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Abstract

This paper addresses the puzzle of why, and under what conditions, international organizations cease to exist. International relations literature offers rich explanations for the creation, design and effectiveness of international institutions and organizations, but surprisingly little effort has gone into studying the dynamics of IO termination. Yet if we want to understand why and under what conditions international organizations endure, we must also explain why they often fail to do so. The present paper formulates and tests theoretical conjectures about IO termination using a combination of statistical analysis and historical case studies. My analysis is based on an original dataset covering the period 1815-2016. I find that exogenous shocks is a leading proximate cause of IO deaths since 1815 but that international organizations that are well-established, have large memberships and technical mandates have higher survival rates. My analysis leads me to suggest a number of refinements to existing theories institutional robustness.

Keywords

International organizations, institutionalist theory, institutional design, IO mortality.

On 14 November 1936, Germany withdrew from the international conventions establishing the International Commissions of the Danube, the Elbe, the Oder, and the Central Commission for Navigation of the Rhine.[1] Whilst they were never officially dissolved, the Elbe, Oder and Danube River Commissions never resumed their functions, whereas the Rhine Commission continues its operation to this day, making it the oldest international organization (IO) in modern history. On 31 March 1991, members of the Warsaw Pact voted to terminate their alliance in view of monumental geopolitical changes. The Pact thus joined long list of institutionalized multilateral alliances that have been eventually relegated to history.[2] By contrast, its western counterpart, NATO, went on to expand its membership and mission, leading international relations (IR) scholars from various theoretical perspectives to hail it as an exemplar of the remarkable durability of international institutions (e.g., McCalla 1996; Wallander 2000; Menon and Welsh 2011).

Why do IOs (sometimes) die? Why some IOs and not others? From the perspective of existing scholarly literature, IO terminations present a puzzle. An extensive literature in IR asserts that international institutions and organizations arise from costly negotiation and contracting processes that are far too deeply ingrained in underlying social and political structures to simply reverse (Cotrell 2016:21; Strange 1998). Rational choice theories invoke high negotiating costs and 'increasing returns' from institutionalized cooperation to ground the notion that states will seek to maintain existing institutions as long as feasible and—at any rate—"long after the original conditions for their creation have disappeared" (Keohane 1984:215; Stein 1990:50). Sociological institutionalists highlight normative and cognitive biases leading to 'competency traps' (March and Olsen 1998:964) and institutional status quo bias (Crawford 2002:109; Finnemore and Sikkink 2001), historical institutionalists cite positive feedback and lock-in effects producing path-dependence (North 1990:95; Pierson 2004), while organizational theorists highlight international secretariats' strategic use of bureaucratic resources to resist obsolescence (Shanks et al. 1996:593; Barnett and Finnemore 2004). While they depart from vastly different theoretical assumptions, what these perspectives have in common is a general expectation that institutional change is predominantly *incremental* and institutional death rare (Cappoccio and Kelemen 2007; Cotrell 2016:21; North 1990:89-94). As Shanks and co-authors (1996:593) summarize, "no-body expects public institutions to die."

IOs do of course die. Of 561 intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) created between 1815-2006, 216 (about two-fifths) have since ceased to exist (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2018). Why, given the high costs of creating international institutions and the lasting benefits they produce, do states often abandon established IOs? Under what conditions are IOs most likely to terminate? Existing scholarship provides surprisingly limited analytical leverage on these questions. For decades, IR scholars have focused on explaining patterns of institutional creation and design, and on theorizing the underpinnings of institutional *robustness*—understood broadly as "the ability of international institutions to endure despite exogenous change" (Hasenclever et al. 1992:2).[3] This lopsided focus on explicating institutional *endurance* (rather than termination) has led to widespread selection bias, insofar as scholars have systematically favoured the study of the living over the dead.[4] Thus, many studies of institutional

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1 German Waterways, Treaty Denunciation, 1936.

2 *Inter alia*, Brussels Treaty Organization, 1948-1954; South East Asian Treaty Organization, 1954-1977; Australia, New Zeeland, United States Security Treaty, 1951-1984; Central Treaty Organization, 1955-1979, and Western European Union, 1954-2011.

3 Notable exceptions include Shanks et al. (1996) who analyse causes of decline in the IGO population from 1982-1991, Abbott et al. (2016) who draw on ecological theory to explain how changing environmental conditions have facilitated the rise of private transnational regulatory organizations at the expense of IGOs, and Gray (2018) who analyses variation in the vitality of regional economic organizations.

4 The widespread tendency to study surviving IOs is partly determined by prior theoretical assumptions, but an element of optical fallacy may also be at work: because enduring IOs *endure*, they are easier to identify and analyse than their deceased counterparts, leading to systematic bias in favour of studying IGOs that survive exogenous shock or internal contestation rather than those that succumb.

'robustness' focus rather one-sidedly on a handful of enduring IOs while ignoring prominent organizational failures. For example, the substantial literature focus on explaining NATO's survival and expansion after the Cold War (e.g., Wallander 2000; McCalla 1996; Menon and Welsh 2011. cf. Lake 2001) contains surprisingly few references—let alone focused comparison—to former institutionalized alliances that dissolved once exogenous threats subsided. This bias, I submit, has led scholars to widely overestimate institutional robustness and to overlook processes that lead to institutional termination. On the flipside, the comparatively sparse literature on institutional collapse has tended to focus on individual cases (Bernholz 2009), or has centred on select segments of the population (Cotrell 2016; Panke and Peterson 2011; Shanks et al. 1996; Gray 2018[5]). Limited by functional specificities and historical contingency, such studies fail to offer a general explanation of institutional death that can account for mortality patterns across a wider universe of cases.

This article attempts to fill this gap by providing a theory-based analysis of organizational death across the population of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) since 1815. It builds on and extends earlier statistical analysis of IGO death by formulating and testing a number of specific theoretical conjectures, and by supplementing population-wide analysis with detailed case studies of IGO terminations during specific historical 'stress periods' or 'critical junctures.' Previous research has established that IGO terminations correlate strongly with geopolitical shocks and with certain institutional traits such as small size and young age (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2018). Yet, without understanding how these factors influence institutional demise in specific cases, we are no closer to comprehending what causes IGO termination v. endurance. My ambition in this article is thus to distinguish various factors and processes that determine IGO death, to identify the circumstances under which such processes are likely to occur, and to establish how they unfold in specific cases.

I begin with a brief discussion of the central concepts relevant to this study. Next I outline broad historical patterns of IGO mortality to motivate my research question(s), and to identify historical periods and organizational aspects of particular interest. In the third section I turn to leading institutionalist theories to derive hypotheses about the causes of IGO termination. Section 4 turns to fine-grained empirical analysis, combining medium-*n* statistical analysis with individual case studies. I conclude by discussing the implications of my analysis for existing institutional theories.

Data and Methods

My analysis is based on an expanded version of the Dead-IGO (DIGO) dataset, which contains information on all IGOs created between 1815-2006, tracking their fate until 2016. This dataset includes IGOs listed in the Correlates of War (COW) IGO-Datasets (version 2.3) *plus* an additional 36 IGOs that are not included in the COW. In addition to listing the fate of individual IGOs ('defunct' or 'operational') as of 2016, the dataset codes core institutional features including number of state parties, scope of mandate and centralization,[6] along with factors of organizational age and geographic location. (a detailed explanation of coding criteria is in the codebook).

My empirical analysis combines population-wide statistical analysis and case study. Starting with population-wide analysis is necessary for two reasons. First, it is possible that terminations may be driven by different antecedent conditions in different segments of the IGO population. Yet without first observing variation across the whole population, we cannot know what the relevant segments might be. Second, population-wide analysis can identify broad regularities which may serve as a source of hypothesis development. Single or small-*n* studies of IGO death—while useful in recognizing an important phenomenon—have distinct liabilities when used as a source of development of concepts and

[5] Gray's 2018 study of the vitality of regional economic organizations provides the most comprehensive analysis of robustness/frailty in a larger segment of the IGO-population.

[6] My measure of centralization is based on data from Westerwinter and Reinsberg (2019) who code the presence of dispute settlement, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms for the universe of IGOs.

hypotheses about variation in IGO mortality. As Pierson notes (2004:141), reliance on single cases often leads scholars to focus on immediate sources of institutional change—the 'catalysts'—but have a harder time identifying the role of underlying structural factors. Because they present isolated studies of institutional collapse at particular points in time, we cannot be certain what factors are important in generating the observed outcomes (opcit.; Baum and Shipilov 2006). For these reasons, I begin with a population-wide statistical survey to ground my formulation of hypotheses before proceeding to test individual theoretical conjectures through a combination of medium-*n* statistical analysis and detailed case-studies designed to establish whether particular causal mechanisms are present in specific cases and produce the expected outcome(s).

Theoretical contribution

My analysis contributes to several avenues of research on international institutions and -organizations. First, by moving the study of institutional collapse beyond the study of single cases of dissolved IGOs, I seek to advance our empirical and theoretical understanding of when and how international institutions die. In doing so, I also seek to refine previous theoretical understandings of what allows some IGOs to endure. As discussed, studies of institutional robustness have predominantly focused on highly robust international organizations. We are, however, unlikely to discover the factors underpinning organizational robustness by examining only enduring organizations. Long-lived IGOs may share certain features, but without carefully examining organizations that did not last, we cannot know whether and how they differed. Bringing to light data on dead IGOs thus enables us to test the validity of existing theories of institutional robustness against a larger array of cases, and to generate new hypotheses about what accounts for the remarkable endurance of some international organizations.

