International organizations' responses to member state contestation: from inertia to resilience

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Abstract

International organizations (IOs) play a key role in promoting multilateral cooperation on critical transnational issues. Yet, their authority has increasingly been contested by member states that cut financial contributions or even withdraw their membership. How do IOs respond to such contestation? While the existing literature has mostly focused on reactions by other member states, I argue with this article that our understanding of IOs' responses to contestation remains incomplete without an analysis of IO bureaucracies. I propose a conceptual framework to analyze three types of bureaucratic responses: *inertia*, i.e. no immediate response; *adaptation*, i.e. institutional changes to maintain the support of the challenging member state(s); and *resilience-building*, i.e. developing organizational capacities to limit contestation. I argue that each of these responses is shaped by specific bureaucratic mechanisms, namely hunkering, negotiation, framing, coalition-building, shaming and professionalization. Based on a comparative within-case study analyzing the reactions of the United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA) to budget cuts by the Reagan, Bush and Trump administrations, I further theorize that the organization's threat perception, the position of other member states and bureaucratic leadership are relevant factors that need to be considered to explain the variation in IO responses to contestation.

Keywords

International organizations, contestation, adaptation, resilience, United Nations Populations Fund, budget cuts

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1. Introduction

International organizations (IOs) are met with increasing resistance, both from societies and member states.[1] Recent examples are the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union (EU), the threat of several African states to leave the International Criminal Court (ICC), and the cuts in the previous United States government's financial contributions to various IOs. Such accumulated contestation by member states has raised a debate about whether or not the current international order has been in a crisis.[2]

In order to be able to assess the extent of such a crisis, I argue with this article that we first need to understand how IOs themselves respond to such existential challenges. So far, the existing literature mostly focused on reactions by other member states.[3] Studies on membership withdrawals, for example, examined the reactions of the remaining member states, but have not taken the complex interplay between the IO's bureaucracy and its member states into consideration.[4] While the role of member states is important, our understanding of IOs' responses to contestation remains incomplete without an analysis of the internal dynamics inside IO bureaucracies.[5] Therefore, this article asks how IO bureaucracies shape IOs' responses to contestation.

I investigate three types of bureaucratic responses to contestation, namely *inertia*, i.e. no response; 2) *adaptation*, i.e. introducing institutional changes to maintain the support of the challenging member state(s); or 3) *resilience-building*, i.e. developing organizational capacities to limit contestation by member states. Integrating an organization perspective into International Relations research on IOs, I argue that each of these responses is a result of specific pathways in which the IO's bureaucracy does or does not undertake particular actions. By examining mechanisms of hunkering, negotiation, framing, coalition-building, shaming and

[1] Stefanie Walter, 'The Backlash Against Globalization', *Annual Review of Political Science* 24: 1, 2021, pp. 421-442; Michael Zürn, 'Contested Global Governance', *Global Policy* 9: 1, 2018, pp. 138-145.
[2] Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni M and Stephanie C. Hofmann, 'Of the contemporary global order, crisis, and change', *Journal of European Public Policy* 27: 7, 2020, pp. 1077-1089; Liesbet Hooghe, Tobias Lenz and Gary Marks, 'Contested world order: The delegitimation of international governance', *The Review of International Organizations* 14: 4, 2019, pp. 731-743; G. John Ikenberry 'The end of liberal international order?', *International Affairs* 94: 1, 2018, pp. 7-23.
[3] Maria Debre and Hylke Dijkstra, 'Institutional design for a post-liberal order: Why some international organizations live longer than others', *European Journal of International Relations* 27: 1, 2021, 311-339; Julia Gray, 'Life, Death, or Zombie? The Vitality of International Organizations', *International Studies Quarterly* 62: 1, 2018, pp. 1-13. As exceptions, see Robert B. McCalla, 'NATO's persistence after the cold war', *International Organization* 50: 3, 1996, pp. 445-475 and Tim Heinkelmann-Wild and Vytautas Jankauskas, 'To Yield or Shield? Comparing International Public Administrations' Responses to Member States' Policy Contestation', *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice*, 2020, online first, available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/13876988.2020.1822144.
[4] Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 'Death of international organizations. The organizational ecology of intergovernmental organizations, 1815–2015', *The Review of International Organizations* 15: 2, 2020, pp. 339-370; Stefanie Walter, 'The mass politics of international disintegration', *CIS Working Paper 105*, 2020, University of Zurich, available at: https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-188107 (last access 30 July 2021).
[5] Rafael Biermann, 'The Role of International Bureaucracies', in Rafael Biermann and Joachim A. Koops, eds., *The Palgrave Handbook of inter-organizational relations in world politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 243-270; Steffen Eckhard and Jörn Ege, 'International bureaucracies and their influence on policy-making: a review of empirical evidence', *Journal of European Public Policy* 23: 7, 2016, pp. 960-978.

professionalization, I highlight the added value of the analysis of IO bureaucracies for the study of institutional change.

With this conceptual framework, this article contributes to the rapidly evolving scholarship on IO survival and IO termination. So far, this field of research has focused on the systemic conditions that explain patterns of regime endurance[6] and IO termination.[7] During periods of geopolitical crises, especially young, small and/or decentralized IOs are more likely to "die".[8] From the few contributions that have analysed the role of IO bureaucracies, we know that the bureaucratic autonomy matters for IOs' survival.[9] How exactly this autonomy plays out when IOs are confronted with life-threatening challenges, however, remains still unclear. When IOs are under pressure, not only member states but also IO bureaucracies engage in self-legitimation strategies as they have an intrinsic motivation to gather support for their work.[10]

I use the case of the United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA) to investigate the role of IO bureaucracies through the lens of a least-likely case for bureaucratic autonomy. Through a qualitative within-case comparison and process-tracing, I study UNFPA's responses to three periods of contestation, 1985-1992, 2002-2007 and 2017-2020. The analysis investigates how the specific activities of UNFPA's bureaucracy helped a young and small organization with initially little autonomy to resist existential challenges and ultimately become more resilient. The study reveals that the organization's threat perception, the position of other member states and bureaucratic leadership are relevant explanatory factors that need to be considered when theorizing the variation in IO responses to contestation.

The article proceeds as follows. In the following section, I develop a conceptual framework to analyse bureaucratic responses to member state contestation. Thereafter, I analyse how UNFPA responded to contestation in the form of budget cuts in three instances. The empirical analysis is based on a combination of semi-structured interviews with UNFPA staff members and civil society organizations such as Population Action International (PAI) and Friends of UNFPA, archival material such as oral history interviews from the Sophia Smith Collection, publicly available primary documents from UNFPA, PAI and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) as well as secondary literature from the field of population research. The penultimate section discusses potential relevant variables for theorizing IO responses to contestation in light of organization research and IR theory. The conclusion discusses the findings' implications for existing and future research on IOs.

