and 0 if voting is consensus-based.

Regarding *indirect sanctioning*, we consider an IPA's financial fragility—the extent to which an IPA is dependent on member states' flexible funding, coded as a ratio of earmarked (unassessed) contributions to the total IO budget. While regular budget cuts are comparatively hard to implement due to the initial delegation contract, earmarked contributions can be easily withdrawn. The more an IPA depends on such contributions, the higher the potential for such sanctioning.

Table 2 summarizes the control indicators. Indicator values range from 0 to 1 and are unweighted to allow comparison across control dimensions.⁷ For further details on operationalization and measurement results, see Tables A2 and A3 in the Appendix.

5. Empirical analysis: Principal control and the risk of agency slack in eight IOs

To probe the plausibility of our argument that principal control and the risk of agency slack are not necessarily inversely related, we measure both principal control and IPAs' entrepreneurialism in eight IOs: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the World Health Organization (WHO). Together, these organizations constitute a sample representative for the population of major IOs; they differ across various categories such as policy fields, staff sizes, or budgets, deemed relevant in comparative IO studies (Bayerlein et al., 2020; Biermann & Siebenhüner, 2009; Hooghe & Marks, 2015) (see Table A4 in the Appendix). In line with the congruence method (Beach & Pedersen, 2016: 269ff; George & Bennett, 2005: 75; Levy, 2008: 6f), we test whether the values of both factors align with the described PA expectations: whether high member state control over the IPA is congruent with low risk of agency slack measured via IPA's entrepreneurialism and vice versa.

In terms of data collection, for the measurement of IPAs' entrepreneurialism, we draw on 131 semi-structured expert interviews, conducted with IO staff in 2016 and 2017. Each interview lasted about 45 minutes, ranging from minimum 11 to maximum 23 interviews per IO from the sample (see Table A5 in the Appendix). Semi-structured interviews followed the list of indicators presented above, were recorded and transcribed. While only officials in IO headquarters were interviewed, different IO departments and three hierarchical levels were covered. Interview partners were asked to describe the IPA's working procedures and routines along the six indicators (see Table A6 in the Appendix for interview questionnaire). In line with the "negotiated agreement approach"

Table 2 Conceptualization and operationalization of control over an international public administration (IPA)

Type of control	Direct	Indirect
Oversight and monitoring	<p><i>Evaluation: existence and reporting line</i></p> <p>1: Head of evaluation reports to member states (MS)</p> <p>0.6: Head of evaluation reports to both MS and the head of IPA</p> <p>0.3: Head of evaluation reports to the head of IPA</p> <p>0: No evaluation unit</p> <p><i>Advisory oversight: existence and reporting line</i></p> <p>1: Head of advisory oversight unit reports to MS</p> <p>0.6: Head of advisory oversight unit reports to both MS and the head of IPA</p> <p>0.3: Head of advisory oversight unit reports to the head of IPA</p> <p>0: No advisory oversight unit</p>	<p><i>Governing body (Executive Board) meetings: intensity</i></p> <p>1: Board meets at least weekly</p> <p>0.6: Not weekly, but at least three times a year</p> <p>0.3: Board meets two times a year</p> <p>0: Board meets once a year</p>
Screening and selection	<p><i>IPA staff appointment: MS' involvement</i></p> <p>1: Head of the IPA appoints his/her team in consultation with MS</p> <p>0: Head of the IPA appoints his/her team unilaterally</p>	<p><i>IPA staff nationality: MS dominance</i></p> <p>Ratio of (professional) staff nationals of five main donor states relative to total (professional) staff, financed by regular budget and other funds</p>
Sanctioning	<p><i>Formal obstacles for sanctioning: voting system in Executive Boards</i></p> <p>1: Weighted voting system</p> <p>0.5: Unweighted majority voting</p> <p>0: Consensus</p>	<p><i>Threat of sanctions: financial fragility</i></p> <p>Ratio of earmarked (unassessed) contributions to total budget</p>

(Campbell et al., 2013: 305), at least two authors then engaged with interview transcripts to make qualitative assessments of the IPA's involvement in respective activities to agree on the indicator values for each IPA⁸ (see Table A1 in the Appendix for coding rules per indicator).

The concept of administrative routines—by definition—conceives of bureaucratic bodies as rather homogeneous units in terms of shared orientations and routines. Yet in many instances, international bureaucracies are exactly the opposite, consisting of different departments, positions, and (field) offices with highly distinctive features. Regarding different positions, we aimed to obtain as much balance as possible by interviewing staffers from three different hierarchical levels in each IO. We also routinely asked for patterns beyond the staffer's own level within the hierarchy and cross-checked answers for consistency.

For the measurement of IPA control, we relied on primary IO documents (e.g., annual reports or staff rules), data from IO websites, and official statistics by the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). Recent data were collected, ranging mostly from 2016 to 2019, depending on document availability. In line with our argument, which for now does not make conjectures about temporal dynamics, the analysis captures the last five years and remains static.