Key Concepts

Before proceeding, it is necessary to briefly clarify the unit of analysis and thus delimit the universe of cases. The international institutions that are the focus of this study are *formal* intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) established by charter or international treaty—as opposed to looser collections of unwritten rules, norms or conventions. To qualify as an IGO an organization must have a written charter, at least three sovereign contracting parties, and an independent administrative apparatus in the form of a permanent secretariat or staff (Pevehouse et al. 2004).[7]

The termination of formal IGOs must be clearly distinguished from situations in which deeply embedded informal norms and practices lose their prescriptive status. Such cases have been the focus of previous studies of how norm-contestation and de-legitimation may trigger institutional change (Panke and Peterson 2011; Cotrell 2009, 2016). I limit my analysis to formal IGOs for both conceptual and theoretical reasons. First, unlike *informal* international institutions whose norms, rules, and principles may gradually cease to inform state behaviour, treaty-based IGOs can be explicitly terminated through legal procedures, making their death relatively easy to 'diagnose' (Reus-Smit 2007). Second, theoretical predictions regarding institutional robustness are generally stronger for formal, 'parchment' institutions (Carey 2000) than for their informal counterparts, making deaths among this kind theoretically more puzzling. Both rational choice and historical institutional theories hold that formal IGOs make for stronger focal points and generate stronger path-dependent and lock-in effects than informal institutions.[8] Being widely deemed as particularly robust, the death of formal IGOs thus presents a

[7] This definition excludes bilateral treaty organizations and IOs formed by non-state parties, as well as IGO "emanations"—i.e., IGO created by other IGOs.

[8] See Pierson 2004:143. Constructivist theory also suggests that written legal norms have distinctive reinforcing effects compared to non-legal norms (Roger and Rowan 2019).

promising starting point for expanding our understanding of what causes international institutions to collapse.

Ways to Die

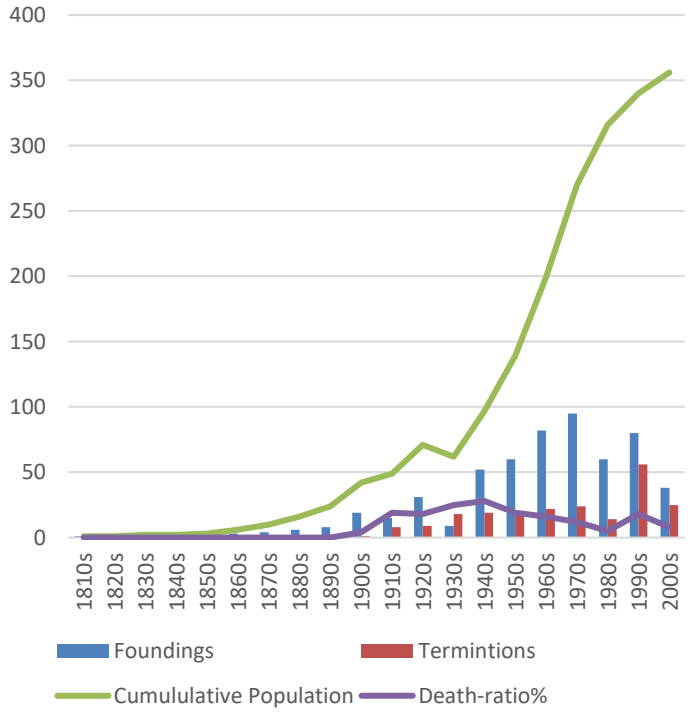
In legal terms IGO can terminate through five broad processes: their founding treaties can expire; they can be explicitly dissolved by their founding members; they can be formally replaced by—or merged with—other organizations; or they can simply fall into disuse for a prolonged period (usually stipulated as 10 years or longer) after which they are no longer considered to have a binding effect on members.[9] (For a detailed discussion of mechanisms of IGOs termination, see Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2018).

I. IGO mortality 1815-2016 - Descriptive Statistics

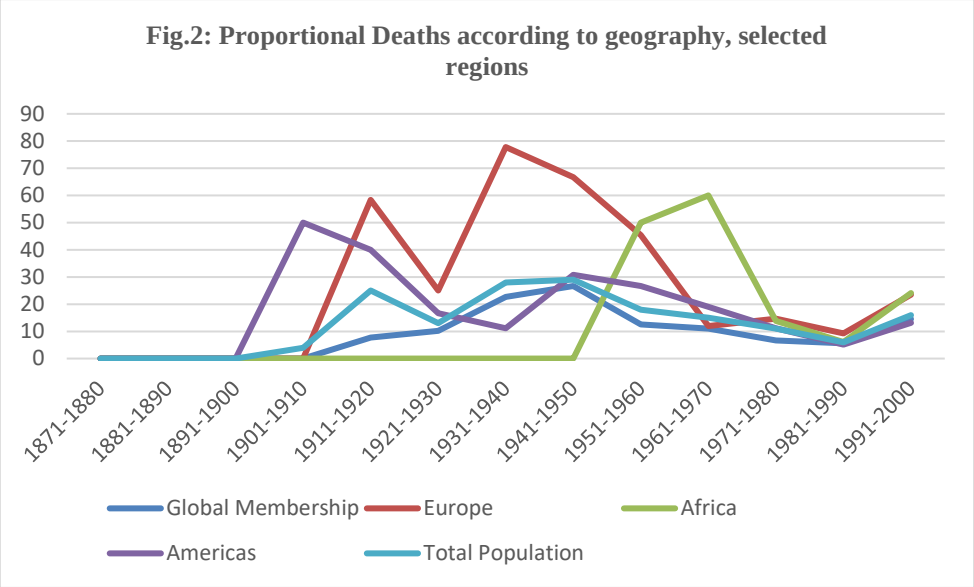
While we know a lot about the circumstances surrounding IGO creation, we know much less about the general conditions under which IGOs die. In this part I therefore present descriptive statistics on IGO deaths during the past two centuries.

Figure 1 depicts rates of IGO creation and termination globally since 1815. It shows that overall termination-ratios increase sharply during decades marked by global geopolitical upheaval, with the highest death-rates recorded during the 1930s and 1940s (coinciding with the Great Depression and World War II), followed by the 1910s (World War I) and 1990s (end of Cold War). Figure 2 shows death-rates broken down by geographic region. It shows that whereas organizational terminations peak in Europe around the two world wars, and in the Americas between 1910-1930, deaths on the African continent climb sharply between 1950-1970, coinciding broadly with decolonization.

Fig.1. IGO Foundings, Terminations and Population, 1815-2006



[9] A period of +10 years during which an IO shows no sign of activity is widely considered an expression of tacit agreement to regard it as terminated. Kohen 2011:352; Pevehouse et al. 2004.



Historical and geographic fluctuations in IGO death-ratios provide general clues as to what causes organizational deaths to spike, but tells us little about what kinds of organizations die under what specific circumstances. To provide a more detailed picture I therefore report the results of a Cox proportional hazard analysis which measures mortality according to specific organizational features such as membership size, function, and age (Table 1, appendix). Like other historical event analyses, this model measures relative mortality by considering the amount of time an IGO has been in existence before death strikes.[10]

The Cox model shows that the *size* of an IGO's membership is a statistically strong predictor of death, with an inverse correlation between number of member states and risk of termination. On its own, however, this finding must be treated with caution: IGOs that produce significant benefits for members may tend to attract more members, implying that size may be confounded with other potentially survival enhancing factors, such as 'effectiveness.'

In terms of *function*, IGOs focused on security and judicial matters display the highest mortality rates, followed by IGOs focused on trade and economic and social policy, whereas IGOs that handle predominantly technical matters (such as scientific and standard setting bodies) have the lowest mortality. Thus, across the two centuries under scrutiny, security organizations are more than twice as likely to terminate as IGOs focused on technical matters (Table 1, appendix).

Turning finally to *age*, hazard analysis shows that an IGO's survival chances drop sharply during the first three decades of its existence, then decline at a slower rate between 30-50 years, only to stabilize at around 50 years (Fig.3). In other words, once an IGO makes it through a perilous youth during which it is highly liable to termination, its immediate termination-risk declines.

To summarize, population-wide statistical analysis reveals that IGO death-rates vary historically according to exogenous factors such as geopolitical upheaval, but also according to intrinsic features such as membership, function, and age which may serve as either independent or intervening causal variables. This raises a number of important questions for further study: How specifically does geopolitical turmoil undermine IGOs? How—and to what extent—may endogenous factors such as

[10] In a Cox proportional hazard analysis, the hazard-ratio is the ratio of fatality-rates corresponding to different values of an explanatory variable. E.g., we may find that IGOs of a particular form die at three times the rate per unit time as the control population (hazard ratio=3). Box-Steffermeier and Drefus 1997.

having a large membership or being long-established reduce the risk of organizational termination? To probe deeper into these questions we need an explicit theory of IGO termination to guide our analysis.