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[6] Andreas Hasenclever, Peter Mayer and Volker Rittberger, *Theories of International Regimes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
[7] Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 'What kills international organisations? When and why international organisations terminate', *European Journal of International Relations* 27; 1, 2021, 281-310; Debre and Dijkstra, 'Institutional design'.
[8] Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 'What kills international organisations'.
[9] Gray, 'Life, Death, or Zombie?'.
[10] E.g. Jennifer Gronau and Henning Schmidtke, 'The quest for legitimacy in world politics – international institutions' legitimation strategies', *Review of International Studies* 42: 3, 2016, pp. 535-557; Monika Heupel and Michael Zürn, eds., *Protecting the Individual from International Authority. Human Rights in International Organizations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

2. The responses of IO bureaucracies to member state contestation

The existence of IOs relies on financial and personnel contributions, a functioning membership body and the implementation of their policies by member states.[11] States use numerous ways to not only influence IOs according to their interests but also to contest IOs' authority or individual policies.[12] While membership withdrawals and budget cuts are nothing new in the history of IOs, these acts can pose a significant threat to the existence of IOs, especially if driven by nationalist and populist attitudes.[13]

This article relies on the assumption that IOs are autonomous actors and therefore have an inherent interest in maintaining their position in the current multilateral order.[14] In response to member states contestation, some IOs choose a rather reconciliatory tone in their communicative responses whereas others are more assertive.[15] This article builds on these studies by focusing on the role of bureaucracies in shaping IO responses to contestation by member states. Based on insights of organization theories, I propose three types of bureaucratic responses: inertia, adaptation, and resilience-building.

Inertia. We should not expect IOs to always respond with action to member state contestation. To the contrary, there might not be any immediate response to the challenges. Not responding can be a strategic decision but can also mean that an IO is simply ignoring the challenge because it is sticking to institutional routines.[16] Inertia can therefore be a result of both a strategic decision and an organization's "blind spots".[17] Following McConnell and t'Hart, I define inertia as "an instance and/or pattern of non-intervention" by an IO in response to member state contestation.[18]

How can inertia be observed at the bureaucratic level? Research on the communication of IOs has shown that IOs communicate strategically.[19] Avoiding "unfavorable headlines" through

[11] Erin R. Graham, 'Money and multilateralism: how funding rules constitute IO governance', *International Theory* 7: 1, 2015, pp. 162-194; Danesh Sarooshi, *International Organizations and Their Exercise of Sovereign Powers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
[12] Inken von Borzyskowski and Felicity Vabulas, 'Hello, Goodbye: When do States Withdraw from International Organizations?', *Review of International Organizations* 14: 2, 2019, pp. 335–366; Francesco Francioni, 'Multilateralism à la Carte: the Limits of Unilateral Withholdings of Assessed Contributions to the UN Budget', *European Journal of International Law* 11: 1, 2000, pp. 43-59; Julia C. Morse and Robert O. Keohane, 'Contested multilateralism', *Review of International Organizations* 9: 4, 2014, pp. 385-412; Daniel L. Nielson and Michael J. Tierney, 'Delegation to International Organizations: Agency Theory and World Bank Environmental Reform', *International Organization* 57: 2, 2003, pp. 241-276.
[13] Karen J. Alter, James T. Gathii and Laurence R. Helfer, 'Backlash against International Courts in West, East and Southern Africa: Causes and Consequences', *European Journal of International Law* 27: 2, 2016, pp. 293-328.
[14] Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore, *Rules for the World. International Organizations in Global Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).
[15] Heinkelmann-Wild and Jankauskas, 'To Yield or Shield?'.
[16] Tine Hanrieder, 'The path-dependent design of international organizations: Federalism in the World Health Organization', *European Journal of International Relations* 21: 1, 2015, pp. 215–239.
[17] Tobias Bach and Kai Wegrich, *The Blind Spots of Public Bureaucracy and the Politics of Non-Coordination* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan/ Springer, 2019).
[18] Allan McConnell and Paul 't Hart, 'Inaction and public policy: understanding why policymakers 'do nothing'', *Policy Sciences* 52: 4, 2019, pp. 645-661.
[19] Matthias Ecker-Ehrhardt, 'International Organizations 'Going Public'? An Event-History Analysis of Public Communication Reforms from 1950 to 2015', *International Studies Quarterly* 62: 4, 2018, pp. 723-736.

overt judicial activism has been identified as a "survival strategy" in particular for international courts and human rights institutions facing populist backlash.[20] Hunkering down allows the IO bureaucracy keeps a low profile to continue its work without changes. Empirically, hunkering can be observed for example by an IO bureaucracy's refusal to issue public statements or press declarations on a contested issue or regarding its relationship with the challenging member state as an indicator for an overall decrease in public visibility.

Adaptation. This response type is based on the theoretical assumptions of the principal-agent approach according to which IOs as the agents of their member states undertake efforts to satisfy the principals' demands.[21] The IO changes its policy to maintain the support of the challenging member state(s). Previously, the threat of significant budget cuts by the US government under President Reagan has led to adaptation in policy and decision-making for example in the World Bank.[22] Further indicators are policy reforms that grant the challenging state greater influence on decisions. Adaptation aims at accommodating the contesting state to the extent that this state refrains from further contestation.

IO bureaucracies actively shape adaptation through framing and negotiation. To demonstrate the challenging member state its willingness to adapt, IOs can rename a contested policy (e.g. "maternal health" instead of "reproductive health") or stop the implementation of contested programs (e.g. projects addressing climate change in response to the Trump administration's budget cuts). Moreover, we know from existing research that IO bureaucracies influence institution-building and shape the agenda of international negotiations.[23] We can thus expect the bureaucracy to actively negotiate aspects of policy and budget with individual member state governments, especially if their resources are primarily based on voluntary contributions.[24]

Resilience-building characterizes an IO's response where the bureaucracy develops organizational capacities to limit and push back contestation by member states. This response type builds on theories of organizational autonomy, which find that IOs are able to "insulate" themselves from the control of member states.[25] Instead of classifying this as dysfunctional organizational behavior[26], resilience-building can help an IO to protect itself against the challenging member state. While resilience has often being equated with persistence and

