

Allies of Convenience: How NGOs and the United States Cooperate to Control Intergovernmental Organizations

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Word Count: 9,449

Abstract

What explains the variation in nongovernmental organization (NGO) access across and within intergovernmental organizations? I argue that access is determined by an “alliance of convenience” formed between the United States and NGOs. When faced with declining influence, the United States changes an organization’s rules to provide NGOs formal access to an institution. NGOs act independently after gaining access, and the added information, preferences and tasks that come from their participation crowd out the influence of other actors, insulating American influence. NGOs, in turn, gain valuable access to the organization and the chance to push their own agenda. I test this theory quantitatively using the TRANSACCESS data set alongside original measures of American control. An in-depth case study of the World Bank Inspection Panel uses recently released archival evidence to test the theoretical mechanisms and show how NGOs and the United States coordinated to increase access to the World Bank through the institution’s creation. Both the quantitative and qualitative results provide support for the theoretical expectations. This study highlights an important factor in determining NGO participation within global governance structures and adds to our understanding of the distributive logic behind institutional design more broadly.

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“I want you to know that I have made it clear to my staff here and to all of our ambassadors around the world that I am serious about making sure we have the best relationship with the NGOs, who are such a force multiplier for us... Needless to say, cooperation between governments and NGOs is not the same as co-opting you. Always, we must respect your independence.” *Colin Powell, US Secretary of State, October 2001*

1 Introduction

In 1993, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) formed two separate campaigns to gain access in the World Bank. One, the “Fifty Years Is Enough” campaign, coincided with the Bretton Woods institutions’ first half-century and deployed a broad assortment of NGOs. Protestors descended on the 1994 annual meeting in Madrid, Spain, and NGO leaders staged conspicuous protest tactics like sit-ins alongside targeted lobbying of member-state executive directors. This campaign demanded “openness, full public accountability and the participation of affected populations in the decision-making standard procedures at the World Bank and the IMF,” (Cleary 1996, 89). The second, smaller campaign also demanded accountability and access for affected parties but stopped short of demanding access to the Bank’s decision-making. Here, NGOs called for the creation of an independent accountability mechanism with access to non-state actors. Moreover, this second campaign streamlined its strategy by focusing almost exclusively on the United States’ ability to pressure the World Bank (Wade 1997). Despite its larger size, the first campaign failed to provide nonstate access to the Bank’s decision-making procedures. But the second campaign led to the creation of the World Bank Inspection Panel, which granted unprecedented access to NGOs and local actors. Why did the second campaign succeed where the first failed, and why did the United States aid a critical campaign against an institution where it was the largest shareholder?

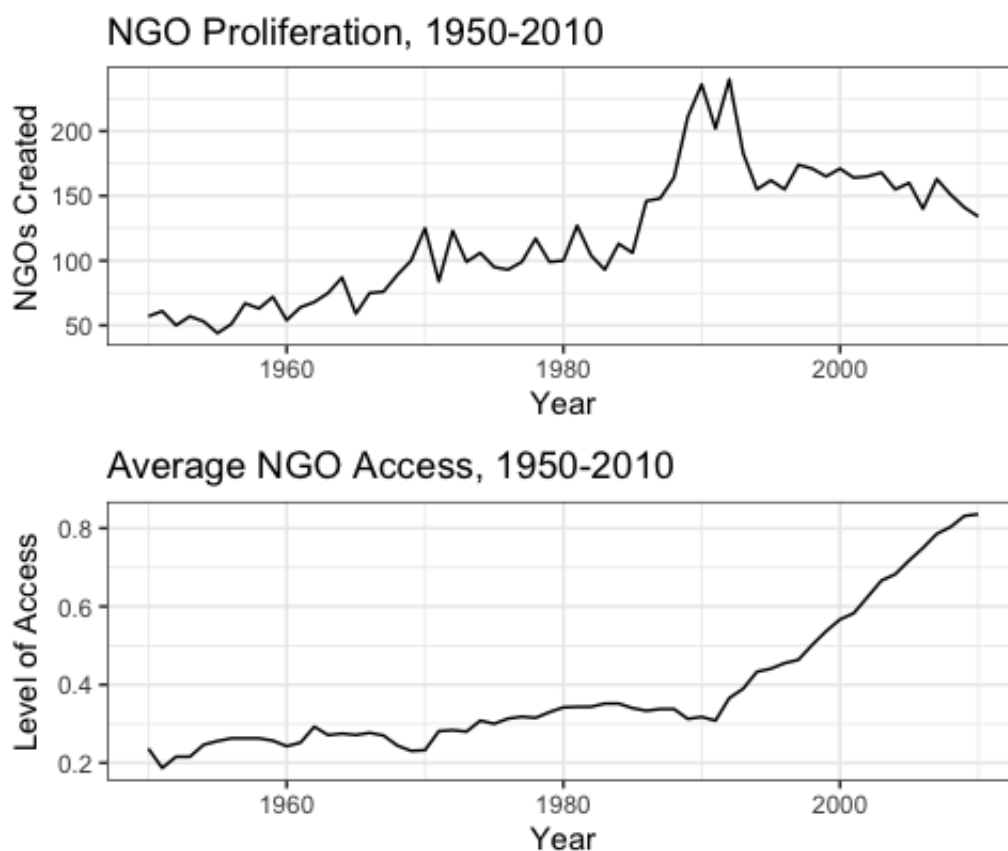
NGOs are a growing force in global governance. As Figure 1 shows, the annual creation of new, internationally focused NGOs increased throughout much of the 20th century, with a peak in the early 1990s. The access NGOs and other transnational actors have to

intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) appears to follow a similar pattern, with a slowly increasing average followed by a sharp increase in the 1990s. But the story becomes more complicated when access is conceptualized as a spectrum. Organizations may grant NGOs complete access or no access at all. But substantial variation exists between these two levels. Figure 2 shows the moving average paired with the level of access individual bodies within organizations provide. While the average does suggest an upward trend, individual organizations continue to vary dramatically on the level of access granted. What explains the continued variation in access across intergovernmental organizations (IGOs)? The question is substantively important, as the degree of access influences NGO participation within an organization (Tallberg et al. 2018; Henry et al. 2019).

Determinants for NGO access to IGOs can be separated into “push” and “pull” factors, the former referring to NGO demands to join an organization and the latter focusing on IGO needs (Steffek 2013). But most systematic studies of NGO and nonstate access more generally have focused on the “pull” side, with IGOs granting access to achieve specific policy tasks (Abbott and Snidal 2010; Abbott et al. 2015), provide legitimacy for democratic organizations (Grigorescu 2007, 2015), fill institutional gaps in preexisting structures of global governance (Green 2014; Abbott, Green, and Keohane 2016) or a combination of the above (Tallberg et al. 2013, 2014). Such “supply-side” explanations provide crucial evidence for the important policy benefits NGOs can provide. But incorporating the demand-side is necessary to understand the full variation in observed access. In addition, the emphasis on IGO actors as the main drivers of institutional design neglects the demands of member-states, which ultimately have the final say on granting access (Vabulas 2013). Indeed, if one views NGOs as interest groups in global governance (Bloodgood 2011), it is crucial to understand state policymakers’ demand for lobbyists in conjunction with lobbyists’ own demands (Lucas, Hanegraaff, and Bruycker 2019).