II. A theory of IGO death

Debates in IR about the creation and endurance of international institutions have traditionally been anchored in three main paradigms: power-based accounts, 'neo-liberal' or 'functionalist' accounts, and social constructivism (see Cotrell 2016 for a general overview). These theoretical clusters focus on different variables—geopolitical, economic, or social—which generate important institutional outcomes. In the past two decades, IR scholars have also increasingly turned to historical institutionalism to examine how temporal processes such as 'critical junctures' and path-dependent processes shape international institutions (Fioretos 2011, 2017; Pierson 2004), and to theories of bureaucracy to examine how autonomous organizational agency strengthens IO resilience (Strange 1998; McCalla 1996; Barnett and Finnemore 1999, Bernholz 2009; Vaubel 2006, Haftel and Thompson 2006).

In this part, I concentrate on two broad classes of theoretical arguments: rational-choice and historical institutionalist accounts. As discussed, given a predominant focus on theorizing barriers to change, neither cluster of theories offers explicit predictions about when IGOs may be forsaken by their creators. This does not, however, imply that they cannot potentially explain what 'kills' IGOs. By identifying sources of institutional endurance, existing theories implicitly provide a starting point for understanding the opposite outcome: institutional collapse. From the perspective of extant theory, IGO deaths may be simply viewed as theoretically expected events (endurance) that fail to materialize, prompting us to ask whether causal factors believed to underpin institutional endurance are absent in these cases (see van Evera 1997). Admittedly, this approach has shortcomings. Most obviously, an absence of hypothesized 'robustness enhancing' factors is unlikely to be a direct cause IGO death, but may be merely an intervening or contributing factor (in much the same way as immunodeficiency is not the direct cause of death in a biological organism but merely a factor increasing vulnerability to disease). Nevertheless, by theorizing sources of institutional robustness, existing theories can help to identify candidate factors (exogenous and endogenous to institutions) that may disrupt institutional equilibria. At the same time, they focus attention on underlying structural factors which may account for systemic variation in organizational survivability.

Before proceeding, it is important to clarify that I do not intend my formulation of hypotheses to usher in a competitive test of rival theoretical paradigms. Rather my aim is to combine insights from existing institutionalist theories to build towards an understanding of what causes IGO termination. As many scholars have argued (see esp. Pierson 2004; Fioretos 2011, 2017), rather than theoretical competitors, rational-choice and historical institutionalist accounts are often complementary, each emphasizing different aspects of institutional processes which may explain IGO death. For example, by focusing on the utility of institutions to (powerful) states, RC theories draw attention to how factors *exogenous* to institutions—such as war, economic depression or technological developments—alter existing balances of power and interests and lead to 'punctuated equilibria' (Krasner 1984) characterized by rapid institutional change. While having less to say about processes occuring outside institutional frameworks, HI scholars draw attention to *temporal* processes such as positive feedback, sequencing, duration, and timing which can enrich 'thinner' rationalist understandings of increasing returns from institutions, and which explicate both processes of gradual institutional reinforcement and of gradual deterioration which may culminate in IGO death (see Pierson 2004; Rixen et al. 2016; Capoccia and Kelemen 2007:344; Fioretos 2017:15). Combining insights from these perspectives, I thus seek to construct an explanation for IGO death which integrates exogenous forces and intrinsic institutional features.

Exogenous shocks and IGO death

From the perspective of realist or power-based RC theories, international institutions are created and maintained by powerful states to advance national interests. Since they serve the needs of their most powerful patrons, institutions are expected to change following major shifts in international power balances. Wars and economic depressions feature heavily in such accounts. Thus a large literature examines how abrupt shifts in power - like those triggered by the Napoleonic wars or the world wars - create opportunities for newly powerful states to remake the international system in accordance with their own interests, putting in place institutions which increase the returns to their power and thus 'lock in' a new status quo (e.g., Gilpin 1981:36; Ikenberry 2001; Mearsheimer 1995:7, 13; Hanrieder 2015; Gunitsky 2017).

Common to both RC and HI theories is that they tend to focus on historical crises or 'critical junctures' as starting points rather than end-points. Major historical power-shifts are widely depicted as great 'founding moments' which usher in new institutional orders from which a range of positive feedbacks flow. Thus IR scholars have focused significantly greater attention on the new institutional bargains that were struck at Versailles (1919) or post-1945 than on pre-existing institutional arrangements that were blown apart or left behind. Looking in the other direction, however, a power-based logic suggests that abrupt power shifts will destroy IGOs that privilege the interests of no-longer powerful patrons while leaving intact organizations that serve the interests of currently powerful states. This view also offers a two related insights: Since the institutional status quo likely favours traditionally powerful states, the push to dismantle existing IGOs can be expected to come from newly powerful states that feel disadvantaged by existing arrangements (Jupille et al. 2013:43; Lipscy 2015). Second, since they have fewer implications for relative power IGOs with purely technical mandates (e.g., metrology or meteorological services) may be expected to be less vulnerable to power shifts than 'political' IGOs (e.g., IGOs focused on trade, finance, political or military cooperation) whose functions have direct distributive effects.

Hypothesis 1. IGO deaths are caused by shifts in international power balances which reduce the power of existing institutional patrons vis-à-vis institutional challengers. Hypothesis 1a. 'Political' IGOs are more vulnerable to changing power distributions than 'technical' IGOs.

Whereas power-based RC theories focus on whether institutions serve the needs of powerful states, *efficiency-based* (or 'functionalist'[11]) theories focus greater attention on *collective* benefits (Hanrieder 2015). Borrowing from new institutional economics, efficiency-based institutional theories (EFI) hold that states create international institutions to reduce transaction costs of cooperation. Institutions fulfil this function chiefly by supplying information and by providing focal points that stabilize expectations. A core premise of EFI is that designing effective international institutions involves high start-up costs, whereas the benefits created by institutions increase with continued use thanks to positive feedback processes, including learning- and coordination effects, and economies-of-scale. Thus, "once a given institutional equilibrium has been reached, substantial changes in the environment are necessary to alter it" (Keohane 1984:101-2. Also Hanrieder 2015:17; Jupille et al. 2013).

This does not imply that institutions are ever-lasting. Rather, EFI scholars conceive of institutions as equilibria which track efficiency (Shepsle and Weingast 1981; Jupille et al. 2013). Institutions are expected to endure as long as they solve (or are perceived to solve) cooperation problems more efficiently than alternative institutions - or no institution (Stein 1990:50-1). To the extent exogenous events such as wars, economic change or shifts in technology reduce the expected utility to actors of adhering to existing institutional equilibria, institutional change is likely to follow. This logic may seem difficult to distinguish from a realist reasoning that also stresses exogenous shocks to state interests. By

[11] As Pierson (2004:106) notes, power-based RC theories are also 'functionalist' in their presumption that institutions exist because they serve the needs of currently powerful actors. I thus prefer to distinguish between efficiency-based v. power-based theories.

conceiving of institutional efficiency in terms of collective benefits rather than narrow benefits to powerful states, however, EFI theories highlight that IGO terminations may be driven by exogenous changes (including technological changes) which alter state interests *independently* of shifts in material power.

Hypothesis 2: IGO deaths are caused by political, economic and technological changes which reduce expected collective utility of existing institutions.

Endogenous Factors: Adaptability as a function of scope, structure and size

Whether one adopts a power-based or efficiency-based rationale for the creation and maintenance of international institutions, a cursory historical survey of IGO deaths (Part 1) suggests that exogenous shocks alone are insufficient to explain variation in IGO terminations. Wars, economic depression, and technological change may kill many IGOs, but many more survive. To explain IGO death we thus need a systemic theory that explains why some IGOs cope better with exogenous shocks than others.

A starting point is to consider variation in IGOs' capacity for adaptation. Faced with exogenous shock an IGO's continued utility—to powerful states or wider groups—may depend on how easily it can be adapted to changing circumstances. IR scholars have suggested different ways of conceptualizing institutional adaptability. According to Wallander (2000:706) an institution's adaptability to change depends mainly on whether its assets—its principles, rules and procedures—are *specific* or *general*. Specific assets facilitate particular transactions for a specific purpose, and confer efficiency gains for those particular transactions, whereas general assets confer efficiency gains on a variety of different transactions in different contexts (ibid.; also Keohane 1984:90). Although asset-specificity may be a function of multiple factors, this logic suggests that 'General-purpose' IGOs (i.e., IGOs whose mandates cover a number of different policy-areas) are easier to adapt to new problems than 'task-specific' IGOs (Lenz et al. 2014) that serve narrowly-defined purposes for which they have developed highly specialized routines and expertise.

A second aspect of adaptability is *organizational apparatus*. As Wallander explains, 'general assets' can be conceived as institutional assets that enable states to cooperate more efficiently by providing information, and by establishing clear rules for negotiation, decision-making, monitoring and dispute resolution which reduce transaction costs and increase transparency (2000:707). IGOs offering centralized information-provision, decision-making and implementation thus provide general assets which increase the efficiency of transactions in a variety of cooperative contexts. A large literature also finds that centralization enhances IGOs' capacity for autonomous action which in turn increases organizational capacity to make timely strategic decisions to accommodate environmental change (Haftel and Thompson 2006:260; Bernholz 2009; Lall 2017; Abbott et al. 2016).