[20] Laurence R. Helfer, 'Populism and International Human Rights Institutions: A Survival Guide', *iCourts Working Paper Series No. 133*, 2018, University of Copenhagen.
[21] Darren G. Hawkins, David A. Lake, Daniel L. Nielson, and Michael J. Tierney, eds., *Delegation and Agency in International Organizations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
[22] Margaret Karns and Karen A. Mingst, *The United States and Multilateral Institutions. Patterns of Changing Instrumentality and Influence* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), p. 306.
[23] Frank Biermann and Bernd Siebenhüner, Problem solving by international bureaucracies, in Bob Reinalda, ed., *Routledge Handbook of International Organization* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 149-161; Tana Johnson and Johannes Urpelainen, 'International Bureaucrats and the Formation of Intergovernmental Organizations: Institutional Design Discretion Sweetens the Pot', *International Organization* 68: 1, 2014, pp. 177-209.
[24] Jörn Ege and Michael W. Bauer, 'How Financial Resources Affect the Autonomy of International Public Administrations', *Global Policy* 8: 5, 2017, pp. 75-84; Ronny Patz and Klaus H. Goetz, *Managing Money and Discord in the UN. Budgeting and Bureaucracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).
[25] Tana Johnson, *Organizational Progeny. Why Governments are Losing Control over the Proliferating Structures of Global Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
[26] Barnett and Finnemore, 'Rules for the world'.

longevity, the concept also includes a transformational component.[27] Resilience-building can thus be indicated by institutional changes that help the IO counter further contestation by member states, for example through resource diversification, a larger and more diversified staff body, as well as more permanent institutional structures for crisis management.[28] While changes in the funding rules and assessed contributions require the consent of member states, bureaucracies of IOs that base their funding on voluntary contributions may enhance their independence by expanding these sources.[29]

There are several ways of how IO bureaucracies can contribute to resilience-building. Previous research has revealed that, in light of a lack of formal enforcement power, shaming of member states is a rather common practice among IOs.[30] We can expect that IO bureaucracies use this strategy also when a member state is contesting its mandate or core policies. Shaming constitutes a strategy of normative sanctioning that can lead to reputational damages for the contesting member state both internationally and domestically.[31] The IO bureaucracy hereby attempts to rhetorically delegitimize contestation and thus to prevent other member states from engaging in similar behavior.

Furthermore, we know from the literature on inter-organizational relations that international bureaucracies build relations with peer organization, non-state actors and like-minded member states.[32] Besides these external coalitions, international bureaucracies engage in networking with like-minded states, which are more likely to support them vis-à-vis the contesting state.[33] Bureaucracies can also connect with civil society organizations, media organizations and sub-national actors to shape public opinion in favor of their organization.[34] Through coalition-building, IO bureaucracies can pro-actively build up resilience towards future contestation.

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[27] Pierre Bourbeau, *On resilience. Genealogy, Logics, and World Politics,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 21.

[28] Louise K. Comfort, Arjen Boin and Chris C. Demchak, eds., *Designing Resilience: Preparing for Extreme Events*. (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), p. 25; Klaus H. Goetz and Ronny Patz, 'Resourcing International Organizations: Resource Diversification, Organizational Differentiation, and Administrative Governance', *Global Policy* 8: 5, 2017, pp. 5-14; Eugénia Heldt and Henning Schmidtke (2017) 'Measuring the Empowerment of International Organizations: The Evolution of Financial and Staff Capabilities', *Global Policy* 8: 5, 2017, pp. 51-61; Julia Hillmann and Edeltraud Guenter, 'Organizational Resilience: A Valuable Construct for Management Research?' *International Journal of Management Reviews* 23: 1, 2021, pp. 7-44.

[29] Ege and Bauer, 'How financial resources affect'.

[30] Teresa Squatrito, Magnus Lundgren and Thomas Sommerer, 'Shaming by international organizations: Mapping condemnatory speech acts across 27 international organizations, 1980–2015', *Cooperation and Conflict* 54: 3, 2019, pp. 356-377.

[31] Heinkelmann-Wild and Jankauskas, 'To Yield or Shield?'.

[32] Liliana B. Andonova, *Governance Entrepreneurs. International Organizations and the Rise of Global Public-Private Partnerships* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Biermann, 'The role of international bureaucracies'; Jonas Tallberg, Thomas Sommerer, Teresa Squatrito, and Krister Jönsson, *The Opening Up of International Organizations. Transnational Access in Global Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[33] Tana Johnson, 'Cooperation, Co-Optation, Competition, Conflict: International Bureaucracies and Non-Governmental Organizations in an Interdependent World', *Review of International Political Economy* 23: 5, 2016, pp. 737-767.

[34] Thomas Bernauer and Robert Gampfer, 'Effects of civil society involvement on popular legitimacy of global environmental governance', *Global Environmental Change* 23: 2, 2013, pp. 439-449.

Finally, IO bureaucracies can engage in management professionalization to build resilience. Recent research on the League of Nations has revealed how the League's Secretary-General used staffing decisions to increase the autonomy of the Secretariat.[35] IOs have also professionalized their communication channels when publicly challenged in order to legitimize themselves.[36] Through professionalization of fundraising, an IO's bureaucracy can build up additional financial capacities that contribute to resilience.

The following table (Table 1) summarizes how IO bureaucracies are able to shape IOs' institutional responses to member state contestation. The mechanisms to analyse the active role of IO bureaucracies are hunkering, framing, negotiation, shaming, coalition-building and professionalization. The three response types inertia, adaptation and resilience-building as well as the individual mechanisms within each response type are conceptualized as ideal-types which in reality may take place simultaneously or overlap. Given the complexity of bureaucracies, different sub-sections of a bureaucracy may engage in different mechanisms at once.

Table 1: Bureaucratic responses to contestation

	Bureaucratic mechanism
Inertia	Hunkering
Adaptation	Framing Negotiation
Resilience-building	Shaming Coalition-building Professionalization

These response types relate to institutional change in different ways. While inertia implies no change, adaptation and resilience-building are two forms of institutional change that operate very distinctly. Adaptation implies changes that intend to accommodate the challenging state's demands. Hereby, the IO bureaucracy frames its activities along the lines of the state's demands and rhetoric. In negotiations, the bureaucracy offers changes in the contested activities or the institutional structure as concessions to the challenging state. By contrast, resilience-building results in institutional changes that intend to hedge in the contesting state and prevent further attempts of contestation by this or any other state.

Of course, IO bureaucracies are not the only relevant actors shaping institutional responses to contestation. As we know from the literature on IO design, significant institutional changes cannot be adopted without the support of at least a critical mass of states.[37] While

[35] Karen Gram-Skjoldager and Haakon A. Ikonomou, 'The Construction of the League of Nations Secretariat. Formative Practices of Autonomy and Legitimacy in International Organizations', *The International History Review* 41: 2, 2019, pp. 257-279.
[36] Matthias Ecker-Ehrhardt, 'Self-legitimation in the face of politicization: Why international organizations centralized public communication', *The Review of International Organizations* 13: 4, 2018, pp. 519-546.
[37] Darren Hawkins et al., 'Delegation and Agency', Ch. 1; Orfeo Fioretos, (2011) 'Historical Institutionalism in International Relations', *International Organization* 65: 2, 2011, pp. 367-399, Liesbet Hooghe, Tobias Lenz and Gary Marks, *A Theory of International Organization*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 107.