Drawing on the principal-agent literature, I argue that the United States forms an “alliance of convenience” with NGOs after it begins to lose control of the organization. While

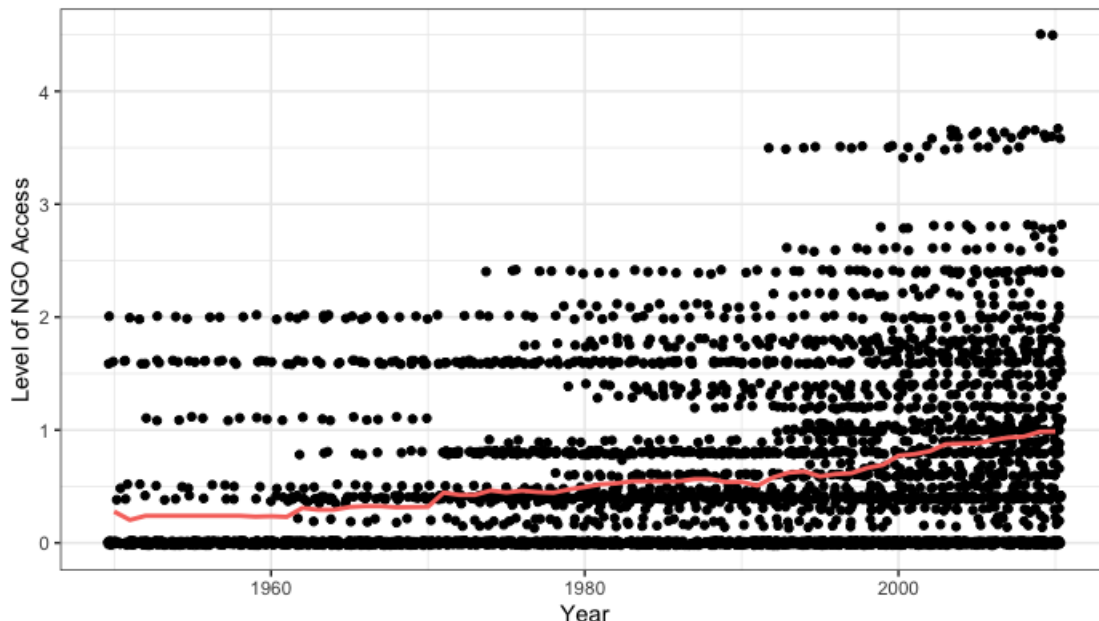
Figure 1: NGO Proliferation and Access to International Organizations Over Time



Data on NGO proliferation was collected from the Yearbook of International Organizations database. Qualifiers were used to select NGOs that prioritize a consistent international presence. Data from Sommerer and Tallberg (2017) were used to create the plot detailing NGO access at the IGO-body level. The time unit for both series is annual from the years 1950-2010.

the United States often wields disproportionate influence in organizations, it must accept a certain level of risk over the delegation arrangement to reap its benefits. However, increases in environmental uncertainty in the context of specialization increase this risk and cause the United States to perceive a loss of control over the organization. Under this scenario, the United States collaborates with NGOs to change an organization's rules and grant increased access to an institution. Here, NGOs "grease the wheels" of groupthink between Executive Branch officials and other government actors to create a unified front that pressures other actors to accede to the rule change. While US officials coordinate with civil society to obtain access, NGOs act independently afterwards; their participation is not directly coordinated

Figure 2: NGO Access to International Organizations Bodies with US Membership



Data from Sommerer and Tallberg (2017) were used to create this plot detailing NGO access at the IGO body level.

by any one state. NGOs subsequently dilute the normal process of governance by adding an additional actor inside the organization that provides new information, preferences and tasks. By crowding out the influence of other actors in the IGO, dilution minimizes the risk incurred by the United States. NGOs, in turn, gain a valuable position to advance their own agenda.

This study adds to our understanding of NGO participation within IGOs and stresses the often de-emphasized role the state has in providing access. The findings present a nuanced view on the role of nonstate actors in global governance: NGOs can simultaneously advance their normative agendas while imperfectly extending the influence of the United States. More broadly, it highlights the importance of power and process in determining institutional design. International institutions can respond to changing external environments, but rules can also be changed in tandem to insulate the interests of the most powerful.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, I describe how originally favorable delegation arrangements to international organizations can erode for state principals. I then specify the

dilution NGO participation provides and why it may prove favorable to powerful member-states in times of uncertainty. My research design describes the TRANSACCESS data-set and justifies the choice of explanatory variables—which include original measures of control—to be used in a quantitative analysis. The results, followed by a series of robustness checks, support the proposed explanation. Finally, I use recently released archival documents to test the underlying theoretical mechanisms with a case study on the World Bank Inspection Panel, detailing how the United States and NGOs worked together to increase nonstate actor access through its creation. In this writing sample, most of the quantitative results and robustness checks are kept to an online **Appendix**, linked here and available upon request.

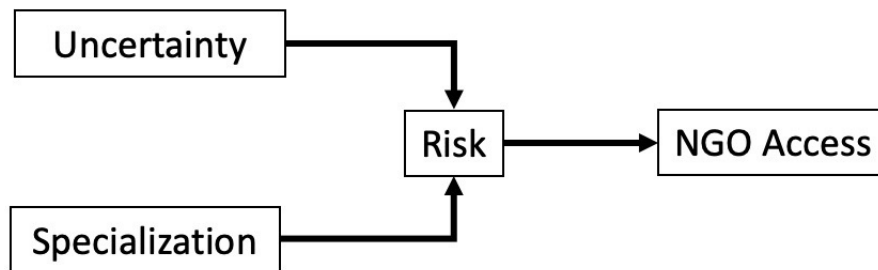
2 Theoretical Explanation

I argue that an “alliance of convenience” forms between NGOs and the United States after the latter risks losing control over an organization. Independent of the United States, certain NGOs push for access. While the United States is normally reluctant to change the organization’s institutional design, this perspective shifts after the conditions for losing control emerge. Under these conditions, the United States can benefit from the dilution—defined as added information, preferences and tasks—that NGOs bring into an organization. This changes the risk calculation for US officials, and they subsequently work with NGOs to increase access. This section details the theoretical logic.

2.1 Controlling International Organizations

The principal-agent literature highlights two factors that hamper successful delegation for state principals: uncertainty and specialization. Member-states can be uncertain both about the agent’s efforts (Hawkins et al. 2006, 24), and unilateral attempts to influence the agent from other member-states (Urpelainen 2012). Indeed, Kleine (2013) shows that member-

Figure 3: Theoretical Logic



states can unilaterally influence policy from within delegation arrangements, leading to disparate influence over certain aspects of the agent’s policy tasks. Specialization, in turn, raises the costs of reducing uncertainty. Agents working on specialized tasks are better insulated from principal monitoring efforts, given the cost of monitoring in such a context (Hawkins et al. 2006, 25). In deciding to delegate, the United States must assess the costs of uncertainty and specialization against the benefits of delegation. This assessment constitutes the *risk* US officials expect to incur from delegation.¹ Figure 3 visualizes the logic.

Upon delegating, the United States accepts some level of risk to reap the benefits of delegation.² Under this initial arrangement, the United States would have little reason to push for nonstate participation. As independent actors, NGOs may critique existing American policies or push an unfavorable agenda within the organization. And while the NGO-bureaucrat relationship is often conflictual, it can also, at times, be cooperative (Johnson 2016), and nonstate collaboration may further insulate an IGO’s bureaucracy from member-state interference (Lall 2017). In short, increased access presents its own risk calculation. Indeed, the United States initially designed the UN to afford less formal access than the prior League

¹This follows Knight’s (1921) classic distinction between risk and uncertainty, whereupon outcomes and probabilities are known under risk and unknown under uncertainty. Here, policymakers must derive the risk from the level of uncertainty, with outcomes now known due to specialization.

²All collective delegation arrangements require some level of risk acceptance from principals. In delegating to an international organization, the US must grant a degree of autonomy to the bureaucracy and accept some potential agency slack. Moreover, the US must also accept a degree of influence from other member-state principals. Otherwise, delegation would be tantamount to pure unilateralism.

of Nations (Pickard 1956, 72). And while NGOs gained access to the UN secretariat, the United States opposed NGO access in the UN General Assembly and Security Council in the 1990s (Grigorescu 2015, 196). If an organization already presents favorable outcomes with minimal intervention, American officials have little reason to risk a departure from the norm.