A final factor of adaptability is organizational *size*. Population-wide hazard analysis (part 1) showed an inverse relationship between the size of an IGO's membership and mortality. As discussed, this correlation may be spurious. There are, however, several theoretic reasons to expect size to affect mortality. The more members an IGO has, the larger the number of patrons to whom its functions are of potential future value, and who have expended resources to create dedicated mechanisms to support its functions. For example, most countries have established permanent diplomatic missions to the UN and created national bodies to implement diverse UN conventions. In addition to the specific purposes for which they were created, these structures also serve a wider range of diplomatic functions and domestic political purposes, thus creating additional stakeholders with an interest in their perpetuation. Much like banks, some IGOs may thus be 'too big to fail'. Size may also affect organizational adaptability in a second way. Whereas IGOs with narrow membership may be vulnerable to changes in the political situation of a single member-state, IGOs whose membership span many countries may be able to 'average outcomes' across member states, thus reducing vulnerability to country- or region-specific shocks (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2018). To illustrate, a global trade organization with 150 members may

not be fatally undermined if a handful of members leave, whereas an IGO with just three members would cease to exist should one party withdraw.

It is important to acknowledge that size could be hypothesized to have the opposite effect. More member states may imply greater preference heterogeneity which in turn reduces strategic flexibility by multiplying veto-points.[12] But whereas large size may reduce IGOs' capacity to respond swiftly and flexibly to environmental challenges, it may nonetheless increase adaptability understood as *resilience*. Specifically, adaptability does not necessarily require *agent-driven* strategic flexibility, but may simply entail that an IGO holds continued value for a sufficient subset of stakeholders despite changed circumstances. Thus, while size may reduce one aspect of resilience - strategic flexibility - it broadly underpins IGO's ability to adapt to exogenous change.

From this analysis I identify three factors—narrow scope, low centralization, and small size—that contribute to IGO mortality by reducing adaptability to change. Death becomes more likely if *any* of the three causes are present, but especially so when they exist in combination.[13] These factors are likely to be particularly consequential *in conjunction* with exogenous shocks. Specific assets or small size may not greatly penalize an IGO during periods of relative stability. However, these factors are likely to grow more decisive in rapidly changing environments when institutions come under pressure to adapt.

Hypothesis 3: IGOs are more likely to terminate if they have i) small membership, ii) narrow scope, iii) low centralization. Mortality among IGOs with these features will increase in rapidly changing environments.

Reconciling Exogenous and Endogenous Factors: Time and Sequencing

I have hypothesized that IGO deaths are caused by a combination of exogenous shocks and intrinsic institutional features such as narrow size and scope, and low centralization. An additional aspect (bridging exogenous and endogenous domains) is *temporality*. Unlike rational-choice theories which conceive of actors as free to abandon institutions when they no longer maximize utility (Rixen and Viola 2014), a core insight of historical institutionalism is that institutions are subject to strong 'lock-in' effects, arising from various positive feedback processes and complementarities existing within a given institutional system. These processes imply that, once a particular institutional path gets established, the cost of reversals increase drastically (North 1990:89; Pierson 2004:10). From this perspective, institutions may endure not because they present efficient solutions to collective action problems, "but simply because barriers to change grow over time" (Fioretos 2017:9, 13).

By emphasizing path-dependence and positive feedback, HI theories suggest that time has certain properties insofar as it matters *when* institutions are introduced, in *what order*, and *how long* they have been around—individually or jointly (Pierson 2004:1; Fioretos 2017). HI scholars point to three kinds of positive feedback which may strengthen institutional lock-in over time. The first is *adaptive behaviour.* Institutions in place for extended periods lead to shifts in the expectations of social actors, causing them to adjust their policy preferences and routines in ways that reinforce initial institutional choices (Pierson 2004:85, Levi 2000:94). Second, institutions in place for extended periods accumulate knowledge and expertise which leads to higher returns from continuing use ('*learning effects'*) (Pierson 2000:253; North 1990:95). Third, over time, institutions may develop exchange relationships with other actors which lead to the adoption of complementary institutions and practices, increasing overall

[12] A large literature holds that large group size reduces capacity for collective action. See, e.g., Oye 1986; Kahler 1992; Downs, Rocke and Barsoom 1996; Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2009.

[13] Individually, these causes may be neither necessary nor sufficient, but work in combination to produce organizational failure. In short, they are 'probability raisers' (Mahoney 2008:7, 13).

benefits within an institutional matrix ('*coordination effects*').[14] The longer an IGO is in place the greater adaptation, learning and coordination effects it is likely subject to. By contrast, newly created IGOs are less likely to benefit from learning or adaptation effects, or to have developed strong exchange relationships with governments or other stakeholders which embed them securely in wider institutional matrixes.[15]

Hypothesis 4: Young IGOs have higher mortality rates due to limited learning effects, and low environmental embeddedness.

Not only the passage of time, but also the timing and sequencing of events may affect IGO mortality. As Pierson (2004) notes, a focus on path-dependence and self-reinforcement raises a conundrum: How can we think systematically about causal processes involving the interaction of large systemic shocks—such as the onset of global war or economic depression—and ongoing processes of institutional cooperation which are quite separate from these shocks, but which embed IGOs more deeply in their environments over time? One answer is timing. It is plausible that young age occurs low penalties in a stable environment but results in elevated termination risk during times of rapid change.[16] Thus, IGOs hit by exogenous shock early in their life-span are likely to succumb, whereas newly founded IGOs not subjected to shock may continue.

Hypothesis 4a: Young IGOs have higher overall mortality rates, but 'liability of youth' increases in rapidly changing environments.

A second answer is sequencing. Both HI and RC theories of 'first-mover advantages' suggest that *when* a particular process occurs in a sequence matters insofar as "early developments become deeply embedded in a particular environment, altering the resources and incentive structures…of social actors, and thus changing subsequent events" (Pierson 2004:64). Much like early entry into a market can confer a leading market position on firms (Baum and Shipilov 2006), being first to facilitate cooperation on a given international problem may be advantageous for IGOs, since once a specific rule-set is chosen it is subject to strong positive feedback (Jupille et al. 2013:211). All else equal, relatively older IGOs are more likely to have enjoyed opportunities to shape their environments in ways that lay the foundations for their own perpetuation. While *absolute* age offers a proxy for learning effects and secure exchange relationships, *relative age* is thus a proxy for institutional first-comer advantages.

Hypothesis 5: IGOs that are young relative to peers with similar mandates or functions are of higher risk of termination.

As with size, the notion that growing age reduces mortality is far from obvious. Older IGOs tend to have more formalized structures, more standardized routines, and greater accumulation of sunk costs which may discourage organizational change (Levitt and March 1988). Hence one might expect adaptability to decline with age (Hannan & Freeman 1984, 1989; Ranger-Moore 1997:904). Furthermore, since organizations tend to reflect their founding environment, recently created IGOs are more likely to reflect the current preferences of stakeholders, whereas older IGOs may be at greater risk of being obsolete. However, given some minimal element of institutional updating over time, I expect that 'liabilities of age' are outweighed by the positive feedback processes which anchor IGOs more firmly in their environments over time. This means that the older an IGO is, the older it is likely to grow. Far from tautological, this is precisely what institutional path-dependence entails.

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[14] Coordination effects obtain when the value of an activity increases with more actors adopting the same option. Pierson 2004:24. See also North 1990:95; Fioretos 2011:377.

[15] Environmental embeddedness is not a direct causal effect of age. Rather age serves as a proxy for the path-dependent processes which embed IGOs more deeply in their environments over time.

[16] On variation in organizational age-dependence according to exogenous change, see Ranger-More 1997.

III. Empirics: IGO deaths, 1939-1949 and 1979-1989

From previous analysis we know that periods of geopolitical and economic instability are associated with elevated IGO death-rates. We also know that many IGOs survive wars and economic crises. In the previous section, I identified intrinsic factors which I posit contribute to IGO termination. These causal factors are separate from, but complementary to, exogenous shocks. Thus while IGOs with small size or narrow scope may incur only slight penalties in stable environments, such features are likely to make IGOs particularly vulnerable to termination during periods of rapid environmental change.

Given the hypothesized interaction of exogenous and intrinsic causes of IGO death, a good starting point for testing my hypotheses is to examine changes in the IGO population during a period of high environmental stress which affects a large segment of the population. Focusing on a period during which large numbers of IGOs are subject to a similar systemic shock allows me to check for the presence/absence of intrinsic features assumed to help some organizations cope with stress while others succumb. Results can later be refined by examining the incidence and profile of IGO terminations during a period of relative environmental stability (on my theory, IGOs that terminate during periods of low environmental stress should have similar profiles, but instances of termination should be rarer). This medium-*n*, cross-section analysis will in turn allow me to identify promising candidates for further in-depth case study.