Turning to the descriptive results, Figure 2 presents the empirical findings of IPAs' entrepreneurialism. Low values correspond with less entrepreneurialism and thus lower risk of IPAs' engaging in agency slack, whereas higher values indicate a more entrepreneurial style and thus higher risk for an IPA to slack. In the sample, UNHCR and the IMF demonstrate highest values. Indeed, both organizations actively engage in entrepreneurial activities, despite their structural differences and issue fields. UNEP, FAO, IOM, and WHO take middle positions, whereas NATO and the ILO score significantly lower. The two organizations also differ in their activities and institutional design but were both found to exercise little entrepreneurialism throughout the policy cycle. For detailed measurement results see Table A2 in the Appendix.

Second, Figure 3 presents the varying levels of member states' control across eight IO administrations in descending order. If we compare the results across the IOs, the highest level of control is found in the IMF, where the administration faces strictest direct and indirect control mechanisms. The IOM and ILO also score high on the IPA control index, whereas FAO and WHO are positioned in the middle. Member states' control is lowest for NATO, UNEP, and UNHCR. For detailed measurement results see Table A3 in the Appendix.

Considering the above, to what extent these results support the assumed inverse relationship between principal control and the risk of agency slack? If this PA assumption is correct, we should observe systematic congruence between the level of applied control and IPAs' propensity to engage in slacking behavior. A typical case for an IO bureaucracy according to PA theory would be that of high control and therefore constrained slack propensity or low control and thus high risk of agency slack. We do find such typical cases, namely the ILO, which is controlled relatively tightly and exhibits the lowest values for entrepreneurialism among the IOs, as well as UNHCR, whose control is comparatively low while its slack propensity is the highest among the IOs. It seems that there are indeed cases that follow conventional PA model predictions. However, we also find cases that do not fall neatly with conventional PA expectations. For instance, NATO secretariat enjoys low control and yet remains servant to member states, whereas the IMF administration is stringently controlled and yet still maintains pronounced entrepreneurialism. Overall, our findings demonstrate variance in the strictness of control principals impose on their agents, as well as in how entrepreneurially the agent behaves. In particular, they show that the inverse relationship between principal control and agent's likelihood to engage in slacking behavior is not always given. In the following, we discuss these cases in closer detail.

5.1. Variation in the risk of agency slack despite high control: ILO versus IMF

The case of the ILO is what conventional PA theory would assume: high control over the IO administration makes the agent unlikely to engage in agency slack. If we compare the ILO to the IMF, we see that this assumption can hardly be generally justified. Although the IMF reveals a similarly high level of principal control, the risk that the administration will engage in slacking behavior remains very high.

The ILO is a tightly controlled organization, scoring third in our sample with well-balanced direct and indirect control mechanisms in place. Its centralized evaluation unit reports to the Director-General (ILO, 2017: 42), although its Independent Oversight Advisory Committee reports to both the Director-General and the Governing

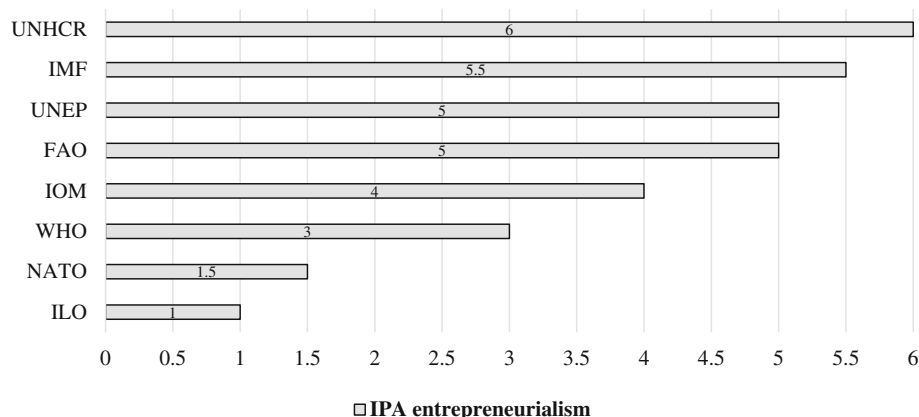


Figure 2 Aggregated values for international public administrations' (IPAs) entrepreneurialism as a risk to engage in agency slack.