However, US policymakers may adjust their risk calculation (Howard 2010). As the international landscape changes—through new member-states, varying preferences, and geopolitical alignment—uncertainty over the delegation arrangement should increase. Here, uncertainty is similar to Kleine’s (2018) contests of “inter-state control,” whereupon states are largely concerned with the unilateral influence of other states on the bureaucracy. Meanwhile, the specialization and expertise of IGO bureaucrats should remain constant, if not grow larger (Hawkins and Jacoby 2006), while greater heterogeneity among the membership hinders the principal’s ability to re-delegate to control the agent (Nielson and Tierney 2003; Martin 2006). Powerful member-states like the United States thus face a “dynamic delegation problem” and appear bound to lose control over the organization in question. Under these conditions, the original delegation risk increases, relative to the risk of NGO access.³

2.2 How NGOs Reverse the Loss of Control

Faced with increased risk, I argue that the United States subsequently seeks to dilute the organization in question with NGO participation. Dilution waters down the risk of delegation by adding additional steps to the governance process. This lessens the influence of all prior actors—including the United States—but diminishes risk by increasing the chances of catching unfavorable policies. Unlike shadow bureaucracies (Dijkstra 2015), NGOs are not

³States may also use outside options or informal institutions to “forum shop” when an existing IGO does not cater to their preferences (R. Clark 2022; Vabulas and Snidal 2013). My argument does not preclude such options, but it does assume that principals wish to retain some degree of control over existing organizations, even if alternative options are available. This assumption also showcases why the argument applies best to the United States, which has strong incentives to influence how other states use existing international institutions (Stone 2011), even when outside options impose low costs (Reinsberg and Westerwinter 2021).

commanded nor controlled by any other actor. Rather, the logic of dilution is similar to the classic oversight mechanism of “fire alarms,” whereupon independent actors alert the principals to any problem with the agent (McCubbins and Schwartz 1984). But unlike fire alarms, dilution requires the new actors to take an active role in the delegation process itself. Thus, rather than placing alarms around the town, dilution would demand background checks for the purchase of matches, charcoal and kerosene. NGOs are optimal conduits for dilution due to the additional information, preferences, and tasks they bring into an organization. I elaborate on each component below.

First, NGOs bring in a substantial amount of new information. NGOs often have expertise and technical skills that IGOs and states do not possess, or do not wish to expend resources on. For example, the Organization for American States (OAS) allows NGOs to distribute written reports among member-states before meetings. Information from third parties may not necessarily prove to be more accurate and unbiased, but it often differs from the information provided by bureaucrats or collected by member-states themselves (Lake and McCubbins 2006, 350). One World Bank executive director – when describing the 1988 Narmada dam project in India – said, “When I hear what NGOs say about this project and then what the operations people [World Bank staff] say, it sounds like they are talking about two different projects.” (Wade 1997, 699). NGO access thus dilutes IGOs with a substantial amount of new information, which member-states must then navigate through.

Second, NGOs add new voices and preferences. Whereas an international financial institution may have only cared about economic growth and stability before NGO access, NGOs, once they are allowed in, bring in new preferences on topics like human rights and environmental protections. And while NGOs care about existing IGO policy, they often seek to reform governing practices, particularly in accountability (Buntaine 2016). Suddenly, the institution must contend with a host of new considerations. After the Cold War, NGOs in the UNSC promoted “peacebuilding” as an approach to international security, a US prerogative at the time (Graubart 2008). But regardless of how often preferences align or diverge

with US interests, these new voices will hamper the normal governance process, as effective dilution does not require a specific direction or focus; it stems from the cacophony of NGO voices with a variety of positions. The logic here is similar to that of veto players: adding players makes policy making more difficult, especially with wide preferences and low cohesiveness among them (Tsebelis 1995, 2002).⁴ In the WTO, NGO and US interests clashed over the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, with NGOs supporting the public health interests of developing economies. But NGO lobbying prolonged the talks while the United States formed the “August 30 Solution,” a compromise for all involved parties (Murphy 2010, 123).

Beyond providing additional information and preferences, access demands the creation of new bureaucratic tasks. Organizations often establish forums and committees to hear NGO concerns and hire new staffers to coordinate between groups. Often, staffers attempt to monitor and screen the behavior of NGOs. Such actions require additional time and resources from IGO staff. A World Bank project in Senegal was delayed by 12 months as staff searched for a suitable NGO consultant before settling on the World Wildlife Fund (World Bank 2009). NGO-related tasks can also grant substantial powers to non-state actors, causing further dilution. This depends on the specific rules granting access. For example, nonstate actors in the International Labour Organization carry limited voting power. And the World Bank’s Inspection Panel allows NGOs to call for formal investigations into a project’s implementation, which can lead to substantial reforms. Even when substantial reforms do not occur, the deliberation process takes time.

NGOs thus dilute the normal channels of influence within an IGO and raise the costs of delegation for the assigned agent. The logic here is similar to the work on access points in trade policy (Ehrlich 2007), which describes how certain institutional features allow protectionist lobbyists more or less access. Here, the United States deliberately changes institutional features to allow NGOs—the lobbyists—access to numerous points in IGO policy

⁴Of course, veto-players wield the ability to block policy-making entirely. Dilution is more akin to placing hurdles on a track; they may significantly slow down a runner, but rarely do they stop the race entirely.

making. By adding an additional actor within the IGO’s formal governance, the influence of opposing preferences can be crowded out. Other powerful member-states, like the rest of the G5 and China, may be able to take advantage of these access points. But the United States, with its already robust information-gathering procedures and unmatched influence over policy stands to benefit the most. Of course, NGOs can also crowd out the influence of the United States, but to a lesser degree, given the considerable influence it already wields.

The added information, preferences and tasks that come from NGO practice grants the United States the opportunity to intervene against unfavorable policies. Added information can confuse other member-states on the Bank’s Executive Boards by generating rival stories and presenting more perspectives to sift through. NGO preferences hamper policies by adding additional critiques and issue-areas to address. And the added bureaucratic tasks that must be created to accommodate NGOs can significantly delay policies by creating extra steps in the governance process and diverting resources away from prior initiatives. When the path toward adopting and implementing an unfavorable policy is diluted by NGO practice, the United States can use the delay to intervene against it. Thus, rather than constituting a new mechanism of control, NGO dilution bolsters other levers of control, like vote-buying (Dreher et al. 2019; Vreeland and Dreher 2014), outside options (Voeten 2001), informal intervention (Stone 2011), and bureaucratic incentives to preemptively align policies with the United States (Clark and Dolan 2021).

The cancellation of the World Bank’s Chinese Western Poverty Reduction project in 2000 shows how the added information, preferences and tasks NGOs provide can allow the United States the opportunity to intervene and amend previously enacted policy. In 1999, Bank staff—wishing to take advantage of China’s newly graduated status from IDA loans—fast-tracked the project to the Executive Board. The Board subsequently approved the project, despite strong US opposition. Meanwhile, a group of NGOs filed a complaint on the project through the Bank’s Inspection Panel, automatically forcing an investigation. NGOs then held multiple meetings with Bank leadership to promote their preference against the project’s

continuation while they used their networks to gather additional information about the project’s negative environmental and social impact, distributing this information among the Bank’s membership. During this time, the US executive director and Treasury Department lobbied Executive Board members—particularly the European states—to oppose the project. The strategy worked, and the Board reconvened and voted to cancel the project a year after its initial approval (Clark and Treacle 2003).

2.3 Establishing the Alliance

Powerful member-states should benefit the most from dilution. While NGOs dilute the influence of all member-states, this affects powerful states less, given the power they already possess. The United States, in particular, should coordinate with NGOs to increase access when their risk calculation favors an increase. Here, the logic is similar to the use of shadow bureaucracies, which only powerful states have the resources to deploy (Dijkstra 2015). Thus, the United States can better navigate NGO dilution, relative to other states, as it can field the largest and best equipped delegations (McKeown 2009), a crucial ability to accommodate the added preferences, tasks and information NGOs supply. The US also government views NGOs as governing partners, affording them far greater status and responsibilities than other developed democracies like France or the United Kingdom (Stroup 2012). This comfort extends beyond the US Executive Branch; Congress uses NGOs to gather information on Executive Branch activities, a practice that has carried over to monitoring IGOs (Daugirdas 2013). Thus, we should expect various US actors and NGOs to coordinate together and promote access when risk increases for the United States.