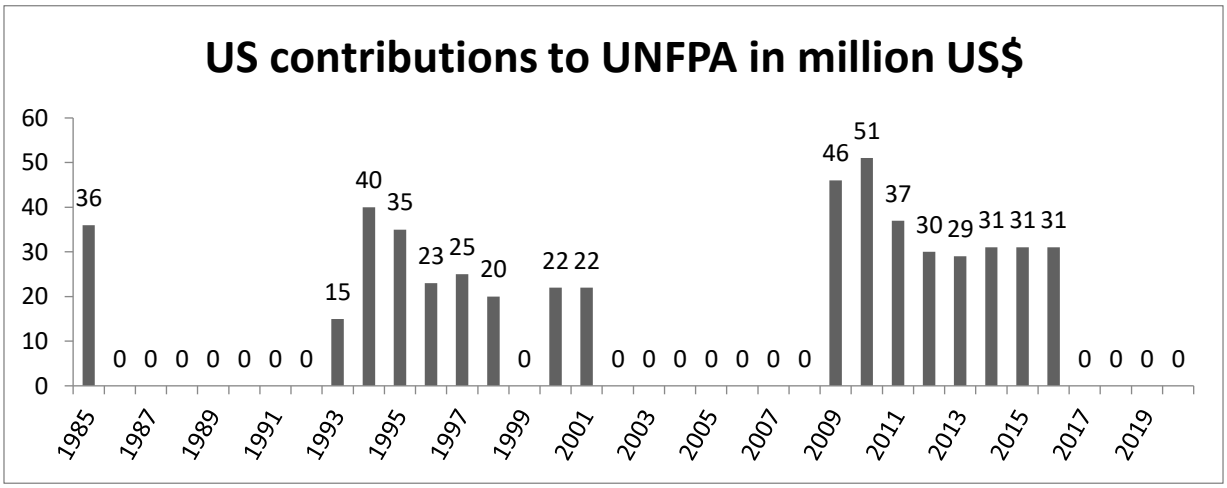
acknowledging that member states play an important role in IOs, this article focuses on the range of activities of IO bureaucracies in response to contestation. I argue that investigating the bureaucratic mechanisms in situations of existential challenges will help us generating new hypotheses on the intra-organizational dynamics in response to contestation.

Research design and methods

This analysis is designed as a theory-building study that examines the responses of IO bureaucracies to existential challenges. Budget cuts have become an impactful form for states to express their disapproval with multilateral cooperation.[38] While most of the member states are notoriously late payers and often withhold payments for various reasons, budget cuts have significant implications for the functioning and the policy scope of an IO that might, under specific circumstances, lead to its decline. As a means of contestation, budget cuts can – similarly to membership withdrawals – significantly challenges an IO's existence.

I use the United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA) as a within-case study to investigate bureaucratic responses to contestation. Throughout its existence, UNFPA has been confronted with budget cuts three times, first during the Reagan administration, second under the G.W. Bush and third under the Trump administrations (see figure 1 below, with 1999 as another year where a Republican-dominated US Congress cut contributions to UNFPA). By studying UNFPA's responses to budget cuts as a comparative within-case study, I trace the processes of different responses over time, taking into account earlier experiences when analyzing UNFPA's responses to later challenges. For each of these three periods, I analyse the bureaucratic mechanisms that shaped the responses of UNFPA to contestation.

Figure 1: US contributions to UNFPA[39]



[38] Francioni, 'Multilateralism à la carte'.
[39] Data retrieved from: The Kaiser Family Foundation, *UNFPA Funding & Kemp-Kasten: An Explainer*, 2020, available at: https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/fact-sheet/unfpa-funding-kemp-kasten-an-explainer/ (last access 1 October 2020).

By studying the underlying dynamics, I intend to derive more systematic theoretical expectations to explain the variation in response types. Given UNFPA's small size and relatively young age at the time of the first budget cuts, we can consider it a least likely case to resist existential challenges.[40] At the time of the first budget cuts, UNFPA was a very small organization, with only four senior staff and little bureaucratic autonomy whose mandate had turned from a technical approach to demographics to the highly politicized topic of sexual and reproductive health.[41] Having existed only 15 years when the US government decided to cut the budget for the first time, the challenge hit the organization rather early in its life-time. Studying the bureaucratic responses of such a small and low-autonomous organization will therefore reveal important generalizable insights that will hold also for larger and more autonomous IOs whose Secretariats usually have more room for maneuver. Moreover, the fact that UNFPA has been challenged by the same state already three times during its history makes it a good case to study path-dependent effects. With this approach I intend to gain more insights into the lifecycles of IOs and the "hidden" dynamics in response to existential challenges that have been understudied so far.[42]

When studying UNFPA's responses to contestation, it is important to keep in mind that UNFPA is not a monolith organization. The organizational units relevant for this analysis are UNFPA's Executive Director and the senior leadership level, the divisions at headquarters level, the liaison offices (in particular in Washington, DC and Brussels) and the field offices (in particular in China). Some of these organizational units did not exist at the outset of UNFPA's existence, but evolved over time. The analysis further includes UNFPA's Executive Board, which approves UNFPA's policies and programs.[43] This allows us to also take the role of member states into account while focusing on the bureaucratic responses.

The analysis relies on a combination of semi-structured interviews with UNFPA staff members and civil society organizations such as Population Action International (PAI) and Friends of UNFPA and an analysis of archival material such as oral history interviews from the Sophia Smith Collection; in addition, I use publicly available primary documents from UNFPA, PAI and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), as well as secondary literature from the field of population research.

3. UNFPA's responses to contestation: A stairway to resilience in global population politics

UNFPA was created during a period of extensive population growth worldwide to support and advise governments in developing population policies through voluntary family planning,

[40] Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 'What kills international organisations?'.

[41] Nafis Sadik, 'Interview', *Population and Reproductive Health Oral History Project*, Sophia Smith Collection (Smith College, 24 July 2003, New York), p. 37.

[42] Julia Gray, 'Life, Death, Inertia, Change: The Hidden Lives of International Organizations', *Ethics & International Affairs* 34: 1, 2020, pp. 33-42.

[43] Stirling Scruggs, 'Interview', *Population and Reproductive Health Oral History Project*, Sophia Smith Collection (Smith College, 17-18 July 2005, New Paltz, NY), p. 75.