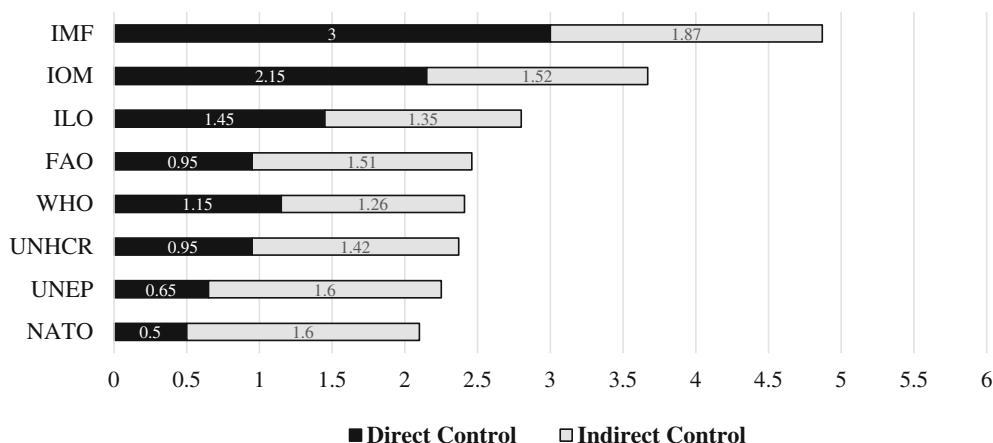


Figure 3 Aggregated values of member states' control over international public administrations.

Body (direct oversight) (ILO, 2019). The latter meets three times a year (indirect oversight). Member states have to be consulted for the appointments of senior IPA officials (direct screening) (ILO, 2018b). Moreover, 33.2 percent of total professional staff are nationals of five main donor states,⁹ allowing for a concentrated, indirect screening. Finally, voting procedures in the Governing Body are usually consensus-based (direct sanctioning) (ILO, 2016) and 42.8 percent of the total budget is earmarked voluntary contributions (indirect sanctioning) (ILO, 2018a).

The IMF even scores first on the IPA control index, being above the ILO. Its centralized evaluation unit reports directly to the Executive Board (IMF, 2015) and its External Audit Committee, overseeing internal control functions, also reports to member states (direct oversight) (IMF, 2018). Its in-house Executive Board meets several times a week (indirect oversight). Regarding staff selection, the Managing Director has to consult with member states prior to appointing or dismissing any official equal or above a division chief (IMF, 2019b). Also, more than a third (35.7 percent) of total IMF professional and managerial staff (A9-B5) are nationals of five main donor states (IMF, 2017). Although votes are sometimes held in the Board, the usual procedure is consensus-based (direct sanctioning) (IMF, 2019a). Finally, 51.2 percent of the total budget comes from voluntary member states' contributions (IMF, 2019c).

Yet, despite similar levels of tight control, both IPAs radically differ in their slack propensity. The ILO scores lowest on the extent of entrepreneurial behavior patterns. First, the IPA rarely builds strategic coalitions with civil society or else to promote own issues or initiatives (support mobilization) (ILO 7, 11, 13).¹⁰ Second, its efforts to map member states' interests are "rather decentred" (ILO 2) and lack a comprehensive strategy. Third, issue

emergence usually occurs outside the bureaucracy, based on the demand by the constituents (ILO 5), so the administration usually “react[s] to things” (ILO 4, 10). Fourth, political anticipation in the ILO is indeed pronounced, but as a requirement in assisting member states rather than as a strategic move by the administration (ILO 4, 6, 13). Fifth, the strategic use of formal bureaucratic powers occurs only rarely. The IPA staff described itself as a tool or a “platform” for the cooperation of others (ILO 3, 12), avoiding any opportunistic interpretation of its formal capabilities. Finally, the administration’s efforts to promote itself and its policies remain low: the ILO “play[s] it safe” (ILO 3, 12) and follows the lead given by its constituents. Hence, its overall servant-like administrative behavior as well as high control by member states make agency slack highly unlikely, which is reflected in the ongoing discussion about the ILO having no “teeth” (Douglas et al., 2004; Weisband, 2000).

By contrast, the IMF administration exerts high levels of entrepreneurialism despite tight control. The administration has an “active communication strategy” and continuously engages with external actors to mobilize support (IMF 2). Also, IMF managers are regularly involved in mapping member states’ interests (IMF 2). Regarding issue emergence, the administration monitors global events and develops *own* policy proposals (IMF 1, 2). In policy drafting stage, the IMF actively anticipates the political environment to avoid deadlocks both by engaging with member states and in country surveillance or program work. As one official told us, the managers must know “what can fly and what cannot” (IMF 2). Furthermore, the bureaucracy is highly strategic in using its bureaucratic powers (IMF 6). For instance, officials sometimes deliberately “deliver papers about major policy issues to the Board later than they should,” so the Board is forced to follow the management approach in emergencies (IMF 3). Lastly, the administration actively works on its high profile for publications and policy recommendations to enable policy promotion across issue fields and topics (IMF 7, 15). Overall, the observed behavioral patterns driven by administrative self-interest maintain despite high control by the member states, thus deviating from conventional PA wisdom. Unsurprisingly, various studies have reported on instances where the IMF administration went against its member states’ wishes (Gould, 2006; Vaubel, 1996).

The combination of high entrepreneurialism and high control deviates from a traditionally assumed inverse linear relationship between the two. Despite strict control by the principal, the agent actively (and regularly) seeks to strengthen itself beyond formal constraints. The delegation relationship is likely contentious, and the agent is likely to occasionally succeed in deviating from the principal’s wishes. Although the IMF secretariat is strictly controlled by member states, it remains highly entrepreneurial.