These incentives set the stage for the requisite alliance of convenience to form between NGOs and American officials. The “convenience” of this alliance is key; it forms when each actor’s independent interests align. Indeed, dilution is not a perfect mechanism for the United States to control organizations. NGO participation will, at times, harm the interests of major shareholders (Vabulas 2013). And more generally, NGOs dilute the influence of

all involved actors, including the United States. Moreover, NGOs can advocate for their continued presence upon gaining access; once they are let in, they are unlikely to leave willingly. This is precisely why the predicted increase in access follows an increase in the risk of losing control. If the United States perceives a manageable level of risk, there is no reason to take a chance on NGOs. This follows Martin’s (2021) proposition that working through informal means can represent a second-best policy option for powerful states, rather than a first-choice preference.

Why should NGOs, as independent actors, contribute to the alliance of convenience? Many NGOs have strong incentives to participate within IGOs for both material and normative reasons. Participation brings additional contracts, connections and status, all of which can be leveraged to obtain greater funding, a great concern for many groups (Cooley and Ron 2002). At the same time, participation presents NGOs with a chance to make substantial progress toward their mission (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Steffek 2013). A World Bank contract allows development NGOs to operate on a larger scale than normal. A human rights NGO can bring greater attention to its reporting by presenting information directly to the Human Rights Council. And many NGOs, particularly those involved in advocacy operations, wish to increase IGO oversight and organizational performance. The Bank Information Center, a watchdog for international financial institutions, does just this by participating in inter-governmental civil society forums and monitoring development projects around the world. In short, I follow Mitchell and Schmitz (2014) and maintain that NGOs act with “principled instrumentalism,” allowing room for them to desire participation for both material and normative ends.⁵

While NGOs can directly influence IGO policy-making, notably through geographic proximity (Dörfler and Heinzel 2022), I suggest that NGOs can best influence an organization’s institutional design in collaboration with the United States. Overall, the United States main-

⁵Of course, NGOs and their preferences are not monolithic. Organizations will have different objectives and thus adopt different strategies toward IGO interactions (Dellmuth and Tallberg 2017). Thus, I merely assume that a significant number of NGOs demand access to organizations, but not all.

tains a relatively cooperative, rather than conflictual, relationship with NGOs (Stroup and Murdie 2012). This allows them to establish a favorable "political opportunity structure" which affords increased influence over the IGO (Joachim 2003). In short, NGOs can realize their demands for access by working with the US, but the US will only prove cooperative when the benefits from dilution outweigh the risks.

The above logic leads to the following hypothesis:

H1: NGOs are granted more institutional access to an intergovernmental organization when the risk of the United States losing control over the organization increases.

3 Data and Quantitative Analysis

3.1 Dependent Variable: Change in Access

This study seeks to understand changes in NGO access over time. NGO access can be measured both on a binary scale (is access granted or not) and on a spectrum (the degree of access granted). For example, the World Bank's Central Projects Note 10.05 established a formal procedure for engaging with global civil society in 1981. Since then, the Bank has adopted additional rules that further determine the level of access NGOs are granted. Here, emphasis is placed on the degree of access; the greater their access, the more NGOs can theoretically make up for a loss of control. Moreover, this study is principally concerned with *change* in the level of access, as the US should amend the rules when its uncertainty increases.

Data for the dependent variable are taken from the TRANSACCESS data set, which constitutes the most comprehensive data on NGO participation to date (Sommerer and Tallberg 2017).⁶ Using a random sample of 50 IOs and 298 IO bodies, the data set measures

⁶Tallberg et al. 2014 use this data to study "transnational actors" (TNAs) which includes NGOs alongside

both the *Depth* and *Range* of NGO access to intergovernmental institutions from 1950-2010. *Depth* is defined as the degree of access NGOs are granted, whereas *Range* refers to the restrictions on which organizations are allowed access. These measures are then combined into an overall access score. This index (*Access*) constitutes my primary dependent variable, with the IGO-body-year as the unit of analysis. IGO fixed effects specifications are included in all main models to account for the change in access *within* IGO units and properly model my dynamic expectations.⁷

I expect the alliance of convenience to occur most frequently and severely in areas of high agent specialization. All forms of delegation to an organization require some degree of specialization, but certain activities and institutions provide far more. For example, the WTO’s General Council pools member-state authority into a main decision-making body with minimal bureaucratic oversight, whereas the WTO’s Appellate Body is highly specialized and insulated from direct member-state influence. To account for agent specialization, I leverage the TRANSACCESS decision-making body distinction to limit the main analysis to non-decision-making bodies. Analyses that include decision-making bodies are listed later, where I would expect the alliance of convenience to occur to a lesser degree or not occur at all.

3.2 Independent Variables and Controls

My primary explanatory variable is delegation risk perceived by the US, defined as increasing uncertainty occurring under agent specialization. Given that the decision-making body distinction within the dependent variable proxies for specialization, the independent variables serve to proxy American uncertainty. This can then be interacted with measures of NGO demands for access, to further test the predicted US–NGO collaboration. Using IGO

multinational corporations (MNCs). Theoretically, my argument on NGO access remains the same for both NGOs and MNCs, and Tallberg et al. acknowledge that the UN definition of NGO, “is close to that of TNAs in substantive terms” (2014, 761).

⁷For models in which fixed effects specifications are not appropriate, I modify the original index to measure the change in access over time within organizational bodies, grouped by the organization.

membership data from Pevehouse et al. (2019), I create three separate measures for the degree of uncertainty: preference divergence, security cooperation, and IGO membership ties among the organization’s membership.⁸ These general measures allow me to uniformly operationalize American control across organizations, which further distinguishes this study from other delegation studies that tend to emphasize singular organizations (Copelovitch 2010; Clark and Dolan 2021; Vreeland and Dreher 2014; Stone 2011) or treat member-states as a collective whole (Hawkins et al. 2006; Hooghe et al. 2017; Johnson 2014). Moreover, these measures can be easily switched to measure a different state’s influence, or be combined into an average measure for a particular group (e.g. the G5; the Permanent 5). I leverage this flexibility to probe my theory’s US-centrism in the results section.

Preferences among the membership constitute the main measure. Heterogeneous preferences among an organization’s membership can hamper successful delegation (Hawkins et al. 2006; Martin 2006; Nielson and Tierney 2003). Martin (2006, 144) specifically states that—when preferences diverge—“there is more likely to be a wide range of proposals that could gain majority approval. This gives the staff room to maneuver.” And Borzyskowski and Vabulas (2019) find that preference divergence is associated with IGO exit. Thus, with divergent preferences, the United States becomes less assured of activities occurring outside its formal influence. Using United Nations General Assembly voting data from Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten (2017), I calculated the average ideal point distance from the United States for each organization’s membership in a given year. Increases in the preference divergence indicate an increase in uncertainty. Alternative measures for uncertainty—security cooperation and membership ties—are provided as a robustness check (Table A8).

To measure NGO demands for access, I create the *NGO Protest* measure by modifying the protest index from Tallberg et al. (2014) to be a binary indicator for whether any significant civil society protest occurred against an organization in the preceding year.

I account for potential confounders with the inclusion of several control variables. Promi-

⁸I use the first as my primary measure. The other two are used as alternative measures in the Appendix.

ment IGOs with greater resources may attract NGOs while simultaneously maintaining larger, more divergent memberships. Since accurate and uniform data on IGO resources over time are not available, I proxy IGO prominence and resources by logging the overall GDP among an organization’s membership (*IGO Size*). While other studies use an organization’s total membership to proxy IGO resources (Pratt 2018; R. Clark 2021), measuring GDP accounts for material differences between organizations.⁹

NGOs have gained a strong influence alongside their proliferation (Raustiala 1997; Tarrow 2005). Indeed, the “supply” of NGOs has increased over time, particularly since the 1970s (Reimann 2006). I control for the broad influence of NGOs using Tallberg et al.’s measure of NGO quantity across time and against organizational contexts (Tallberg et al. 2014, 760–761). *NGO Supply* proxies this by indexing the number of transnational actors operating in a given year and region. Nonstate actors also have the power to legitimate organizations, particularly through democratic norms of accountability and transparency (Grigorescu 2007, 2015), and may gain access through the democratization of IGOs (Mansfield and Pevehouse 2006). I therefore include *Democratic Membership* to measure the average level of democracy among an IGO’s member-states. The variable is lagged one-year to account for sudden shifts in an IGO’s democracy-level.