"without violating the dignity and freedom of the human person".[44] Originally established in 1967 at the initiative of the US government as the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, its budget until today is entirely based on voluntary contributions. In the early years, the US government matched every financial contribution by other states and thus contributed the by far largest share to UNFPA's overall budget.[45] This active role of the US government in global population policies, however, changed in the 1980s.

The Mexico City Policy and budget cuts under the Reagan administration: UNFPA's responses

UNFPA's international family planning programs promoted voluntariness, but several participating countries adopted coercive policies which led to grave human rights abuses such as coercive sterilization or abortion.[46] Since the early 1980s, especially China's one-child policy caused great concern. This strengthened the position of the anti-choice and religious right coalition in the US. Domestic opposition to international population activities eventually became linked with a growing dissatisfaction with the US' engagement in UN institutions. The Reagan administration fundamentally departed from previous US administrations' support for global population policy. At the International Population Conference held in Mexico in 1984, the US delegate James Buckley announced what became known as the Mexico City Policy or the "global gag rule". In his conference statement, he declared that

"before the US will contribute funds to the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, it will first require concrete assurances that the UNFPA is not engaged in, and does not provide funding for, abortion or coercive family planning programs".[47]

Two senators in the US Congress used this momentum to introduce an amendment to the US Congress' annual legislations on foreign operations appropriations, which stipulated that "U.S. funds will not be made available to any organization or program which, as determined by the President, supports or participates in the management of a program of coercive abortion or involuntary sterilization".[48] Taken together, the Mexico City Policy and the Kemp-Kasten amendment constituted a fundamental turn-around in the US' engagement for UNFPA with significant implications for the organization's financial resource base.

The announcement of the Mexico City Policy took the participants of the conference by surprise.[49] Nothing in the US government's participation in the preparatory meetings had indicated this fundamental shift in the US' commitment to international population programs. During the conference, the other member states' delegations did not outspokenly confront the US on the announced policy shift. To the contrary, the outcome document adopted at the conference urged governments "to take appropriate steps to help women avoid abortion, which

[44] Stanley Johnson, *World Population and the United Nations. Challenge and Response* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 250.
[45] EveryCRSreport (2010) *The U.N. Population Fund: Background and the U.S. Funding Debate*, 15 July 2010, available at: https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL32703.html (last access 30 July 2021), p. 8.
[46] Paige W. Eager, 'From Population Control to Reproductive Rights: Understanding Normative Change in Global Population Policy (1965–1994)', *Global Society* 18: 2, 2004, pp. 145-173.
[47] Johnson, 'World Population and the United Nations', p. 256.
[48] EveryCRSreport, 'The UN Population Fund'.
[49] Johnson, 'World Population and the United Nations', p. 254.

in no case should be promoted as a method of family planning".[50] Nevertheless, the document also recognized unambiguously the "leading role" of UNFPA.[51]

Statements by high-ranking UNFPA staff reveal that the budget cuts were perceived as a significant threat by the organization.[52] At the time when the US government announced the cuts, the US still held a share of 25% in the financial contributions to UNFPA's core budget.[53] UNFPA's Executive Director at the time, Rafael Salas, predicted that this would not only disrupt UNFPA's programs but "stall the momentum generated by UNFPA".[54] UNFPA's initial response to the Mexico City Policy can be characterized by hunkering: "We kept our head down. […] Maybe it'll go away. Let's not say anything. Instead of coming out very forcefully and publicly about the Chinese, and forcefully saying to the U.S., You're crazy. This is what we do. It's kind of a bureaucratic thing. If you don't make decisions and rock the boat, you're not going to get in trouble".[55] In parallel, UNFPA's leadership also made efforts to accommodate the US demands to a certain extent. Their strategy was to "try to maybe rearrange the program, talk to the Chinese behind the scenes".[56] In numerous negotiations conducted especially by Executive Director Salas, UNFPA's senior leadership tried to convince them to reverse their position.[57] But it became clear that the US government was not interested in any compromise: "we were just spinning our wheels for nothing at all".[58]

After a change in the organization's leadership in 1987, the organization increasingly focused on the professionalization of its fundraising activities. During Salas' tenure, fundraising had successfully been prioritized as one of the core tasks of the Executive Director, reaching an annual budget of $142 million from 13 major donors in 1984.[59] When Nafis Sadik became Executive Director in 1987, a fundraising office was set up at headquarters level under the leadership of Stirling Scruggs.[60] As a result, UNFPA managed to double contributions from other donors within the first ten years of her tenure as Executive Director.[61] By shifting attention to other donor states, this new fundraising strategy provided the basis for a first diversification of resources.

Overall, UNFPA's responses to the US budget cuts under the Reagan administration was mixed: at first, hunkering and negotiation prevailed; towards the late 1980s the focus shifted to the professionalization of fundraising among a wider range of donors. This means that bureaucratic activities first corresponded with inertia and adaptation as the two primary initial responses. After a change in leadership, the bureaucratic mechanisms increasingly included resilience-

[50] Johnson, 'World Population and the United Nations', p. 259.
[51] Johnson, 'World Population and the United Nations', p. 280.
[52] Rafael M. Salas, 'Statement 25 September 1985', *Population and Development Review*, 12: 1, 1986, pp. 161-162.
[53] EveryCRSreport, 'The UN Population Fund', p. 2.
[54] Salas, 'Statement'.
[55] Scruggs, 'Interview', p. 64.
[56] Sadik, 'Interview, p. 63.
[57] Sadik, 'Interview', p. 77.
[58] Scruggs, 'Interview', p. 44.
[59] Sadik, 'Interview'; Salas 'Statement', p. 17.
[60] Scruggs, 'Interview', p. 39.
[61] Scruggs, 'Interview', p. 90; Sadik, 'Interview'.

building activities. These processes were crucial in determining UNFPA's development throughout the 1990s and are therefore relevant for our understanding of its responses to the following period of budget cuts.

Responses to budget cuts during the Bush administration[62]

In 1993, the Clinton administration reinstalled US funding to UNFPA. The controversy about UNFPA's engagement in China started anew in the early Bush years. During the years 2002-2008, the George W. Bush Administration annually requested funds for UNFPA from US Congress, but found UNFPA ineligible for funding under the Kemp-Kasten amendment. Throughout the Bush administration, the US Congress invoked the Kemp-Kasten amendment and additionally requested UNFPA to manage US funding in separate accounts to prevent it to be spent on programs in China.[63]

While the funding cuts by the Bush administration were still significant, the role of the US as a donor had notably changed. When the White House reinstated the Mexico City Policy, the US' position had diminished from being the by far largest contributor with 27.3% in 1985 to only the seventh largest contributor with 8.1% in 2000. Compared to the 80% that the US contributed to UNFPA's budget at the outset of its existence, this constituted a significant decline. Moreover, inside UNFPA, the previous cuts had isolated the US in a way that senior UNFPA positions would not be given to Americans any longer.[64] Statements by UNFPA's senior staff members demonstrate that the organization had become used to the unreliability of US' funding: "We knew that if you cared about family planning, […] that the money ain't going to come from the U.S. for the foreseeable future".[65] Initially a significant threat to the organization's existence, budget cuts from the US thus had become something UNFPA needed to work with by the early 2000s.