Identifying 'systemic shocks'

I have proposed that IGO deaths are caused by exogenous shocks which alter state preferences and reduce the utility of existing institutions to powerful states or wider stakeholder groups. Exogenous shocks may take different forms (a point to which I return later). However, the most commonly cited cause of changing state preferences over international cooperation are sudden shifts in relative power. To observe the impact of power-shifts on IGO terminations, I borrow from Gunitsky's (2011) measure of 'power volatility' which considers annual changes in relative power among major state powers based on Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC) scores (Singer 1963). Gunitsky identifies two periods of extreme volatility, 1917-1922 and 1940-1947, and a lesser spike, 1989-1995. Other scholars (e.g., Gates et al., 2007:19) have defined global 'shock years' as lasting from 1914–23, 1939–49, and 1989–96. Given that Gunitsky's measure also shows volatility climbing sharply from 1914 and staying elevated until 1923, I thus identify three periods of rapid change in global power distributions: 1914-1923, 1939-1949 and 1989-1996. To capture other aspects of geopolitical change (in addition to shifts in demographic, military and industrial strength which are the main components of CINC scores), I also include the Great Depression (1929-39), a period of rapid economic change, and 1956-68 as a period of rapid decolonization across Africa marked by large shifts in political power.

This list is not exhaustive. It omits many shocks at regional or sub-regional level, and sector-specific shocks like the international oil crises. However, by identifying systemic shocks which affect *large segments* of the IGO population, it provides a starting point for observing variation in the impact of exogenous shocks on IGO mortality in a systematic manner.

Table 2

Periods of high volatility in power	**Rising / declining powers**	
1914-1924 (WWI)	US	Germany
1929-1939 (Great Depression)	Germany	US
1939-1949 (WWII)	US, USSR	Germany, Japan
1956-1968 (Decolonization, Africa)	Newly independent states	Former colonial powers
1989-1999 (Soviet Collapse)	US	USSR

As illustrated in Table 3, the periods of high power volatility identified above all display elevated IGO termination-ratios (18%-35% of the incumbent population per decade), whereas global 'low stress' periods have lower termination-ratios (3%-12%/decade). To examine the possibility that technical IGOs may be less vulnerable to power shifts than other organizations (hypothesis 1a), I also compare the distribution of deaths for technical v. 'political' IGOs. I find termination-rates among 'political' IGOs soaring as high as 46% during the world wars, whereas death-ratios for technical IGOs remain low (11-15%). By contrast, the highest death-ratios among technical IGOs occur during the Great Depression and from 1956-1968. This divergence leads me to treat these groups as separate sub-populations for the purpose of further analysis.

Table 3: Impact of environmental stress on IGO termination-ratios

Period	**Volatility**	**No Years**	**No deaths (*incumb. popl.*)**	**Deaths % incumbents per 10-years**	**Non-techn. only**	**Techn. only**	**Average Age dead/surv.***
1900-1913	*Low*	13	1 *(24)*	**3%**	6%	0%	3 / 22
1914-1924	*High*	10	16 *(46)*	**35%**	46%	11%	21.8 / 22.5
1924-1929	*Low*	5	0 (*53)*	**0%**	0%	0%	- / 20.9
1929-1939	*Medium*	10	15 *(70)*	**21%**	24%	29%	14.7 / 21.4
1939-1949	*High*	10	19 *(64)*	**30%**	36%	15%	22 / 29
1949-1956	*Medium*	7	12 *(84)*	**20%**	27%	5%	14.9 / 26.4
1956-1968	*High*	12	28 *(118)*	**23%****	21%	16%	13.3 / 21.3
1968-1979	*Low*	11	21 *(179)*	**11%**	11%	11%	10.4 / 23
1979-1989	*Low*	10	17 *(260)*	**7%**	7%	4%	16.2 / 22.6
1989-1997	*High*	8	42* *(300)*	**18%**	20%	6%	20.0 / 29.1
1997-2015	*Low*	17	44 *(348)*	**7%**	9%	3%	23.0 / 32.5

* this measure captures the age of IGOs at the start of each period.
** terminations during this period are predominantly in Africa and Asia.

My detailed analysis of the timing of IGO deaths provides general support for hypotheses 1 and 2 which stress power shifts or rapid economic change as causes of IGO death, and for hypothesis 1a which posits lower vulnerability to power-shifts among technical IGOs. But without closer scrutiny we cannot tell *how* such shocks impact different IGOs. In the remainder of the paper I undertake a detailed analysis of the periods 1939-1949 and 1969-1979. These periods provide a good basis for structured comparison given that they feature both a period of rapidly shifting power among great powers, and one of relative stability at the global level.

In the previous section, I pointed to intrinsic factors such as small size, narrow scope, low centralization and young age as potential causes of IGO collapse. Some of these factors may be correlated. For example, younger IGOs may on average have smaller membership and less centralized structures. Yet hazard analysis reveals a statistically significant effect for each factor separately,

suggesting the merit of exploring their impact through further medium-n and case-based analysis to tease out their individual effects. I begin with a broad cross-sectional analysis, before proceeding to more detailed case-studies. Relevant institutional features are operationalized as follows: 'centralization' is measured on a scale from 0-3 according to whether an IGO provides centralized dispute resolution, monitoring or enforcement. To determine the scope of an IGO's policy portfolio I borrow and adapt a list of 26 policy-areas set out by Hooghe and co-authors (2017) (see codebook). IGOs whose mandate span more than three policy-areas are considered 'general purpose'.[17] IGO membership size and age are both recorded at the beginning of each period examined.

IGO Deaths 1939-1949

Given high termination-rates during the 1930s, 62 IGOs were in existence worldwide in 1939 (down from 70 a decade earlier). Of these, 17 died between 1939-49. Another two were founded and terminated during this period, bringing total deaths to 19 (see table 4, appendix, for an itemized list).

When considering what (if anything) distinguished fatalities from survivors, the most conspicuous factors are *geography* and *function*. The majority of IGOs that collapsed had either exclusively European membership or a preponderance of European members. By contrast, regional and inter-regional IGOs in other parts of the world (e.g., the Americas, Africa, and the Commonwealth) were less likely to succumb.[18] Technical IGOs had lower death-rates (15%) than non-technical IGOs (36%) (table 3). These findings provide direct support for hypotheses 1 and 1a regarding the adverse effect of abrupt power shifts for political IGOs. A second factor is length of prior lifespan. The average age (as of 1939) of IGOs that terminated between 1939-49 was 23 years v. 29 years for survivors, meaning that IGOs that were slightly younger when war broke out were less likely to survive (hypothesis 4). IGOs that terminated had an average of 20 members v. 23 for survivors. When separating the population into 'technical' v. 'political' organizations, size grows somewhat more significant with terminated technical IGOs having on average 23 members v. 27 for survivors. Scope is not significant as surviving and terminated IGOs address roughly the same number of policy issues, and centralization scores are higher for terminated IGOs (0.6 v. 0.4) (table 4). Findings from this period thus provide mixed support for hypothesis 3 which stresses the positive benefits of size, scope and centralization for survivability.

In addition to confirming hypotheses regarding the effects of power shifts, analysis of the WWII period draws attention to a small group of long-lived IGOs which should be of particular interest to IO scholars. 19 of 45 IGOs that persisted through the period 1939-49 were founded prior to 1914. Not only did these organizations survive two world wars, but fourteen of these 'double-veterans' are still operative today. When considering what may account for their durability despite profound changes in the conditions that gave rise to them – including major shifts in economic and military power - three factors stand out. First, most focus on narrowly technical issues related to research, standards and measures, or postal services. None focus on security or trade. Second, with an average age of 52 years by 1939 (or 27 years by 1914) these organizations were already firmly established when global conflict broke out (hypothesis 4). Third, their advanced age—in absolute *and* relative terms—means that these IGOs likely benefitted from 'first-comer' status (hypothesis 5). Organizations such as the International Telecommunication Union (1865-), the Universal Postal Union (1874-), or the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (1875-) to list a few examples, were all 'pioneers' in their fields in that they were first to facilitate broad international cooperation on specific problems. Being first out of the gate allowed these organizations to shape the core norms and practices of cooperation in their respective fields, and led to early adaptation by other actors which further reinforced these norms, protecting them against

[17] Whereas the population-wide hazard analysis reported in table 1 (appendix) distinguishes only between general-purpose v. task-specific IGOs, this section provides a detailed measure by counting the number of specific policy-issues addressed by an IGO.

[18] IGO deaths in other regions also track power volatility. E.g. African regional IGOs were five times as likely to terminate as European IGOs during 1960s.

challenges from competing rule-sets or administrative practice. To illustrate, the ITU has been in continuous operation since 1865 whereas later IGOs focused on telecommunication (e.g., the Radio-Telegraph Union, 1906-32, the International Telegraph Committee, 1925-56, the International Long-distance Telephone Council, 1925-56, and the inter-American Radio Office, 1937-63) have all had shorter life-spans, eventually ceding their functions to the ITU.

IGO Deaths, 1969-1979

Before turning to case studies, I briefly compare findings from 1939-49 to the period 1969-1979 which featured relatively low volatility in global power distributions (table 2; Gunitsky 2011). The global IGO population in 1969 was 179. Of these, 21 died by 1979 (11%/decade). Death-rates among technical and non-technical IGOs did not differ during this period. However, both age and membership emerge as strong predictors of death. Thus surviving IGOs had been in place for an average of 23 years by 1969, while IGOs that terminated had lived for just 10 years (table 5, appendix). Surviving IGOs had on average 29 members v. just 10 for IGOs that died. As expected (hypothesis 3) centralization scores are higher for surviving IGOs (0.8 v. 0.5) during this period while, contrary to expectations scope is *lower* for survivors.