Furthermore, IGOs do not operate independently (Pratt 2018), similar institutional contexts may reduce member-state uncertainty (Copelovitch and Putnam 2014), and NGO access may increase across organizations through a diffusion process (Sommerer and Tallberg 2019). I use data from Sommerer and Tallberg (2019) to measure *Diffusion*—the number of partnerships an IGO has with other organizations—and account for possible diffusion processes across time and institutions. Finally, the United States may not feel a loss of control via risk and uncertainty, but institutional power. Graham and Serdaru (2020) find that weighted vote shares and earmarked financial contributions serve as control “substitutes.” I create a variable that measures the US share of the organization’s total GDP (*US GDP Per-*

⁹Membership size is included as a control in Table A6.

centage) to account for this influence and roughly proxy the determinants of both weighted vote shares and financial contributions.

3.3 Results

I estimate ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions to test the proposed hypothesis. While not purely continuous, the indexed nature of the dependent variable is largely appropriate for OLS estimation. However, the data are left-censored at zero, which could lead to bias. Tobit and Heckman selection models can account for such left-sided data censorship. To facilitate interpretation and estimate fixed effects specifications, I report OLS models for the main results and include Tobit and Heckman selection models in the Appendix. IGO fixed effects are included to measure variation within units, a crucial specification given that the primary outcome of interest is the change in access within organizations. Body-level fixed effects are not included in the main models, as such a specification would discount the creation of new IGO bodies that are born with significant access levels. However, I include body-level fixed effects in Table A5. I also include year fixed effects to account for the general trend of increasing access over time. Standard errors are clustered at the organization-level.

The results presented in Table 1 are consistent with my theoretical expectations. Models 1 and 2 include the overall access of a body as their dependent variable, while Models 3 and 4 include the range of access for a given body.¹⁰ *US Preference Divergence* is positively significant across all models, suggesting that increases in uncertainty are associated with a positive change in NGO access in non-decision-making bodies. The positive significance for the range of access is important to note, as my theory suggests that the benefits of NGO dilution stem from a wide range of participants; to generate a cacophony of information, voices and tasks, the US does not impose limits on the types of actors allowed in. But NGOs may aid US policy preferences through preference alignment instead. Under this alternative explanation, the United States limits access to only include ideologically similar groups. Thus,

¹⁰As a reminder, the greater the range of access, the more NGOs are allowed to participate.

it is the increase in friendly actors—rather than an increase in *all* actors—that incentivizes the United States to push for access. However, the direction of the relationships remains similar across both overall access and the range of access, suggesting that the US supports indiscriminate access.

Table 1: Effects of US Uncertainty on Access in Non-Decision-Making Bodies

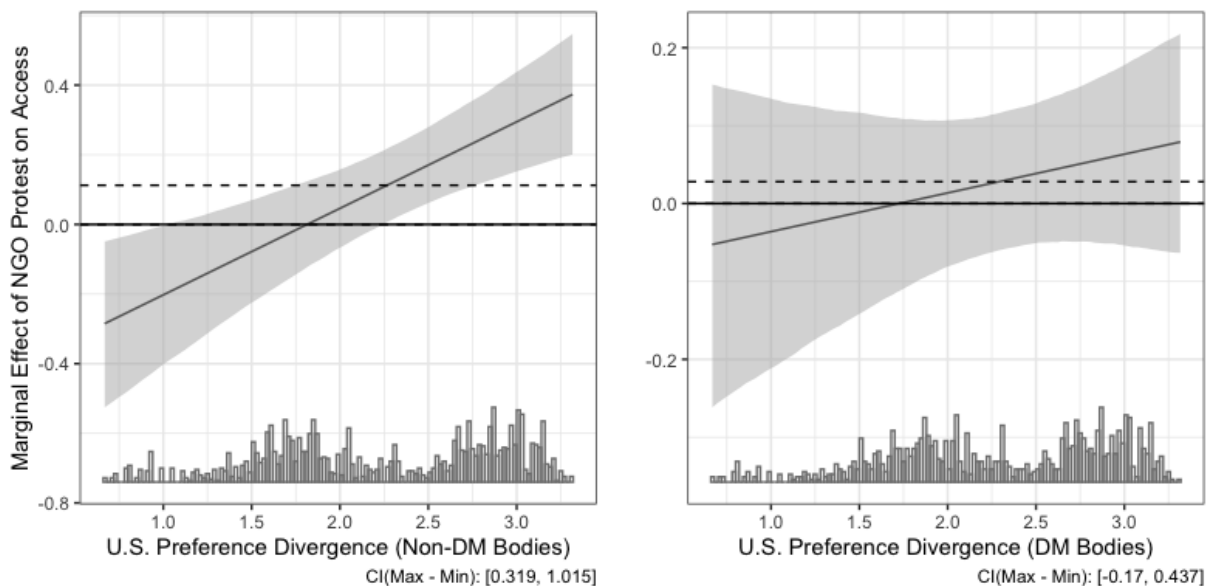
	Overall Access		Range of Access	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
US Preference Divergence	0.821*** (0.064)	0.466*** (0.108)	0.484*** (0.042)	0.305*** (0.061)
IGO Size		−0.162 (0.827)		0.119 (0.567)
Diffusion		−0.422 (0.292)		−0.257 (0.193)
US GDP Percentage		0.082 (2.157)		0.226 (1.404)
Democratic Membership		0.043** (0.018)		0.027** (0.012)
NGO Supply		0.170 (0.271)		0.031 (0.174)
IGO fixed effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	2408	2034	2408	2034
Adj. R-squared	0.665	0.702	0.666	0.702

***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1

Standard errors clustered by the organization (in parentheses)

The above results support the proposition that the access is granted when the United States begins to lose control of an organization. But what of NGO demands for access and their role in negotiating institutional design? To further test the collaboration between the United States and NGOs, I re-estimate Model 2 as an interactive effect between *US Preference Divergence* and *NGO Protest*, running separate models for decision-making bodies and non-decision-making bodies. Figure 4 shows the marginal effect of *NGO protest* on access

Figure 4: Marginal Effects of NGO Protest Interacted with US Uncertainty



as US preferences increasingly diverge from an organization's overall membership.¹¹ As my theory expects, there is a positive interaction between protest and American uncertainty on changes in access for non-decision-making bodies, but no significant relationship on access for decision-making bodies. These findings suggest that NGO demands for access rely upon the present US risk calculation to succeed.

I next probe this paper's US-centrism, as other state principals desire control over intergovernmental organizations and should experience variation in uncertainty over agent specialization (Hawkins et al. 2006). These principals, particularly the most powerful, may also benefit from NGO dilution. The independent variable is amended to measure the mean uncertainty between France, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States, a group commonly referred to as the G5. While this group is not always the most influential in every organization (e.g. the P5 in the UN Security Council), the G5 are broadly influential due to their financial power and frequent collaboration (Copelovitch 2010). We may therefore expect NGO access to increase when the G5 collectively updates their risk calcu-

¹¹The `interplot.medline` package was used to create the figure (<https://tompepinsky.com/research/code/>).

lation. However, the G5 measure is insignificant (see Appendix, Table 9). Furthermore, in a horse-race model between US preference divergence and G5 preference divergence, the US variable retains its significance while the G5 variable becomes negatively significant. I therefore maintain that the alliance of convenience applies best to the United States, although future work should explore the interactions between the United States and its allies.