At the same time, homogenous support among other member states for UNFPA had been growing, especially in the aftermath of the Cairo conference in 1994.[66] This led to new coalitions among UNFPA's member states when the Bush government reinstated the Mexico City Policy: "Most countries hated it [the Mexico City Policy]. The North Koreans thought it was so much fun to fight together with all the other countries against this policy".[67] In response to the cuts, UNFPA established a new liaison office in Brussels to mobilize funding from the European Union, especially the European Commission.[68] The EU assured the organization that it would increase its funding and also encouraged its member states to step up and compensate for the budget losses. Moreover, UNFPA used the united position of the other donors

[62] US funding for UNFPA continued during the first year of the G.W. Bush administration, mainly due to Colin Powell's influence within the administration (Scruggs, 'Interview', p. 101).
[63] EveryCRSreport, 'The UN Population Fund', p. 11.
[64] Scruggs, 'Interview', p. 97.
[65] Scruggs, 'Interview', p. 67.
[66] Scruggs, 'Interview', p. 95. "But by [1984], every [developing] country in the world had a family planning program. […] Even a country like Sudan talked about reproductive health" (Sadik, 'Interview', pp. 60, 97).
[67] Interview #3 with UNFPA official, online, 18 May 2020.
[68] Interview #4 with UNFPA official, online, 27 May 2020.

strategically to single out and shame the US government after the budget cuts were announced.[69] The organization had already professionalized its lobbying activities by establishing a permanent office in DC in 1994.[70] With the budget cuts by the Bush government, UNFPA decided to build up a new funding base that included private foundations such as Rockefeller, Gates and PATH.[71] In addition, a new constellation of support formed: two American women independently from each other successfully launched campaigns asking 34 million US citizens to send 1 dollar to UNFPA to compensate for the loss of US financial contributions under the Bush administration. Initially, UNFPA was rather skeptical towards these actions but increasingly embraced these private contributions.[72]

At headquarters and field levels, UNPFA started to professionalize its external communication to preempt and manage misinformation campaigns.[73] In addition, training for advocacy on behalf of UNFPA was systematized throughout the different field offices.[74] Media offices were established in UNFPA's representations in Mexico, Dakar, Senegal, Nairobi, Jordan and Kenia and the senior leadership trained these offices regularly in dealing with communication crises.[75]

Overall, UNFPA's response to the budget cuts by the G.W. Bush administration reveals resilience-building on various levels. Despite the cuts, UNFPA's staff size increased to around 1100 by 2005.[76] The resilience-building activities were facilitated by a decreased influence of the US in terms of its financial share in UNFPA's budget as well as more homogenous support for UNFPA by other donor states, both rhetorically and financially. UNFPA professionalized in lobbying through the establishment of liaison offices in DC and Brussels as well as in terms of communication. Coalition-building in particular with civil society actors, a wide donor community and private actors led to a diversification of its fundraising activities. This allowed UNFPA and its supporters to isolate and shame the US government within the Executive Board, domestically and internationally among the community of member states. These processes of pro-active resilience-building proved crucial when addressing the next period of budget cuts enacted by the Trump administration.

[69] "During the Bush era, we had a concerted effort where we had […] contributions from almost every country at the world. One of our stories was even Afghanistan gave us a hundred dollars because they supported our work. And so, with the kind of talking point, every country in the world supports us except for one" (Interview #1 with UNFPA official, in person, 20 February 2020, Cambridge, MA.). "No other country has ever withheld funding from UNFPA. And in fact, we made a big fuss of it." (interview #3).
[70] Scruggs, 'Interview', p. 101.
[71] "[I]f you want it [*i.e. family planning*] to happen in the world, […] you've got to work with the people on the ground, the NGOs, and develop more and more contacts" (Scruggs, 'Interview', p. 67).
[72] Scruggs, 'Interview', p. 101.
[73] Interviews #1; #3.
[74] Scruggs, 'Interview', p. 136.
[75] Scruggs, 'Interview', p. 70.
[76] Scruggs, 'Interview', p. 98.

Reactions to budget cuts under the Trump administration

The third time period during which UNFPA was confronted with budget cuts from the US government started when President Trump took office in 2017.[77] Moreover, during the Covid crisis, the US House of Congress and Senate asked the Secretary of State for humanitarian exemptions for UNFPA funding in May 2020, but the Trump administration – in addition to the financial cuts – requested that the United Nations remove any references to reproductive health from its humanitarian response plan to COVID-19. On 18 May 2020, Acting USAID Administrator John Barr in a letter to the UN Secretary-General requested that "the U.N. should not use this [Covid-19] crisis as an opportunity to advance access to abortion as an essential service".[78] Apart from its content, such a letter from staff member of the US administration to the highest UN official was unprecedented as it disregarded established diplomatic hierarchies and channels of communication.[79]

At the time of the cuts, the share of US funding in UNFPA's overall budget was around 10%.[80] In contrast to other UN organizations like UNICEF where the US outnumbered other member states' contributions by far, the role of the US within UNFPA had become less significant. According to UNFPA staff members, the US contribution was still important but not as crucial as it had been in the early years: "it is huge, of course, but not insurmountable".[81] Moreover, previous funding cuts had harmed the perception of the US inside UNFPA as a reliable source of funding: "you know, we never count on American funding. It comes and goes".[82] This shows that budget cuts from the US government have changed from the perspective of UNFPA from constituting a significant shock for the organization to a more regular challenge that the organization has learned to deal with.