5.2. Variation in the risk of agency slack despite low control: NATO versus UNHCR

A second assumption inherent to PA theory is that agents tend to slack if they only can. Yet, a closer look at our cases of NATO and UNHCR casts serious doubts on the general validity of this assumption. Both IPAs are characterized by rather weak controls from their principals and hence should have plenty of options to slack. However, despite weak controls, the likelihood of these IPAs’ engaging in slacking behavior differs strongly between the IOs.

The UNHCR case goes in line with what PA theory would expect to observe: low control is accompanied by a much higher risk of a slacking agent. On the one hand, UNHCR scores relatively low in terms of control. Its evaluation unit reports to the High Commissioner (UNCHR, 2016), whereas its advisory oversight unit assists both the High Commissioner and the Executive Committee (direct oversight) (UNHCR, 2019a). Its Standing Committee meets three times a year (indirect oversight). In comparison with the ILO, UNHCR member states have much less control over selection of staff: the High Commissioner appoints his/her team unilaterally (UNHCR, 1950) and only 17.3 percent¹¹ of total (professional) staff comes from five main donor states. Finally, decisionmaking in the UNHCR governing body is usually based on majority voting (direct sanctioning) (UNHCR, 2016) and 65 percent of its total budget comes from earmarked voluntary contributions (indirect sanctioning) (UNHCR, 2019b).

On the other hand, the UNHCR administration demonstrates pronounced entrepreneurialism, scoring first in our sample. Regarding support mobilization, UNHCR is very active in its engagement with partners, mostly regional NGOs and private donors (UNHCR 3, 6, 7, 10). As one staff official put it, this allows “to have one voice talking to states” when initiating new topics (UNHCR 5). UNHCR administration is also very active in mapping the political space to bypass potential political “red lines.” It tends to strategically “keep a low profile” until

member states' support is guaranteed (UNHCR 5, 13); or it frames issues in a way that ensures member states' support based on IPA's interests (UNHCR 2). As one IPA official explained us:

If we were to decide unilaterally to launch a new initiative... if we did not do our homework right, in terms of sounding out opinion, it would be most unwise. So of course, any major new policy initiative would have to be carefully prepared, and the opinions properly sounded out first. (UNHCR 13)

In relation to this, the identification of new issues is strongly driven from within the bureaucracy and the administration actively makes its own policy proposals (UNHCR 1, 4, 10). Regarding political anticipation, the IPA strategically seeks to maintain useful contacts with selected member states while drafting a new policy (UNHCR 13) and sends its staff to international meetings to remain aware of "different sensitivities" among membership (UNHCR 4). Also, UNHCR demonstrates strategic use of its bureaucratic powers, often resorting to behind-the-scenes diplomacy not refraining from conflicts with member states (UNHCR 1, 10, 11, 13). Finally, the IPA displays an active promotion of its own policies and initiatives: both through direct communication with member states and public promotion with the larger public (UNHCR 3, 9). In sum, substantial agency slack becomes highly likely considering that the administration demonstrates entrepreneurial behavior, the chances of success of which are not mediated by strict control mechanisms. There are varying instances, in which the UNHCR entrepreneurialism implied a clear move beyond the IO's mandate; for example, with regard to climate change displacement (Hall, 2016) or the inclusion of NGOs as assistance providers (Betts, 2012).

Contrary to the UNHCR, NATO reflects a constellation in which the agent has formal leeway for independent action which could be exploited, yet it demonstrates low entrepreneurialism and "servant" nature that reduces the risk of agency slack. While NATO as an alliance might be considered being under hegemonic control by the United States, its secretariat demonstrates the lowest levels of control, with only a few (and mostly indirect) control mechanisms in place. It has no centralized evaluation unit, only its Resource Policy and Planning Board advises member states in the North Atlantic Council on resource management and performance assessment (direct oversight) (NATO, 2016b). Although the Council meets at least once a week (indirect oversight), the Secretary-General appoints his/her team unilaterally (NATO, 2016a) and 48 percent of NATO's international civilian staff comes from five main donor states. The decisionmaking process in the Council is based on consensus (direct sanctioning) and only about 12 percent of NATO funding comes from voluntary contributions (indirect sanctioning).¹²

Considering the above, PA theory would expect the NATO administration to use its autonomy and exploit informational asymmetries for its own purposes. However, as our data demonstrate, NATO follows a pattern of a servant-type administration. First, there is generally low strategic engagement with external partners, except for Public Diplomacy Division, which mainly works with think tanks and universities (NATO 10). Admittedly, the NATO bureaucracy puts significant efforts in mapping member states' interests in policy initiation phase and when drafting new policy proposals (NATO 1, 3, 6, 7). Nevertheless, even though the administration is tasked "to provide advice, guidance, and support" to member states (NATO, 2017), new issues and topics rarely emerge within the NATO's bureaucracy. Instead, "it is first and foremost nations that bring forward requests" (NATO 1, 8). Similarly, the administration usually refrains from strategic use of bureaucratic powers in policy implementation, rarely challenging member states' decisions (NATO 1). Finally, no active bureaucratic policy promotion was observed, which goes in line with NATO's characteristics of a servant-like administration (Mayer, 2014).