3.4 Robustness Checks

A series of robustness checks further tests the proposed relationship. The results remain broadly similar for all specifications. The tables can be found in a separate **Appendix**, which is linked and available upon request.¹² I follow Box-Steffensmeier et al. (2014, 77) and implement the Cochrane-Orcutt procedure in Table A1 to account for serial correlation. I then switch out the Cochrane-Orcutt procedure for a first difference estimator in Table A2. And while reverse causality is not a significant concern, I also lag the main independent variable by 1 and 3 years to account for long periods of negotiation over institutional design, although I maintain that changes in access frequently occur in one year or less (see Section 4 below). Indeed, while a one-year lag maintains its positive significance, the three year lag is not significant at the .05 level. This further supports the theoretical proposition that the United States reacts quickly in response to increasing uncertainty and is not simply following broader trends. Issue-area dummies are included in Table A6 to account for variations in uncertainty affected by the underlying cooperation problem (Koremenos 2016), alongside additional controls that account for an organization’s membership size and its membership’s overall preference affinity.¹³

A placebo check further accounts for general temporal trends, organizational particularities, and the possibility that increased uncertainty forces the United States to accede to

¹²Models with the interactive effect are included in most tables, although space concerns in the Appendix prevent their inclusion in all specifications.

¹³I exclude such controls from the main analysis due to potential multicollinearity with the independent variable.

increased access, rather than push for it (Table A4). Here, one switches out the original dependent variable with data collected under similar circumstances, but where no theoretical relationship is expected. Obtaining similar results with the new dependent variables would draw skepticism to the original findings. Using data from Hooghe et al. (2017), I change the dependent variable to delegation and pooling, two other prominent institutional design features that are frequently compared to access (Tallberg et al. 2020).¹⁴ Similar to access, these two design features have experienced upward trends over time. Thus, the placebo check tests if increases in uncertainty are simply correlated with general developments in global governance. Furthermore, if we assume bureaucrats prefer increased delegation and pooling from member-states to insulate their own activities (Johnson 2014), then positive correlations would also suggest that bureaucrats can take advantage of American uncertainty and increase access against the wishes of the US. However, the effect of American uncertainty is either insignificant or negative for both delegation and pooling. These findings support the theoretical importance of the original correlations found in the main results.

As mentioned above, Tobit models and Heckman selection models are estimated to account for left censoring in the dependent variable (Table A7). To replace the IGO and year fixed effects estimates for these models, I model the DV as the change in access over time and include a binary indicator for periods after 1990, a common structural break in NGO influence (Tallberg et al. 2014, 749). The results are largely similar. I also leverage the Heckman’s two-step design to compare decision-making against non-decision-making bodies. The Heckman selection probit first measures whether a body is open or not.¹⁵ The outcome equation then estimates the effect of the independent variables on any change in access *after* the initial access is granted.¹⁶ The results for non-decision-making bodies are similar to the original estimates, but the measures become insignificant for decision-making bodies in the

¹⁴The nature of these data demand that the analyses be kept at the IO-level.

¹⁵I include an additional control variable *Technical Complexity* from Tallberg et al. (2014) to fulfil Heckman assumptions on the selection model.

¹⁶The selection and outcome equation results are included in Table A10. Models 1 and 3 account for access in non-decision-making bodies, while Models 2 and 4 cover access across decision-making bodies.

second stage. This matches the theoretical expectations and highlights the importance of specialization for risk calculation.¹⁷

I also create alternative measures—security agreements and IGO membership ties—to further test the findings and account for temporal trends (Table A8). In contrast to using preference divergence as a measure of uncertainty, increases in these two measures suggest greater certainty over the delegation arrangement. Greater security coordination among the membership should reduce US uncertainty as alliance partners share geopolitical goals. To proxy security coordination, I use data from Kinne (2020) to index the average number of bilateral defense cooperation agreements (DCAs) the United States maintains with IO members. Compared to formal alliances, DCAs present more significant variation in the post-World War 2 era (Kinne 2018). I also measure the average number of shared IGO membership ties the United States holds with member-states in an organization as shared membership may reduce uncertainty and conflict between states (Pevehouse and Russett 2006; Lupu and Greenhill 2017). More shared ties thus imply greater certainty about the organization. I use data from Greenhill and Lupu (2017) to count the average number of shared IGO memberships the United States holds with states within a particular organization. Both *DCAs* and *IGO ties* are negatively significant, suggesting that increases in uncertainty are associated with a positive change in NGO access while decreases are associated with a decrease in NGO access. Notably, both measures maintain upward averages over time. If general temporal trends were driving the results—a significant confounder given the upward trend also exhibited by access (see Figure 1)—we would expect both variables to be positively significant. However, the negative coefficients suggest that the alliance of convenience remains insulated from such trends.

¹⁷In addition, if IO bureaucrats or NGOs were exploiting the United States’ loss of control to build inter-organizational alliances and gain access against the United States’ preferences, we might expect access to increase in all bodies, regardless of decision-making status (Steffek 2013; Johnson 2016; Lall 2017).

4 Assessing the Mechanisms: The Creation of the World Bank Inspection Panel

This section presents an in-depth case study to uncover the mechanisms by which NGOs were granted additional access to the World Bank via the Inspection Panel’s creation. While quantitative analyses can identify the conditions and sequencing under which access is likely to change, they cannot pinpoint the granular process by which institutional rules are amended, particularly the complex interaction I expect to occur between NGOs and the United States. The Inspection Panel is an independent accountability mechanism that can receive civil society complaints regarding project implementation. Created in 1993, the Panel offers a quintessential example of dilution; with no case limit and access provided to a variety of outside actors, a flood of complaints is theoretically possible (Woods 2001, 93). And while affected parties have only filed 157 cases at the time of writing, the possibility of overburdening the Bank with cases was a frequently cited concern prior to its creation. Moreover, the threat of complaints compelled staff members to “panel-proof” projects before implementation, adding another task for their portfolio (Wade 1997, 729). Some member-states recognized these factors at the time and resisted the Panel’s creation (Nelson and Tierney 2003, 263). The case thus presents the opportunity to examine how other member-states eventually acceded to the change in access.

What do I expect to find regarding US strategy and NGO coordination? A 1981 Treasury Report details American control across multilateral development banks, with an emphasis on the World Bank and the conditions under which the United States can best achieve its objectives. Specifically, the United States is more likely to achieve a significant policy objective when: 1. The US commitment is clear, strong, unified; 2. The US expends political capital; 3. Other major donors support the proposal; 4. Bank management supports the proposal; and 5. Congress is actively involved (Department of the Treasury 1982; McKeown 2009, 282). If my argument is supported, NGOs will facilitate the fulfillment of the above

conditions on the path to creating the Inspection Panel. Evidence against my proposed mechanisms would include the complete exclusion of NGOs from the above conditions, or factors that change the drivers of access, such as the Bank staff bringing NGOs in, or the complete capitulation of the Executive Branch to NGO and Congressional demands. In short, the alliance of convenience requires close coordination between NGOs, Congress, and the various Executive Branch actors alongside sustained pressure from the United States overall. Table 2 summarizes how NGOs and Executive Branch officials fulfilled these conditions to create the Panel.

Indeed, US pressure seen as an important condition for reform at the Bank, at least from the American perspective. In April 1993, Patrick Coady, the outgoing Executive Director under the Bush administration stated his view clearly:

“Without US leadership, it’s hard for the Bank to change. The Bank resists change. Unless there is some force applied, nothing happens. I think that this is often interpreted by many others—other Directors, other countries—as a form of heavy-handedness. Such feelings are nothing new. There has been a long history of tension between the US and the Bank’s other member countries.”¹⁸

As the following case will reveal, this statement applied well to the Panel’s creation, albeit with close NGO coordination. NGOs lobbied members of Congress, which had the dual effect of creating a unified US front and convinced the Bank’s management to accept the change. NGOs then shared their preferences with Treasury and White House officials, but the Executive Branch was careful to mediate NGO concerns with US interests. Crucially, access was only guaranteed when Executive Branch officials lobbied other donor states by expending significant political capital. As Table 2 summarizes, NGOs and US officials simultaneously constructed a unified American front in support of increased access, while each group separately influenced different factors that would increase the probability of success.