The response mechanisms enacted by UNFPA also indicate this preparedness. Already before the cuts were announced, UNFPA's leadership had secured the support of important other donor states.[83] UNFPA still maintained its presence in DC, to potentially achieve an exemption for humanitarian funding.[84] During this period, emphasizing the humanitarian aspects of UNFPA's work became an important means of framing for the organization to prove its relevance.[85]

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[77] "Memorandum of Justification for the Determination Regarding the "Kemp-Kasten Amendment," as cited in The Kaiser Family Foundation, 'UNFPA Funding and Kemp-Kasten'.
[78] USAID, 'Press release', 18 May 2020, available at: https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/may-18-2020-acting-administrator-john-barsa-un-secretary-general-antonio-guterres (last access 30 July 2021).
[79] Interview #4.
[80] Interview #1.
[81] Interview #1.
[82] Interview #4.
[83] "Our chief of resource mobilization was able to at least start the conversation with some of our other donors to say, in case this happens, we may be calling on you to help step up and bridge the gap" (interview #1).
[84] As a result of UNFPA's work in DC, Democrats in the House and Senate released letters publicly calling on the Trump Administration to grant a humanitarian exception to the U.S. ban on funding for UNFPA: U.S. Congress, Press Release, 4 May 2020, available at: https://speier.house.gov/press-releases?ID=B74AE07F-2458-42F2-8DAA-E4F16950FF43; https://www.murphy.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/murphy-blumenthal-murray-shaheen-dem-colleagues-lead-call-to-overturn-ideological-trump-administration-policies-that-undermine-global-health-and-covid-19-response (last access 30 July 2021).
[85] Interview #4.

UNFPA hereby has used the humanitarian frame to situate the issue of sexual and reproductive health in a broader context and appeal to a larger audience.[86]

Two other mechanisms prevailed in the responses of UNFPA to the budget cuts: coalition-building and professionalization. Besides early coordination with other donor states, UNFPA headquarters focused on building a strong network with civil society organizations and private actors. Parts of these activities were undertaken to counter further stigmatization of UNFPA and its partner organizations and emphasize the relevance of its activities to the greater public.[87] A Strategic Partnerships Branch was established to reach out to private actors, including foundations and even individuals as supporters "in kind" or as potential funders.[88] These coalition-building activities are accompanied by significant professionalization inside UNFPA's bureaucratic structure. The Resource Mobilization Division together with the Division for Communication and Strategic Partnerships have significantly expanded UNFPA's staff size in these areas, hiring staff members with private sector backgrounds as well as media and communication experts.[89]

Throughout the bureaucracy, the perspective prevailed that hunkering was no option and would even be dangerous.[90] Instead, the organization decided to push back, for the first time publicly supported by the UN Secretary-General.[91] However, instead of the concerted shaming effort that UNFPA undertook with other donors in response to the budget cuts under President Bush, the organization focused on coalition-building with new partners, for example through an "individual giving strategy" to become even more independent of particular donor states.[92] Overall, the organization has built up significant resilience by professionalizing fundraising and communication activities as well as building new institutional channels for a diversified resource base.

To sum up, we can assess that UNFPA's response to the budget cuts has evolved from primarily hunkering and negotiation attempts at first towards significant resilience-building. Following initial inertia and adaptation, UNFPA headquarters started to professionalize communication and fundraising among other donors. When the US government under President Bush cut its contributions, UNFPA leadership secured support by other member states and engaged in a concerted effort of shaming the US for its cuts together with UNFPA. In addition, the bureaucracy engaged in coalition-building with domestic civil society actors and professionalized its lobbying activities through offices in DC and Brussels. These activities aimed to increase the legitimacy of UNFPA's work within a like-minded community and to

[86] UNFPA, 'Humanitarian Action', 2020 Overview. Brochure on file with the author.
[87] "It is sometimes hard to get NGOs who we fund and work with to publicly back us" (interview #1).
[88] Interview #2 with UNFPA official, online, 20 March 2020.
[89] "I think headquarters has evolved […] over the last 20 years or so. […] Handling the media is now done in an extremely professional way. […] Also with all kinds of management support systems and enterprise resource planning, all the systems underneath it have professionalized" (interview #4).
[90] "This is a political narrative and we're the low hanging fruit. […] We try not to fall into that narrative, but we also don't hide below the parapet. We are very proud of our work. And we want to tell everyone what we do, because it's a life-saving human rights agenda" (interview #1).
[91] Interview #1.
[92] "I would say that's one super important lesson: don't take friends for granted and also to expand the number of friends" (interview #1).

jointly raise awareness for the issue. This led to a greater diversification of UNFPA's funding base that included also individual donations from American citizens. Finally, in anticipation of the most recent budget cuts under President Trump, UNFPA's leadership had already secured support from other donor governments prior to the announcement of the cuts. In response to the cuts, UNFPA emphasized its work in humanitarian contexts, hereby legitimizing its work towards the greater public by highlighting the less controversial aspects of UNFPA's impact. Most importantly, UNFPA focused on coalition-building in particular with private actors and on exploring new channels for diversifying its financial resources beyond donor states both at headquarters level and through field offices.

4. Exploring the variation in bureaucratic responses

The foregoing empirical analysis reveals several theoretical insights that are worth exploring to explain the variation in bureaucratic responses to contestation. This section discusses these potential explanatory factors by connecting them to existing International Relations research, in particular principal-agent theory, and organization research. I hereby take into consideration the characteristics of the IO bureaucracy as well as the role of the IO's member states, both the contesting state and the other member states.

The empirical analysis has shown that UNFPA's perception of the severity of the threat that the budget cuts by the US constituted for the organization has changed over time. Initially, the budget cuts were perceived as a rather existential threat by the organization's leadership. During this time, the predominant bureaucratic mechanisms were inertia and adaptation attempts. Over the years, budget cuts became less of an existential threat and instead were perceived as a more regular challenge, which the organization even anticipated during the latest period of contestation. This changed threat perception corresponded with a significant increase in resilience-building activities.

These findings significantly challenge the expectations of organization theories, which stipulate that less severe challenges or "small-scale surprises" are more likely to lead to inertia or a "wait-and-see" attitude, whereas challenges that are more costly are more likely to result in resilience.[93] Instead, the findings seem to correspond more with the expectations of principal-agent theory, which argues that an IO is more vulnerable with regard to states that possess institutional veto power or pay a large amount of the IO's budget.[94] Accordingly, budget cuts from the largest contributing states are too costly to be ignored, whereas budget cuts from states with a lower share in the IO's overall budget do not possess the same degree of severity for the organization. This indicates that the assumptions of organization theory need to be refined when applied to IOs.