It is important to note that although 1969-79 was a period of low power volatility at the global level, several IGO terminations can be linked to local power shifts caused by changing political conditions or inter-state conflict. For example, the International Red Locust Control Service was dissolved in 1970 due to growing tension between the South African and Portugese governments and a group of newly independent African states that withdrew their membership to form an independent organization (Byaruhanga 1999). Similarly, the Asian & Pacific Council (founded in 1966 to contain the spread of Communism in Asia) and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (a US-led collective defence treaty formed to 'counter Communist aggression') dissolved in the mid-1970s after Sino-American rapprochement robbed these organizations of their purpose (Reinalda 2009:372). Thus, while low power volatility at global level may account for overall low death-rates during this period, many individual deaths can be linked to local shifts in power.

Comparison of the two periods provides two important insights. First, whereas high geopolitical volatility during 1939-49 increased death-rates for all IGOs it did so more dramatically for 'political' than for technical IGOs (36% v.15%). By contrast technical and political IGOs suffered similar, and lower, death-rates during the geopolitically more stable period 1969-79 (11%) (consistent with hypothesis 1a). Second, whereas small size and young age were associated with higher death-rates during both periods (confirming hypothesis 3), these factors were of greater significance during 1969-79. Centralization also asserted a protective effect only during 1969-79.[19] Thus, contrary to my expectation that intrinsic features will have greater impact on mortality during geo-politically volatile periods, the opposite appears to be true: intrinsic institutional factors appear more decisive during stable periods when state interests shift less abruptly. Conversely, the 'protective' effects of a large membership, centralized organizational apparatus or mature age appear to be partly cancelled out by dramatic shifts in power distributions, such as that following WWII.

[19] Contrary to my prediction, broad scope did not shield IGOs from termination during either period. However, my general hazard analysis finds that broad scope has a positive effect for the population as a whole. An explanation may be that most General-Purpose IGOs are often political in nature, committing their members to shared goals such as 'political and economic integration' (EU) or 'national liberty and international justice' (League of Nations) (Lenz et al. 2014:147). For this reason many broad scope IGOs may be particular vulnerable to the kind of geopolitical change characterizing, e.g., the WWII period.

IV. Case Studies

Population-wide analysis of the IGO population during specific historical periods confirms that geo-political change kills many IGOs. It also confirms that IGOs that terminate are on average younger and smaller than enduring organizations, and more likely to focus on security or trade than on purely technical matters. Yet, how this contributes to their undoing remains uncertain. Statistical analysis seeks to identify typical causal effects across the general population as opposed to individual cases. It relies on a probability-based definition of causality where a 'cause' is a value on a variable that makes certain outcomes more likely (Mahoney 2008:2-4). To gain a better understanding of how specific causal factors contribute to IGO death this section therefore supplements statistical analysis with historical case-studies that allow me to trace the processes through which specific factors—jointly or singly—cause IGOs to terminate.

My case-selection abides by two criteria. First, by comparing cases of both terminated and enduring IGOs I provide stronger tests of individual hypotheses. Second, by focusing on cases of 'unlikely survival' (i.e., IGOs that persist despite major changes in the conditions which gave rise to them) as well as 'unexpected death' I seek to discover potential variables omitted from the large-*n* study which may be influencing results and thus generate new hypotheses for future research (on use of 'least likely' cases to generate new research questions, see Levy 2007:202). These criteria lead me to select four cases for closer study.

The International Bureau of Education, 1929-1969

My first case, the International Bureau of Education (IBE), fits the profile of a 'typical survivor'. Founded in 1925 as a private organization by the *Institute Rosseau*, IBE was constituted as an IGO in 1929, becoming the first intergovernmental organization to facilitate exchange of information and research on education. During the ten years prior to WWII, IBE was highly active despite a limited budget and staff (Rosselló). In 1934, the Bureau founded the *International Conference on Public Education* (ICPE)–an annual governmental forum focused on educational development. Thanks to the success of the ICPE, IBE's membership—which spanned Europe and Latin America—grew rapidly from twelve in 1929 to fifteen by 1939, and twenty by the end of the war, providing a broad base of support.

During the war years, as it became impossible to convene the ICPE, IBE created the *Service of Intellectual Assistance to Prisoners of War* (SIAP) providing books and intellectual services to prisoners of war in collaboration with the International Red Cross. SIAP was initially funded by the Swiss Federal Council but given high demand funding soon fell short. In 1940, IBE began to issue postal stamps to fund the project, and by the end of the war had distributed more than 600,000 books and organized "Internment Universities' in many prisoner camps. Rather than falling dormant during the war, as happened to many technical IGOs, IBE thus successfully refocused its activities and adapted its funding model to meet war needs.

Besides operational flexibility, an important factor in IBE's survival was its apolitical, technical nature which insulated it from geopolitical strife and other forms of distributive conflict. Created to provide a forum "neutral from national, political, philosophical and religious point of view in a strictly scientific and objective state of mind" (IBE Statutes 1929) and focused strictly on exchange of information and data IBE's activities were politically unobtrusive. This apolitical stance grew increasingly important as IBE's membership expanded. To tackle the challenges of a diverse membership, IBE "ceaselessly stayed clear of interfering with the educational freedom of partners." Rather than pushing for standardization of global educational development the Bureau sought "to take into account the specific needs of each region so as to highlight the main trends in order to shape the worldwide educational movement" thus seeking to promote universal education without interfering with local priorities (Hofstetter and Schneuwly 2013:217; ICPE II, M. 1934:158). Internationally, IBE likewise remained politically neutral. In 1963 a group of newly independent African nations sought to

use the worldwide platform of ICPE to protest colonial policies by demanding that Portugal be excluded from the conference for "offending the sacred principles of education." IBE's directorship emphatically argued that banning a convened member of political grounds would contradict IBE's "technical, scientific and universal features" and insisted that "other organizations could take on that responsibility" (Hofstetter and Schneuwly 2013:228).

A third basis of IBE's ability to weather geopolitical change lay in its high informational value and technical expertise. By 1929, with only four full-time employees, IBE had already organized ten international congresses, working with the League of Nations, the International Labour Organization and several international research and professional associations (Rosselló). Its 'pedagogical tour of the world' which collected data on national educational reforms and issued recommendations had reached more than 70 countries,[20] and provided a crucial resource for national reformers. Thus when UNESCO was created in 1945, IBE helped develop its education programs, building on its significant experience. By 1952, a permanent joint commission was established to facilitate cooperation between IBE and UNESCO which henceforth jointly organized the IPCE, and in 1969, IBE formally joined UNESCO, making it the first of UNESCO's category 1 institutes. However, IBE maintained both intellectual and functional autonomy. Thus consistent with my theoretical expectations, IBE's technical mandate and organizational autonomy (which enabled it to fund its own activities) were key to IBE's survival. This combined with the fact that the Bureau had achieved a relatively settled status by the time war broke out and benefitted from a large, diverse membership (as well as ties to other institutions), to whom its services remained relevant despite geopolitical conflict.

The European Commission for the Danube, 1856-1939

In contrast to the IBE which not only persisted but expanded its membership during WWII, an early casualty of the global conflict was the European Commission for the Danube (CED). Created to keep important waterways open to traffic and commerce, the European river commissions were economically and militarily vitally important. The International Conventions governing navigation on the Rhine, Elbe and Danube formed integral parts of earlier geopolitical settlements, starting with the Vienna Peace Treaty of 1815 which guaranteed freedom of navigation, and extended by the Paris Peace Treaty of 1856 which ended the Crimean War (Act of Navigation-Art.15-19). During WWI, the Danube was controlled by Germany and Austria-Hungary that used the river as base for warships. At the Versailles Peace conference of 1919, "in an effort to block the resurgence of German or Russian power", the Allies' Supreme Council decided that membership of the Commission should henceforth include the riparian states *plus* Britain, France and Italy, while former CED members Russia and Turkey were expelled, thus tilting the organizational balance of power towards the Allies (Popper 1943).

During the 1920s and early 1930s the CED undertook important works to deepen and widen passages of the river (Popper 1943), but as WWII loomed, the Commission's fate once again grew uncertain. From 1936, German parts of Danube were controlled by Nazi Germany, and on 14 November 1936 Germany announced it would cease all cooperation with the river commissions established by the Versailles Treaty.[21] According to British Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, "Germany justifies this step on the ground that the Articles in question were dictated to Germany and not freely negotiated…and clarifies that for the future national treatment will be accorded on a basis of reciprocity on German waterways to the vessels of all States living at peace with Germany".[22] Not content to have renounced cooperation, in August 1940 the Reich unilaterally declared the dissolution of the CED noting that "this

[20] http://ibe-infocus.org/articles/nine-decades-of-global-leadership-in-education/

[21] https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1936-11-16/debates/7180c42f-71d0-40f4-bb45-5f1700b2c6a4/GermanWaterways(TreatyDenunciation)

[22] Opcit.

ends the existence of a valuable source of information for the Allies on the economic situation in Danubian territory" (*New York Times* 30-aug-1940).

Once the war ended in Allied victory, the future of the European river commissions was once again on the international agenda. In 1948 negotiations began in Belgrade about re-establishing free navigation on the Danube. However, new geo-political realities, in particular the beginnings of Cold War conflict, made agreement impossible. The USSR, which now controlled the votes of all but one riparian state, categorically rejected proposals by France, Britain and the U.S. to restore freedom of navigation, thereby ending eight decades of cooperation within the framework of the CED (Reinalda 2009:107-9). A new Danube Convention was agreed under Soviet leadership without participation of the Western powers and the commitment to free navigation soon withered.