The importance of US influence was evident for prior changes in access. The United

¹⁸Patrick E. Coady, interview by William Becker and David Milobsky, April 19, 1993, interview 1, transcript, World Bank Group Archives Oral Histories.

Table 2: The Alliance of Convenience and the Creation of the World Bank Inspection Panel.

Factors Promoting Outcome	US Commitment Clear, Strong, Unified	US Expends Political Capital	Other Donors Support Proposal	Congress Actively Involved	Bank Management Supports Proposal
Executive Branch Coordination	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Significant NGO Activity	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes (via Congress)

States pushed for both increased NGO participation and environmental monitoring in the late 1980s. In 1987 Congress passed 22 USC. 262m-5 which called on the American executive directors to “vigorously promote participation by borrowing country NGOs at all stages of preparation for loans that may have adverse environmental or sociocultural impacts.” (Government Accountability Office 1998, p. 16). And the 1989 Pelosi Amendment specified that international financial institutions must allow for public inspection of a project’s environmental impact 120 days before approval if it is to have US support. In particular, it stressed the importance of NGO monitoring in implementing this measure. The timing coincided with the Bank’s adoption of Operational Policy Note 14.70 in August 1989, which explicitly encouraged Bank staff to involve NGOs in the project cycle. As Charles Dallara, Assistant Secretary for International Affairs at the US Treasury put it, “Our insistence on the participation of non-governmental organizations and affected communities in the project cycle will also yield fruits in the form of improved project design and better prospects for implementation success.” (One Hundred First Congress 1990, p. 43). Overall, the United States was a principal driver in the increased participation of NGOs at the Bank, for reasons

beyond specific environmental concerns.

While the United States supported an increase in NGO participation, through both Congressional statutes and Executive direction, Bank staffers recognized the present and potential roles NGOs held, but did not appear to actively push for increased participation. A 1985 Bank report on early NGO participation recommended that NGOs participate more fully on certain projects, without necessarily increasing the number of projects that included participation, stating, “NGO involvement is not an end in itself but a means to enhance certain important aspects of a project.” (World Bank 1985, p. 11-12). Similarly, a 1989 internal review recognized several NGO benefits, but did not include increased access or participation as one of its many policy recommendations (Salmen and Eaves 1988). Thus, while the Bank was not outright opposed to increased NGO access during this time, it clearly struck a more cautious tone when compared to the preferences put forth by the United States. Indeed, NGO participation on projects would often contradict the work of bureaucrats. Involved NGOs would inform their home country’s executive director of a project’s implementation, who often felt as though “Bank staff gave them ever hopeful, rosy reports with emphasis on selected areas of progress while they received very different reports from NGOs.” (Wyss 1993, p. 6).

Prior to the Inspection Panel’s establishment, a regular NGO-US government dialogue had formed within the Bank. When provided with an early draft of a major position paper, the American Executive Director to the World Bank would often call NGOs together to debrief them (Kapur, Lewis, and Webb 1997, 366). During the Inspection Panel’s formation, prominent NGOs were meeting with various US agencies monthly on the activities of the various multilateral development banks, and on a more regular–yet informal–basis with Treasury Department officials and the US Executive Director’s office (Department of the Treasury 2018b, 18). However, NGO influence on the Executive Branch was often curbed. While Treasury and White House officials listened intently on NGO concerns regarding the environment, they did not support other NGO issues, such as structural adjustment and

debt relief, which received little to no genuine dialogue in the World Bank, despite many NGOs pushing reforms on these issues far more (Nelson 1995, 64–65).

The drive to form an independent accountability body for the World Bank began in the spring of 1992 and moved quickly over the next year and a half. The Bank accepted its first outside inquiry into its implementation with the Morse Commission, an independent review team that investigated the disastrous project performance of the Sardar Saraovar project in India’s Narmada Valley. The Commission released its report on June 18, 1992, detailing the poor policymaking from Bank staff with particular attention given to its negative environmental impact (World Bank 2018a). That same day, the Environmental Defense Fund, flanked by supporting NGOs, called for the creation of a permanent appeals mechanism that would hear complaints from non-state actors (World Bank 1992; Udall and Lammers 1992). In October, the US Executive Director stated his extreme dissatisfaction with the Bank’s performance to the Executive Board, yet the Board still voted to continue the project’s implementation (D. Clark 2003, 5).

One month later, the Wapenhans Report, commissioned by Bank President Lewis Preston, issued another substantial critique of the Bank’s performance, detailing the “approval culture” that had formed among Bank staff and incentivized getting projects out the door without proper attention given to their design and implementation (Wapenhans 1992). On February 10, 1993, the executive directors of Chile, Germany, Malaysia and the Netherlands submitted a memo in response to the report that outlined a new evaluation unit to be housed within the Bank.¹⁹ A staff report analyzing the proposal concluded that there was no need for such a unit, proposing an *ad hoc* procedure of complaints instead (Shihata 1994). Neither proposal included space for non-state actors. Separately, on February 15, US President Clinton issued a Presidential Review Directive to evaluate American environmental policy, to include a thorough review of US control over multilateral development banks completed

¹⁹Aside from the largest shareholders, most Executive Board Directors speak on behalf of a larger country-bloc. However, for the sake of readability, I have opted to only reference the nationality of the appointed director at the time.

by the Treasury Department (Lake 2010).

Meanwhile, NGOs directly sought to change the Bank’s accountability from the outside. Two separate campaigns were planned. The first, “Fifty Years is Enough,” campaign began in the fall of 1993—to culminate with the 50-year anniversary of the Bretton Woods institutions—and brought together a wide range of NGOs into a broad protest that often vacillated between different tactics and objectives, with much disagreement across groups (Cleary 1996, 89). A second, more focused campaign set a principal goal of establishing a permanent accountability mechanism and emphasized a dialogue with the United States. Led by the US-based Environmental Defense Fund and Center for International Environmental Law, this campaign lobbied Congress to leverage its approval of the next IDA replenishment, gaining a valuable ally with Representative Barney Frank, chairman of the relevant Subcommittee on International Development, Finance, Trade and Monetary Policy (D. Clark 2003, 7). Congress made good on the replenishment threat, and Bank staff reversed their initial skepticism and drafted a proposal that was secretly shared with members of Congress prior to its presentation to the Board (Wade 1997, 727). President Preston circulated an official memo supporting the creation of a inspection function on June 10, 1993, the same day the IDA’s replenishment was approved (D. Clark 2003, p. 8).

While the Bank staff now supported increased access, the Executive Board needed to approve any major reforms. The Board met the following July to discuss various proposals for the accountability mechanism, and while it was clear a body of some sort would be created, access to NGOs was contested, much less guaranteed. Several states raised concerns over dilution. Borrowing states stood firmly opposed to increased access and the subsequent “demand-driven” nature of complaints that could arise. Kuwait stressed “the serious risk of inviting complaints from a flourishing array of NGOs seeking to further all sorts of agendas,” (World Bank 2018d, 100). The United States responded with an endorsement to involve “affected parties,” (Ibid, 108-109). But other donor states remained skeptical. The Netherlands expressed concern over NGOs using the new body as a personal tribunal.

Germany added, “And, we have to limit access. It would not be fruitful to permit each and every interested party. Otherwise, we might be taken hostage by outside forces,” (Ibid, 180). By the meeting’s end, the vast majority of the Board, in both members and voting power, remained opposed to or, at best, skeptical of increased access through the Panel.

Meanwhile, the Clinton administration formed its strategy. In the face of growing uncertainty over Bank activities, a draft Treasury report commissioned by Clinton’s National Security Council provided several policy options to strengthen US oversight, including the incorporation of NGOs to “evaluate the extent to which the MDBs are fulfilling recent policy commitments, meeting US legislative benchmarks, and accomplishing their mission to finance sustainable development,” (Department of the Treasury 2018b, 22). By July 26, White House officials had designated this as a top priority in their draft comments, stressing the importance of encouraging development banks to “make greater use of NGOs, particularly local ones, in developing, implementing, and monitoring projects,” and sponsoring the establishment of an independent inspection panel at the World Bank (Council on Environmental Quality 2018a, 6). However, the Treasury report did not endorse all NGO priorities—carefully recording if NGOs supported or opposed certain policy choices—and reiterated that fully appeasing NGOs would lead to a loss of legitimacy among the Bank’s membership, who may perceive the US as acting only on its own behalf due to domestic NGO pressure (Council on Environmental Quality 2018a; Department of the Treasury 2018b, 9).