Overall, we find that the observed levels of member state control and entrepreneurial behavioral patterns of IO administrations are not always congruent with conventional P-A assumptions expecting an inverse relationship between the two. The findings demonstrate that agents which are controlled less do not necessarily show more risk of agency slack (NATO case). Also, more control by the principal does not necessarily lead to less entrepreneurialism by the agent (the IMF case). This supports our argument that the risk of agency slack is not a mere by-product of (missing) control.

6. Conclusion

This paper departed from the basic assumption of PA theory that agents are expected to slack if they are allowed to, and principal control is assumed to constrain the agent and therefore the risk of agency slack. In short, there

should be an inverse linear relationship between control and the risk of agency slack. We argued, however, that not all agents are the same, and thus their propensity to engage in slacking behavior may vary regardless of formal control constraints. Differently put, the risk of agency slack should not be solely determined by principal control and thus the assumed linear relationship could be distorted. While control may reduce the agent's room for maneuver, it does not explain the extent to which different agents are inclined to put efforts in circumventing these obstacles.

Hence, instead of taking as given, we tested the core PA assumption empirically. Measuring both member states' control over IPAs and their likelihood to engage in slacking behavior across eight major IOs, we demonstrated that these two factors indeed do not always align as expected. We found cases where tight control was not associated with a reduced IPA's propensity to slack (e.g., at the IMF). We also found cases where IPAs showed low risk of engaging in slacking behavior despite low control by member states (e.g., at NATO).

These findings have profound implications on PA theory as well as for IPA research. First, we should abandon the dominant view on IPAs as agents with a natural predisposition toward slacking only if principals let them (see also Ege, 2020). IPAs vary in their behavioral routines which are not determined merely by the level of control applied by member states. Second, and directly related, determining an ideal level of control is not possible without considering the nature of the agent. In fact, depending on the prevalence of agent's entrepreneurial behavioral orientations, trusting rather than controlling the agent might be a cheaper and equally effective approach for the principal (see Jankauskas, 2022).

Hence, an IPA's trustworthiness rather than the strictness of control should be the key concern for member states. Knowing how trustworthy the agent is could help solving classical PA dilemmas such as cost–benefit and control–competence trade-offs in delegation relationships (Abbott et al., 2020; Hawkins et al., 2006a). Strictly controlling a “servant” IPA is not optimal both for member states and the IPA since control is costly and reduces the agent's competence (see Honig, 2019). Our findings thus provide further support to studies criticizing principal-focused IO research (inter alia, Biermann & Siebenhüner, 2009; Chorev, 2012; Chwiero, 2008; Jankauskas, 2022), highlighting the need to study relationship dynamics between member states and IPAs beyond deterministic structural explanations. The extent of agency slack in IPAs depends both on control by member states *and* the administrative routines of the IPA.

The paper constitutes a first medium-n attempt to test classical PA assumptions and as such does not come without limitations. For one, our analysis remains static as we focused on variation across IOs rather than changes over time. This decision was motivated, on the one hand, by the PA assumption that PA relations tend toward stability and, on the other hand, the fact that administrative routines are known as “relatively stable behavioral orientations” (Knill et al., 2019: 85) and that formal controls in IOs are oftentimes difficult to change. Also, we have for the sake of clarity oversimplified the role of the principals as these were treated as unitary actors, which is rather uncommon in the world of IOs. Moreover, we did not control for alternative explanations of varying control levels such as principals' inability to use existing control mechanisms, even if this seems rather unlikely. The aim of the analysis was to probe the plausibility of our arguments based on observed congruence in empirical patterns (Beach & Pedersen, 2016: 269ff; George & Bennett, 2005: 75; Levy, 2008: 6f) rather than to unravel causal mechanisms in the spirit of a detailed process-tracing procedure (cf. Beach & Pedersen, 2016). These aspects should thus be considered in future studies which could further scrutinize our argument.