The dissolution of the CED fits the narrative of a rising power—Germany before the war; the USSR in its aftermath—seeking to overturn an established international regime to replace it with a new scheme that better suits its interests. The CED's demise stands in contrast to the Central Commission for Navigation of the Rhine (1815-present) which, due to its different geography, remained dominated by the western Allies and thus continued to ensure freedom of navigation after the war. This case thus underscores that it is often the interests of powerful states that determine which institutions are adapted and which disappear. Yet the Danube Commission's long history also illustrates other aspects of IGO survivability/mortality. The CED was unique among 20th century IGOs in having far-ranging autonomous powers which included the authority to collect tolls and dues from ships, to borrow money on private markets, and to issue regulations with binding effect without approval by member states (Krehbiel 1918). Though it did not avert the death of the CED in a geopolitically divided Europe, this autonomy helped it weather earlier crises, as when, in 1866, the Commission found itself close to bankruptcy due to the Austro-Prussian war and raised money by issuing bonds, offering the river tolls as security (ibid.). The ability to contract private loans also allowed the Commission to stay solvent during the 1930s when the Great Depression led to a dramatic reduction in trade-related river transport (Potter 1943).

The Bank for International Settlements, 1930-present

At first sight, the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) appears a somewhat 'unlikely survivor' of the period 1939-49. Founded in 1930 by Germany, Belgium, France, Britain, Italy, Japan and Switzerland to oversee the payment of war reparations imposed on Germany by the Versailles Treaty (Art.3-BIS Statute), the BIS also had a second purpose; to promote cooperation among central banks and to facilitate international financial operations (Art.4-BIS Statute). Created during a period of global financial turmoil, dealing with a highly politicized issue (war reparations), and having a small membership of mainly European states most of whom would fight on opposite sides as war broke out within a decade of BIS' founding, the Bank would seem highly vulnerable to termination. Its survival is the more surprising since BIS came under direct attack by the most world's powerful country, the US, which demanded its dissolution (Bernholz 2009). Despite these unpromising beginnings, the BIS survived multiple crises and remains operational to this day. What explains its persistence?

The first challenge to BIS' existence resulted from the breakdown of the Gold Standard, and the termination of German reparation payments (Lausanne Agreement, July 1932)—both consequences of the Great Depression. These events made BIS' main task of facilitating WWI reparation payments obsolete and caused a 50% reduction in net profits between 1932-1939 (Bernholz 2009). Robbed of its chief purpose, the BIS instead focused on its second statutory task; fostering cooperation between central banks. For this purpose it increased its emphasis on information and research activities (Fabianni and Pattison 2001). As political tensions deepened in Europe, the BIS was instrumental in helping continental European central banks transfer part of their monetary reserves overseas—to London and New York. Its early survival was thus ensured by the range of its tasks (Bernholz 2009). Indeed, "had it

not been for Article 3…BIS would have disintegrated in 1932 when the Lausanne Agreement brought war reparations to an end." (Fratianni and Pattison 2001:199).

A second challenge arose in September 1939 as war broke out between the UK, France and Germany, all three BIS members. BIS' Board of Directors decided to suspend meetings for the duration of the war but resolved that the Bank would stay open, conducting its operations in a neutral manner that "advantages neither side" (BIS.Org 2019). As the war went on, however, evidence mounted that BIS were conducting operations that benefitted Germany. During the war BIS' business declined sharply, and in July 1944 the UN Monetary and Financial Conference at Bretton Woods which established the IMF and World Bank adopted 'Resolution V' calling for the liquidation of the BIS at "the earliest possible moment" (opcit). The chief architects of Bretton Woods–Harry Dexter White of the US Treasury and John Maynard Keynes–strongly opposed the BIS due to its wartime assistance to the Axis Powers, and because they saw it as a direct obstacle to a new international monetary order with the IMF at its centre (Frantianni and Pattison 2001:201). Nevertheless, in 1946, the BIS Board of Directors held their first post-war meeting to decide how to defend the Bank. Maurice Frere, Governor of the National Bank of Belgium travelled to Washington to lobby American policymakers (Lebor 2014), and in May 1948 the Washington Agreement was signed whereby the BIS consented to reimburse looted gold from the German Reich to the Allied Tripartite Commission.[23] Soon thereafter Resolution V was set aside. "Quietly, carefully, barely noticed by the outside world, the BIS returned to business as usual." (Lebor 2014).

Having narrowly survived the war, the key to BIS' long-term survival was its significant expertise on European monetary and financial issues. During the 1930s and 1940s, the BIS had established itself as an essentially European institution whereas the IMF and World Bank had worldwide focus (Bernholz 2009). The BIS thus enjoyed strong support among European central bankers who found that, rather than duplicate the functions of the IMF, the BIS was useful in making the Bretton Woods system function in a European context, and in serving specific European priorities and needs (Auboin 1955:17). When the Benelux, France and Italy struck an Agreement on Multilateral Monetary Compensation in 1947 they invited BIS to act as the technical agent. In 1950, when the European Payments Union was established within the framework of the Marshall Plan to restore European currency convertibility, BIS was again appointed managing agent—a role it repeated as manager of the EMU, 1979-1994.

Looking across BIS' history, three factors appear crucial to its ability to weather environmental change. First, its immediate survivability was enhanced by the range of its tasks and, in particular, by the value of its services to several stakeholder groups. Beyond contracting governments, the governors of European central banks were keenly interested in having an institution where they could meet and cooperate free of political influences (Bernholz 2009). A second factor was a high degree of organizational autonomy which allowed the Board of Directors to formulate independent business goals. Over time, the BIS has assumed a role as fund manager for other international financial institutions and during the 1980s and 1990s the Bank began to act as 'emergency funder' for nations in trouble, coming to the aid of Mexico and Brazil during their debt crises in 1982 and 1998, thereby widening the group of stakeholders to whom its services are of value.

A third factor underpinning BIS' survival has been its ability to finance activities independently of government funding—a fact which saved it from bankruptcy during WWII (Bernholz 2009)—and which has been an important basis of organizational autonomy since. This aspects mirrors the fate of the IBE and provides a contrast to many IGOs whose work became practically impossible during the Great Depression and WWII due to lacking funds and a resulting incapacity of representatives to meet (examples include—inter alia—*the International Exchange Service* 1886-1939, *the International Institute of Commerce*, 1919-43, and the *International Commission on Teaching of Mathematics*,1908-

[23] In 1948, BIS returned 3.7 tonnes of looted gold it had received during the war as interest payments from the German Reichsbank to the Allied Tripartite Commission, and the 'Liquidation Resolution' was set aside. Financial Times, July 13, 2013-https://www.ft.com/content/43fa3cdc-f934-11e2-86e1-00144feabdc0.

39. See Reinalda 2009:93; Howson 1984). Financial autonomy presents an important topic for future study.

International Copyright Organization, 1952-1971

In contrast to the BIS which survived in a hostile geopolitical environment seemingly 'against the odds', my final case, the *International Copyright Organization* (ICO), exemplifies an 'unlikely death'. With a membership of 13 countries spanning four continents, dealing with a relatively 'low-politics' matter, and operating during a period of low global power-volatility, the ICO statistically had good survival chances. Yet closer examination places the ICO at the heart of an impending struggle for a New International Economic Order which soon made it untenable (Drahos 2002).

The ICO was founded by Art.11 of the Universal Copyright Convention (UCU) in 1952. The UCU was developed by UNESCO as an alternative to the existing international copyright convention (Berne Convention of 1886) which was seen by many developing countries to privilege Western, developed, copyright-exporting nations, and also failed to include the US and many Latin-American countries. Developing nations' discontent with prevailing international copyright governance was apparent at the 1952 Geneva Conference which adopted the UCC, but the push for specific provisions in their favour only gained momentum through a series of conferences during the 1960s (Olian 1974:96; Bannerman 2011). One was the African Study Meeting on Copyright held at Brazzaville in 1963, which concluded that "international copyright conventions are designed, in their present form, to meet the needs of countries which are exporters of intellectual works; these conventions…require review in the light of the specific needs of the African continent".[24]

The Brazzaville declaration illustrates the growing power struggle surrounding the international copyright system which was built and held together by imperial power (Bannerman 2011). The system had been shaped by the UK, France, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and Germany which housed major publishers, publishing in foreign countries. By contrast, developing countries were net copyright importers, dependent on foreign literature. During the 1960s, developing countries strongly urged revision of the system to satisfy their need for ready access to educational, scientific and technical knowledge, and to encourage the development of local publishing industries to reduce reliance on foreign works (Olian 1943:89).

In 1967 the Stockholm Intellectual Property Conference convened to consider reforms to the Berne Convention. A strong factor behind the drive for reform was a growing sense of rivalry between the UCC and Berne Convention frameworks which competed for legitimacy and new members (Olian 1943:81). The Stockholm conference agreed a *Protocol Regarding Developing Countries* which entitled developing members to enter reservations to certain terms of copyright protection for a 10 year period, widening rights of translation and reproduction and restricting copyright where a work was to be used for educational purposes. [25] Yet, this failed to solve the conflict. For developed countries, the Protocol represented a threat to copyright governance as it had evolved over the past century, and a confiscation of the rights of individual copyright-holders, and many refrained from signing it (Olian 1943:102). For developing countries it did not go far enough. At the same time, the UCC was not seen as a satisfactory alternative given that it contained insufficient provisions for reducing royalty payments or for providing financial assistance to developing countries to meet such obligations (Bannerman 2011).