By August 2, Bank staff had compiled a draft proposal based on the July Executive Board discussion, with another meeting to be held in late August. NGOs reviewed the proposal and Jim Barnes—of Friends of the Earth—messed Eileen Claussen, Special Assistant to the President Clinton and Senior Director for Global Environmental Affairs, on August 12 to meet on the proposal (Council on Environmental Quality 2018c). A meeting was set for August 23, just three days before the next Executive Board meeting on the topic. But NGOs continued to pepper the Executive Branch with communiqués. High-level Treasury officials Susan Levine and Jeffrey Shafer met with NGOs twice the second week of August

to discuss next steps (Council on Environmental Quality 2018b). On August 20, Lori Udall, of the Environmental Defense Fund, sent Claussen comments—compiled with several other influential groups—on the proposal, asking that “The Clinton Administration should insist on improvements to the existing proposal, as outlined below. The Clinton Administration should use all diplomatic channels to work with other member governments to revise the current proposal,” (Council on Environmental Quality 2018d, 6).

Yet this pipeline of NGO contact represented just one aspect of the American strategy. After being called by Barbara Bramble, of the National Wildlife Foundation, Aimée Christensen, then an “Intern for International Issues,” sent a memo to Claussen. Christensen, who briefed memoranda for President Clinton, had an ear to all relevant Executive Branch actors. Mark Rentschler, Assistant Director for Sustainable Development for Treasury, remained skeptical of what could be accomplished by meeting with NGOs, since it was not the preferences of the United States that held back access, but other member-states on the Board (Council on Environmental Quality 2018b). The administration had David Harwood, of the State Department, send cables to “urge other Board members to work with us,” (Ibid, 1). NGOs sent Harwood last-minute informational reports, and he had to move quickly to give country representatives time to respond by the next Board meeting on August 26. Meanwhile, Treasury officials deployed their own lobbying effort, although they were constrained since the Senate had not yet confirmed an executive director, which led to the interesting phenomena of high-level Treasury Officials, like Levine and Shafer, conducting the diplomatic ground-work themselves (Ibid, 1).

The influence of this work was evident by the Board’s discussions on the topic, although the requisite votes were not yet assured. On August 26, many borrowing states remained firm in their opposition to access: Saudi Arabia was “not comfortable with the perception that Executive Directors could be viewed on equal footing with outside audiences,” while Algeria was reluctant to accept complaints from any “third parties,” (World Bank 2018b, 40). The United States was firm on the present proposal’s carve-out for outside complaints

but reassured the room that access would not elevate said actors to the Board’s level (Ibid, 21). This rhetoric appeared effective; the following day, India cited the previous discussion as evidence for the importance of including affected parties in the mechanism. Other states also came around, albeit with conditions. France acknowledged the difficulties that would arise from direct access but acceded to the proposal with certain limitations. Japan and Russia agreed. And yet, despite such progress, access was not guaranteed. China wished for the Board to retain exclusive complaint powers, and the Central African Republic did not see why NGOs could not simply lodge complaints through their country’s respective Board member (World Bank 2018c).

One final bout of lobbying from the Executive Branch secured access. On September 1, Shafer—then Assistant Secretary of International Affairs for the Treasury and acting Executive Director to the Bank—wrote to US officials in the State Department, USAID, and the White House to say that, while other member-states had previously blocked the transparency initiative in the Bank, an “intensive Treasury Department lobbying effort with other members of the Board” had made significant gains, and positive progress on the Inspection Panel’s adoption was expected by late September or early October (Department of the Treasury 2018a, 1–2). The prediction proved accurate. Enough votes were secured once the United Kingdom reluctantly gave its vote in exchange for American support to host the 1997 General Summit in Hong Kong (Kapur, Lewis, and Webb 1997, 34). On September 22, the Executive Board narrowly adopted IBRD 93-10 and IDA 93-6, officially creating the Inspection Panel with substantial access for third-party complaints.

5 Conclusion

I have argued that nonstate access to IGOs, as a choice of institutional design, is driven by the interests of powerful member-states working alongside NGOs. Specifically, the United States will support increased access upon perceiving a loss of control over the organization

in question. Control is lost when uncertainty increases in the context of agent specialization. US officials then update their risk calculation and coordinate with NGOs to change the organization’s rules and increase access. This “alliance of convenience” works to solidify American influence. NGOs indirectly aid American interests by diluting the normal policy-making process with additional information, preferences and tasks. But benefits are not guaranteed; as independent actors, the dilution NGOs provide will occasionally go against American preferences. US officials therefore only support increased access when control has already been lost.

My statistical findings and qualitative process-tracing support this hypothesis. Using the TRANSACCESS dataset from Sommerer and Tallberg (2017) alongside original measures of organizational uncertainty, I find that increasing uncertainty in specialized bodies is strongly associated with greater NGO access. Various robustness checks uphold this relationship and provide additional evidence for the theory’s specific mechanisms. A case study on the World Bank Inspection Panel also supports the proposed theoretical explanation, with an emphasis on the underlying mechanisms. There, US officials and NGOs collaborated to ensure substantial access was granted through the new accountability mechanism. The findings do not discount the alternative functionalist and norm-based explanations behind NGO participation. Rather, they highlight an additional incentive that emphasizes NGOs demands and American preferences. NGOs can provide meaningful policy advantages and spread shared values while simultaneously aiding the political interests of the United States.

This paper makes several important contributions. Scholars have long recognized the importance of NGOs and the design of international organizations, but most studies have emphasized select IOs and cases (Tallberg et al. 2013, 18). This study adds to the field’s burgeoning—but still nascent—understanding of NGO participation in global governance from a broad comparative perspective. Moreover, the argument emphasizes the role of the state and its preferences toward NGOs, an under-theorized relationship in the literature (Vabulas 2013). Indeed, Raustiala (1997) theorizes that NGO proliferation represents an

expansion of the state in global environmental governance. This study suggests that, under certain conditions, this perspective can apply to NGO participation within IGOs, but with proper agency given to each actor; here, the NGO-state relationship is built on mutualism. The alliance of convenience allows NGOs to simultaneously advance their own agendas while extending the influence of the United States.

Second, my explanation stresses the role of power and process in institutional design, and provides an answer to when states will choose to change an institution over alternative options (Jupille, Mattli, and Snidal 2013). International organizations operate in evolving environments, which can prompt institutional change (Lipsky 2017). But while the makeup of an organization can change dramatically, my explanation emphasizes the ways in which institutional rules can change in tandem to maintain invested interests. And while powerful actors may be able to work outside an institution's formal rules in crucial times (Stone 2011), I propose that formally integrating informal means of control can provide important systemic benefits. The changing landscapes of global governance may represent a consolidation, rather than an upheaval, of the *status quo*.

The analysis holds several limitations that should be left to future study. Principally, the analysis only investigates the determinants of formal rule changes that grant and increase the access NGOs are given. Thus, while the United States may initially push for access to regain control, it is unclear the extent to which NGOs contribute to the American political interests once they are allowed inside an organization. Future work should investigate the patterns of NGO participation within IGOs beyond institutional design. In addition, this paper's focus on formal access does not address how NGO-IGO relations evolve after a change in access is granted. While I suggest that bureaucrats are often wary of granting formal access initially, this does not negate the possibility of bureaucrats changing and improving their relationship with NGOs over time (Johnson 2016). Investigating the strategies bureaucrats deploy to accommodate non-state participation would be a fruitful avenue for future research. Overall, the complex interactions between states, bureaucrats and non-state actors within

international organizations hold much promise for further study.

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