Acknowledgment

We would like to thank three anonymous referees, Yves Steinebach and Steffen Eckhard for their very helpful suggestions to improve our manuscript as well as the editorial team for their guidance during the publication process. Open Access funding enabled and organized by Projekt DEAL.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Endnotes

- ¹ Yet, it is beyond the scope of this article to provide detailed explanation on why different behavioral routines emerge. For such discussion see, for instance, Bayerlein et al. (2020).
- ² They should thus not be confused with organizational pathologies written in bureaucratic structures (see Barnett and Finnemore, 2004: 39ff). By contrast, administrative styles vary and are also sensitive to external factors.
- ³ To be sure, servant routines do not necessarily mean suboptimal performance; rather, less propensity toward realizing IPAs' own goals (see Boyne, 2004). Similarly, we make no normative judgment as to whether IPAs' entrepreneurialism is right or wrong. Sometimes, by strengthening own position or furthering their own policies, IPAs may stay true to their mission notwithstanding deviations from political preferences of IO member states.
- ⁴ Our notion of agency slack is thus primarily based on slippage rather than shirking (Hawkins et al., 2006a: 8). Yet, it seems that a more central and often concern for member states in IOs is an administration which goes beyond its mandate (slippage) rather than an IPA which minimizes its efforts to fulfill its tasks (shirking).
- ⁵ We do not capture completely informal control mechanisms (e.g., informal requests for information by the member states) as they are difficult to measure and compare across IOs.
- ⁶ The value is 0, if no evaluation unit exists.
- ⁷ We use an average value for the two direct oversight indicators to maintain equal weighting across dimensions.
- ⁸ In case of disagreement, the third author was involved.
- ⁹ Own calculation based on UN CEB data.
- ¹⁰ Interview insights are quoted using labels.
- ¹¹ Own calculation based on UN CEB data.
- ¹² Own estimation for the year 2010 due to data availability.

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APPENDIX

The risk of IPA agency slack: Operationalization

Table A1 provides an overview of indicators and their operationalization used to measure the extent to which IPAs have developed entrepreneurial administrative routines.

Table A1 Indicators and operationalization of the risk of IPA agency slack

Indicator	Phase	Operationalization
Issue emergence	Policy initiation	Regular and active policy initiation from within the bureaucracy: High (1) Occasional policy initiation from within the bureaucracy without clear pattern: Medium (0.5) Usually policy initiation outside the bureaucracy: Low (0)
Mapping of political space	Policy initiation	Regular, active mapping activities (i.e., bureaucratic procedures to early identify member states' preferences toward bureaucratic initiatives, e.g., via consultations or informal working groups): High (1) Occasional mapping activities with no clear pattern: Medium (0.5) No mapping activities: Low (0)
Support mobilization	Policy initiation	Regular and active mobilization activities, active campaigns to gain external support for bureaucratic initiatives: High (1) Occasional mobilization activities without clear pattern: Medium (0.5) No mobilization activities: Low (0)
Political anticipation	Policy drafting	Regular and active identification of bureaucratic policies' political implications to ensure their success: High (1) Occasional anticipation without clear pattern: Medium (0.5) Routinely policy drafting without distinct anticipation of bureaucratic policies' political implications: Low (0)
Strategic use of bureaucratic powers	Policy implementation	Strategic use of bureaucratic powers, especially in conflict situations with member states (e.g., enter into open conflict or deliberate conflict avoidance in order not to undermine member state delegation): High (1) Occasionally strategic use of bureaucratic powers: Medium (0.5) No strategic use of bureaucratic powers: Low (0)
Policy promotion	Policy implementation	Strong and regular efforts by the bureaucracy promote its agenda and preferred policy implementation (e.g., via mobilization of societal support, the close relationships with stakeholders, interest groups, or nat. administrations): High (1) Occasional efforts to promote its policy agenda and preferred policy implementation: Medium (0.5) No active efforts to promote its policy agenda and preferred policy implementation: Low (0)

The risk of IPA agency slack: Measurement results

Based on our interview data (Section A.5 in the Appendix) and the coding scheme (Table A1), we qualitatively assessed the extent to which IPAs are involved in one of the six activities. As qualitative assessments, they naturally remain more a matter of degree rather than a sharp distinction. The final measure for IPA entrepreneurialism is the sum of six indicators' values (total score).

Table A2 Measurement results of the risk of IPA agency slack (data are based on interview data)

Indicator	Measurement of the risk of IPA agency slack based on entrepreneurialism in their behavioral routines							
	ILO	NATO	WHO	IOM	FAO	UNEP	IMF	UNHCR
Mapping of the political space	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High	High	High	High
Support mobilization	Low	Low	Medium	High	High	Medium	Medium	High
Issue emergence	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High	High	High
Political anticipation	Medium	High	High	High	High	High	High	High
Strategic use of formal powers	Medium	Low	Low	High	High	Medium	High	High
Policy promotion	Low	Low	High	Low	Medium	High	High	High
Total score	1	1.5	3	4	5	5	5.5	6

Label scores: high (1), medium (0.5), and low (0).

IPA control: Operationalization and measurement results

Table A3 provides an overview of our principal control measurement results per IO and per indicator.