To resolve the impasse, two diplomatic conferences were held in 1971 aimed at revising both the Berne Convention and the UCU and thereby prevent a break-up of the international copyright system (Bannerman 2011). The result was the creation of the new World Intellectual Property Organization

[24] *Preamble* to the recommendations adopted by the Brazzaville Conference, August 10, 1963 as quoted in Olian 1943:95.

[25] Records of the Intellectual Property Conference of Stockholm, 1967,vol.1.

(WIPO) which took over management of both the revised conventions.[26] Organizationally WIPO inherited the structure and assets of the United International Bureaux for the Protection of Intellectual Property which had administered the Berne Convention since 1893 whereas the smaller and recently established ICO was dissolved.

The ICO fits the profile of a relatively smaller 'late-comer' IGO which, although it dealt with a relatively 'low-political' technical and socio-economic matter, failed to take root due to growing distributive conflict and politization of copyright governance after decolonization. While the ICO terminated the revised UCC remains in force to this day with 84 contracting parties administered by WIPO.

Summary and Conclusions

My analysis of IGO death has illustrated the need to integrate explanations focused on exogenous geopolitical change with an account of the role of endogenous institutional factors. Wars and economic depressions do kill IGOs, but they do not endanger all IGOs equally. Intrinsic features such as organizational function, autonomy, size, and age can enhance or diminish IGOs' ability to cope with a turbulent environment. My analysis also shows that organizational survival often owes a great deal to the timing and sequencing of institution-building efforts—a dimension that might remain hidden from view if studying only enduring IGOs, as has been the standard practice.

Given that IGO death remains an understudied phenomenon about which few generally established facts are known I have chosen to combine population-wide statistical analysis with individual case studies in order to establish a firm empirical ground for my analysis. While both my statistical findings and case studies support my theoretical conjectures regarding the role(s) of exogenous shocks and intrinsic 'robustness determining' factors, the four case studies also illustrate the diverse paths to IGO termination, and thereby underscore the difficulty of formulating a single 'grand theory' of IGO death. By providing a longitudinal view of individual organizational trajectories, the case-studies highlight that an IGO with a certain general profile may be robust in the sense that is immune to the impact of most stresses, yet be highly vulnerable to one specific disturbance (Young 2010:6). This was the case, for example, with Danube Commission which survived numerous bouts of armed conflict between member states before finally succumbing to Europe's Cold War Division. A similar story can be told about the International Commission of the Cape Spartel Light in Tangier (f.1865) which emerged unscathed from two world wars during which its members fought on opposite sides before quickly unravelling in 1958 as a result of Moroccan independence. Historians might insist that the specific circumstances surrounding each IGO death renders it unique and not subject to general explanation. But although individual paths to IGO termination vary, population-wide analysis reveals clear historical patterns and regularities. Throughout the past two centuries, IGOs that have succumbed to exogenous shock have been on average smaller, newer and provided narrower functions than surviving counterparts. Combining statistical analysis and historical case-studies has thus allowed me to draw a distinction between proximate and underlying causes of IGO death: while proximate causes often appear unique, population-wide analysis reveals underlying structural features which make some IGOs generally more vulnerable to termination than others.

While they reveal clear patterns and regularities in the histories of IGOs deaths, my findings also suggest that rather than having a single dominant cause, most IGO terminations involve multiple causes. Individually, these causes (or 'risk-factors') may be neither necessary nor sufficient, but work in combination to produce the outcome of organizational death (Mahoney 2008:7, 13). Furthermore, different *combinations* of risk-factors may result in the same outcome ('equifinality'). Thus, one IGO

[26] Records of the Conference for Revision of the Universal Copyright Convention, UNESCO House, Paris, 5-24 July 1971; Records of the Diplomatic Conference for the Revision of the Berne Convention for Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, Paris, 24 July 1971.

may succumb to environmental change due having a security focus combined with a narrow membership base, whereas another is vulnerable due its late-comer status. The causal significance of several risk factors and of different combinations of risk-factors presents a challenge for theory building. Equifinality however, does not imply that IGO deaths are 'random' and beyond general explanation. Rather, the challenge is to identify and determine the relative importance and empirical bounds of different causal drivers. For example, my empirical analysis has shown that while intrinsic factors such as the scope of an IGO's mandate, the size of its membership or its degree of centralization may not matter greatly for its survivability during periods of rapid geopolitical change, these factors become causally more significant during relatively settled periods, when the efficiency gains afforded by IGOs rich on 'general assets' may give reason for states to keep them alive, or when having a broad mandate may allow an IGO to gradually adapt its activities to slow-moving forms of exogenous change.

This finding may seem to indicate that the historical development of the IGO population conforms to a standard 'punctuated equilibrium' model whereby institutional change occurs through sequences of relative continuity and stability, 'punctuated' by major crises which rapidly undermine existing institutions (Fioretos 2017). During the former periods, low environmental volatility allows IGOs to entrench themselves securely in their environments through various processes of positive feedback, whereas during the latter periods, sudden shifts in state power or interests cause existing institutions to become dislodged. While partially accurate this explanation is, however, incomplete. As Fioretos (2017) argues, the model of discontinuous change associated with most punctuated equilibrium models risks masking important continuities in institutions across ruptures. Only by paying close attention to long-term processes of institutional 'lock-in' and path-dependence can we explain why some IGOs terminate during crises while others remain in place, growing still more durable and shock-resistant over time.

Conclusions

IGO deaths have been a regular feature of international politics during the past two centuries. Yet there have been few scholarly attempts at explaining their causes. Instead it has been common wisdom among IR scholars that 'IGOs rarely die'. Not surprisingly, historical analysis reveals that IGOs are neither as ephemeral as some early realist accounts suggested (e.g. Mearsheimer 1990), nor are they 'unable to die' (Strange 1998; Bernholz 2009). While some IGOs have endured for centuries, others have buckled quickly under various endogenous and exogenous strain. My aim in this article has been to offer a theoretical and empirical foundation for explaining IGO death. Careful identification of the processes that undermine IGOs can help to explain historical failures of international cooperation. At the same time, the population of defunct IGOs provides a rich source of historical data against which theoretical assumptions about 'institutional robustness' can be systematically tested. This may lead us to reassess prominent theories of institutional endurance and may reveal new outcomes of interest, thereby offering opportunities for extending existing theoretical work in new directions.

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Appendix and Codebook

Table 1. COX Proportional Hazard Analysis[27]

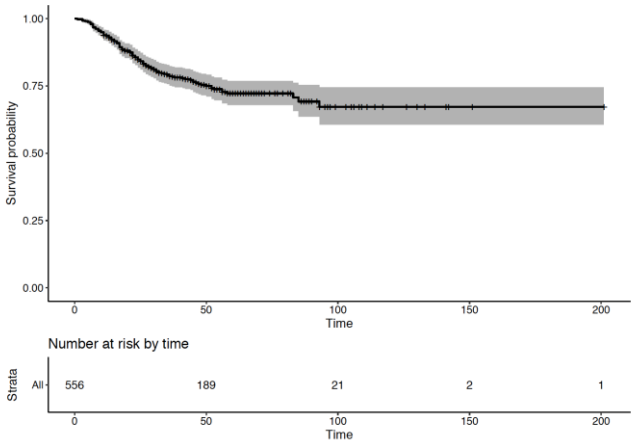
Number of Member States	**Termination Risk**
Number at death (as of 2016)	-0.032*** (0.005)
Region[28]	
Africa	1.860*** (0.599)
Americas	1.767*** (0.599)
Asia	1.372** (0.655)
Europe	1.975*** (0.576)
Middle-East	1.156 (0.721)
Inter-Continental	1.563*** (0.552)
Scope	
General Purpose	-0.823* *(0.494)*
Task-Specific (Judicial)	0.578 (0.623)
Task-Specific (Security)	0.260 *(0.251)*
Task-Specific (Social)	-0.311* *(0.182)*
Task-Specific (Techical)	-0.507** *(0.239)*
Membership Form	
Geographically restricted	-2.968*** *(0.568)*
Purpose restricted	-2.319*** *(0.556)*
Scope	
Task-Specific, Narrow Scope	-0.545 *(0.431)*
Task-Specific, Medium Scope	-0.818* *(0.450)*
No. observations	553
R^2	0.200
Max. Possible R^2	0.989
Log Likelihood	-1,187.559
Wald Test (df = 17)	88.400***
LR Test (df = 17)	123.353***
Score (Logrank) Test (df = 17)	96.266***

Note: Statistical significance *p<.10, **p<.05. ***p<.01

[27] Model based on DIGO-1.0, 2018.

[28] The overall co-efficient for regional (compared to global) IGOs is: 'AnyRegion' 1.672***

Fig. 3. Hazard-Rates Over Time[29]



Tables 4 and 5 are available as excel spreadsheets

The Codebook is available from the author upon request.

[29] Model based on data in DIGO-1.0. 2018.