Table A3 Operationalization and results of member states' control over IPAs measurement

Type of control	Indicator
Direct oversight and monitoring	<i>Evaluation: existence and reporting line</i>
	1: Head of evaluation reports to member states (MS)
	0.6: Head of evaluation reports to both MS and the head of IPA
	0.3: Head of evaluation reports to the head of IPA
	0: No evaluation unit
	IMF: Independent Evaluation Office reports to the Executive Board (1)
	IOM: Head of Evaluation reports to Inspector General who reports to Director General (0.3)
	ILO: Director of Evaluation reports to Director General (0.3)
	FAO: Head of Evaluation Office (OED) reports to Director General and Governing Bodies (0.6)
	WHO: Evaluation Office reports to Director General (0.3)
Direct oversight and monitoring	UNHCR: Head of Evaluation Service reports to High Commissioner (0.3)
	UNEP: Evaluation Office reports to Executive Director (0.3)
	NATO: No internal evaluation unit (0)
	<i>Advisory oversight: Existence and reporting line</i>
	1: Head of advisory oversight unit reports to MS
	0.6: Head of advisory oversight unit reports to both MS and the head of IPA
	0.3: Head of advisory oversight unit reports to the head of IPA
	0: No advisory oversight unit
	IMF: External Audit Committee reports to the Board of Governors (1)
	IOM: Audit and Oversight Advisory Committee reports to the Council (1)
	ILO: Independent Oversight and Advisory Committee reports to both Governing Body and Director General (0.6)
	FAO: Audit Committee advises Director General (0.3)
	WHO: Independent Expert Advisory Oversight Committee reports to Executive Board (1)
	UNHCR: Independent Audit and Oversight Committee reports to High Commissioner and Executive Committee (0.6)
	UNEP: No comparable unit identified (0)
	NATO: Resource Policy and Planning Board reports to the Council as senior advisory body (1)

(Continues)

Table A3 Continued

Type of control	Indicator
Indirect oversight and monitoring	<p><i>Governing body (Executive Board) meetings: Intensity</i></p> <p>1: Board meets at least weekly</p> <p>0.6: Not weekly, but at least three times a year</p> <p>0.3: Board meets two times a year</p> <p>0: Board meets once a year</p> <p>IMF: In-house Executive Board (1)</p> <p>IOM: Standing Committee meets twice a year (0.3)</p> <p>ILO: Governing Body meets three times a year (0.6)</p> <p>FAO: Council holds at least five sessions in biennium (0.6)</p> <p>WHO: Executive Board meets two times a year (0.3)</p> <p>UNHCR: Executive Committee's Standing Committee meets three times a year (0.6)</p> <p>UNEP: Committee of Permanent Representatives meets at least four times every year (0.6)</p> <p>NATO: North Atlantic Council meets at least once a week (1)</p>
Direct screening and selection	<p><i>IPA staff appointment: MS' involvement</i></p> <p>1: IPA head appoints his/her (management) team in consultation with MS</p> <p>0: IPA head appoints his/her (management) team unilaterally</p> <p>IMF: The Managing Director shall inform the Executive Board at least two weeks in advance of any action to appoint or dismiss any person to or from a position graded equal to or above that of a division chief (1)</p> <p>IOM: The Director General shall appoint the staff of the Administration in accordance with the staff regulations adopted by the Council (1)</p> <p>ILO: Appointments to vacancies of Deputy Director-General, Assistant Director-General and Treasurer and Financial Comptroller shall be made by the Director-General after consultation with the Officers of the Governing Body (1)</p> <p>FAO: The power of appointment of staff members rests with the Director-General (0)</p> <p>WHO: All staff members are subject to the authority of the Director-General and to assignment by him to any of the activities or offices of the World Health Organization (0)</p> <p>UNHCR: High Commissioner appoints his/her team unilaterally (0)</p> <p>UNEP: Acting Executive Director appoints his/her team unilaterally (0)</p> <p>NATO: International staff are either recruited directly by the Organization or seconded by their governments and each appointment is approved by the Secretary-General (0)</p>
Indirect screening and selection	<p><i>IPA staff nationality: MS dominance</i></p> <p>Ratio of (professional) staff nationals of five main donor states relative to total (professional) staff, financed by regular budget and other funds</p> <p>IMF: 0.36</p> <p>IOM: 0.24</p> <p>ILO: 0.33</p> <p>FAO: 0.3</p> <p>WHO: 0.24</p> <p>UNHCR: 0.17</p> <p>UNEP: 0.21</p> <p>NATO: 0.48</p>
Direct sanctioning	<p><i>Formal obstacles for sanctioning: Voting system in Executive Boards</i></p> <p>1: Weighted voting system</p> <p>0.5: Unweighted majority voting</p> <p>0: Consensus</p> <p>IMF: Weighted voting (1)</p> <p>IOM: Majority voting (0.5)</p> <p>ILO: Usually consensus (0)</p> <p>FAO: Majority voting (0.5)</p>

(Continues)

Table A3 Continued

Type of control	Indicator
Indirect sanctioning	WHO: Majority voting (0.5)
	UNHCR: Majority voting (0.5)
	UNEP: Majority voting (0.5)
	NATO: Consensus (0)
	<i>Threat of sanctions: Financial fragility</i>
	Ratio of earmarked (unassessed) contributions to total budget
	IMF: 0.51
	IOM: 0.98
	ILO: 0.42
	FAO: 0.61
	WHO: 0.72
	UNHCR: 0.65
	UNEP: 0.79
	NATO: 0.12

Measurement is based on data from official IO websites and IO annual reports (2018–2019).

Overview of diverse general characteristics across IOs from the sample

Table A4 Diversity in general characteristics across selected IOs

	FAO	ILO	IMF	IOM	UNEP	UNHCR	NATO	WHO
Founding year	1945	1919	1945	1951	1972	1993	1949	1948
Policy area	Agriculture	Labor	Finance	Migration	Environment	Asylum, migration	Defense	Health
Location headquarter	Rome (IT)	Geneva (CH)	Washington (USA)	Geneva (CH)	Nairobi (KE)	Geneva (CH)	Brussels (BE)	Geneva (CH)
Number of Member States	191	184	187	132	58	79	28	194
Total budget in billions \$	2.736	0.723	624.5	1.369	0.801	1.992	0.28	4.540
% of non-assessed budgetary contributions	69%	44%	42%	97%	68%	99%	n/a	83%
No. of staff (general and support staff, excl. short-term consultants)	3069	3011	2421	7699	910	6314	1200	8660

Based on IO websites and annual reports (2018–2019).

¹ Source: Policy fields manually coded based on official IO websites (<http://www.un.org/en/sections/about-un/funds-programmes-specialized-agencies-andothers/index.html>); total and decentralized staff (outside HQ) calculated based on UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination data (UN CEB) (<https://www.unsystem.org/content/un-system-hrstatistics-report-2018>) and IO annual reports; budget data calculated based on UN CEB or IO websites (<http://www.unsystem.org/content/FS-A00-01>).

Interview data and questionnaire

Table A5 Overview of conducted interviews across IOs and interviewee positions

IO	Senior managers	Middle managers	Analysts, technical officers	Total
NATO	2	5	5	12
FAO	3	1	19	23
ILO	1	3	12	16
UNEP	3	4	15	22
IOM	1	3	12	16
UNHCR	0	4	12	16
IMF	1	6	8	15
WHO	4	4	3	11
			Total	131

Please note that the “Senior managers” category refers to officials at the level of Secretary- or Director-General, directors, their deputies, and similar. The “Middle managers” category refers to team leaders, heads of units, and similar. The “Analysts and technical officers” category refers to various specialists at the technical level of administrations such as policy specialists or technical officials. We identified the respondents through IO websites and primary documents such as annual reports.

The interviewees were asked about internal operating procedures in their IOs along the six indicators (see Table A1). Upon completion of the interview process, the interviews were transcribed by the authors. To determine the intensity to which the administration is involved in the six activities, we assessed the consistency of interviewees’ statements and gave score values according to Table A1. In rare cases of conflicting statements, we triangulated them with secondary scholarly literature to decide upon the value of the indicator (see Table A2).

Table A6 Interview questionnaire used for semi-structured interviews with IPA staff

Phase	Indicator	Open question	Closed question	Test questions
Initiation (Please describe how your organization is involved in the very first steps of policy development)	Issue emergence	When you are thinking about the angle of a new policy, is the administration involved in the identification of new issues and solutions, and if so, how exactly?	Did your administration try to actively identify issues and propose solutions in the case of policy X, or was this left to other actors?	Have you made the experience that your administration is working on issues before they receive member states’ attention and support or are these preconditions before your administration becomes involved?
	Mapping of political space	When you are thinking about the first steps in the development of a new policy, do you consider member states position on that policy, why?	How was member states’ support for the development of policy X organized and how were the interests of the member states addressed?	Does the administration regularly consider potential political “red lines” and how to bypass them when initiating own policies?
	Support mobilization	When you are initiating new policies, do you seek support from actors other than member states?	How important was the external support for policy X, and how was it secured?	Does the administration regularly highlight the extent of external support toward its new policy to member states and if so, why?

(Continues)

Table A6 Continued

Phase	Indicator	Open question	Closed question	Test questions
Drafting (Could you describe a typical policy drafting process?)	Political anticipation	When you are drafting new policies, do you consider member states' interests toward that policy, why?	Did member states' interests affect how policy X was drafted and if so, how?	Are you aware of any instances when knowing member states' interests helped the administration to draft a policy so it favors administrative preferences?
Implementation (Could you please name the most common outputs your organization produces?)	Strategic use of bureaucratic powers	How does the administration defend its interests when implementing policies?	Do you make use of bureaucratic powers to push for favorable policy implementation or do you rather avoid risking backlash from the member states?	Is that a general approach applied to many policies, or does it vary between output and/or unit?
	Policy promotion	How does the administration promote its policies during implementation phase?	In the case of policy X, did you try to promote your agenda in implementation and if so, why and how?	Does your administration decide by itself on how to promote policy implementation?