The second factor that potentially influences the variation in IO responses to contestation is the position of other member states. In the years prior to the Mexico City conference, member states

[93] Johan M. Rosenschöld, Jaap G. Rozema and Laura A. Frye-Levine, Institutional inertia and climate change: a review of the new institutionalist literature, *WIREs Climate Change* 5, 2014, pp. 639–648; Comfort et al., 'Designing Resilience', p. 19.
[94] Hawkins et al., 'Delegation and Agency'.

were not unified regarding multilateral cooperation on population, with a particular division between developing and developed countries.[95] During the conference, member states for the most part did not expressly counter the announced policy changes of the US. The outcome document of the conference reflected the US' new position on abortion rather than adopting a more differentiated view on the issue. By contrast, member states were far more homogenously supportive of UNFPA at the time of the budget cuts under the Bush and Trump administrations. Funding for sexual and reproductive health as well as the funding necessities of UNFPA had become accepted by a majority of the UN's member states.[96]

These findings largely correspond with the expectations of organization research. According to this perspective, inertia is more likely if there are competing power coalitions that block each other to stimulate action or if there are certain gatekeepers that disable actions to be undertaken.[97] Accordingly, we would expect inertia if the other member states are divided in their positions regarding how to respond to the challenge. Indeed, in the case of UNFPA, the only period of inertia took place when the position of other member states towards the challenge was not united. Adaptation and resilience-building, in particular those involving changes in the funding rules, in turn can each result from a critical mass of member states united on the issue.[98] Although UNFPA's funding rules have not changed, the growing homogenous support of member states towards the organization allowed the bureaucracy to pro-actively diversify its funding and make full use of the flexibility that a funding system based on voluntary contributions provided. The findings also support the insights of the recent literature on membership withdrawals, which argues that the position of other member states determines the institutional impact of the contestation.[99] An important additional insight of the analysis is that the position of other member states is neither predetermined nor stable; instead, the analysis has revealed how IO bureaucracies can take an active role in promoting coalitions of support among member states and civil society actors.

Finally, the analysis also indicates that the change in UNFPA's bureaucratic responses corresponded with a change in the organization's executive leadership. This supports the argument of organization research that leadership strategies are crucial for an organization's resilience.[100] Two important leadership strategies for resilience identified, namely facilitating "emerging nodes of coordination" and organizing "outside forces", seem to apply in this case.[101] The diversification of resources had already started under Rafael Salas. However, one of the reasons for why UNFPA's diversifying fundraising strategy became so successful was the relationship Nafis Sadik managed to establish with the other donor countries within the Executive Board: "They say I come in like a queen, reign on the executive board, and leave

[95] Johnson, 'World Population and the United Nations', p. 249.
[96] "I think one of the reasons why we do get support either from governments or from NGOs is because I think people thought that sexual and reproductive rights would no longer be considered controversial" (interview #1).
[97] McConnell and 't Hart, 'Inaction and Public Policy, p. 647.
[98] Fioretos, 'Historical Institutionalism'; Erin R. Graham, 'The institutional design of funding rules at international organizations: Explaining the transformation in financing the United Nations', *European Journal of International Relations* 23: 2, 2017, pp. 365-390.
[99] Walter, 'Mass politics'.
[100] Comfort et al., 'Designing Resilience', p. 10.
[101] Comfort et al., 'Designing Resilience', p. 136.

with my subjects eating out of my hand. […] But it took a few years to do that, because in the beginning I think they were a bit suspicious about whether I could manage […]".[102] These close ties to donor representatives in the Executive Board proved rather valuable for UNFPA to continue its programs despite the cuts.

To summarize, the empirical analysis has revealed several factors that are relevant for theorizing IOs' responses to contestation. First, the degree to which contestation is perceived as a severe threat by the IO's bureaucracy seems to influence whether the organization engages in hunkering or negotiation in opposition to resilience-building mechanisms. Second, the position of other member states, both in terms of their homogeneity and their support for the organization, apparently matters for the type of institutional response to contestation. Finally, the pro-active role of the bureaucracy's leadership should not be underestimated, for example with the effect of shaping the position of other member states. These factors suggest that integrating organization perspectives into IR theories can foster our understanding of IO responses to contestation.

5. Conclusion

This article set out to provide a more in-depth understanding of the institutional reactions of IO bureaucracies to member state contestation. Earlier research on the decline of IOs has indicated that the autonomy of an IO's bureaucracy might play a role in IO survival. This article built on this insight to analyse the responses of IO bureaucracies to situations which pose a threat to their existence. Drawing on organization research, I investigated three ways of how IO bureaucracies respond to contestation, 1) inertia, i.e. no immediate action in response to the challenge; 2) adaptation, i.e. policy changes to maintain the support of the challenging member state(s); and 3) resilience-building, i.e. developing organizational capacities in order to limit further contestation by member states. By examining processes of hunkering, framing, negotiation, shaming, coalition-building and professionalization, the study provides insights into the role of IO bureaucracies in shaping institutional responses to contestation.

I used a within-case comparison of UNFPA to illustrate my argument. UNFPA has repeatedly been confronted with budget cuts by US governments throughout its existence. However, the responses of UNFPA varied across three time periods of cuts: while inertia and adaptation were present in the first period of cuts, resilience-building processes dominating during the latter two periods. The activities of UNFPA's bureaucracy were crucial in shaping these responses: after initial hunkering and attempts of negotiation, the bureaucracy focused on professionalization and coalition-building (first among other member states, then increasingly among private actors) throughout the years, combined with shaming during the second period and new framing in the most recent period. I demonstrated that the organization's changed threat perception, the increasingly supportive and homogenous position of other member states and a change in UNFPA's executive leadership can help explaining the variation in bureaucratic responses. Overall, the analysis showed that while these processes might be undertaken more easily by

[102] Sadik, 'Interview'.

more autonomous organizations even the bureaucracy of an IO with little autonomy can engage in these.

The within-case comparison revealed an important additional insight that further confirms the value of historical institutionalism: new institutional routines established by an IO in response to a specific challenge determined the organization's responses to subsequent challenges. However, the path dependent effects of past decisions are not necessarily recognized by the organization itself: during the interviews, many staff members considered UNFPA to be a very different organization in a particular situation, without seeing any need to draw on the lessons of previous experiences. Only one staff member interviewed attempted to generate institutional memory about responses to past budget cuts to address a current one. Nevertheless, all of them recognized the importance of past activities of UNFPA's bureaucracy for the organization to survive. Future research is necessary to grasp the extent of these path dependent effects.

Another important insight manifested itself through the analysis, which is related to the mandate of an organization. Existing research has claimed that organizations with a more technical mandate are more likely to survive situations of exogenous shocks.[103] The case of UNFPA shows that not only can an IO's mandate evolve from a rather technical focus on demographics to a highly politicized issue, but that the mandate also plays an important role in shaping the possibilities for response. Most interviewees argued that while UNFPA's politicized mandate made UNFPA more vulnerable to attacks, it also helped for resilience-building.[104] Future studies should investigate the impact of mandates and their politicization on the scope of action of IO bureaucracies more systematically.

Finally, the findings of this article generate important questions for future research on the survival and decline of IOs. In light of the recent research on IO deaths, we need further systematic studies on how budget cuts as a means of contestation challenge the existence of IOs and which factors constrain this threat. Based on the expectations about IOs' responses generated through this analysis, future research is required to investigate which institutional responses are particularly efficient in securing an IO's survival. This will be essential to contribute to a better theoretical understanding of the full life cycle of IOs while appropriately considering the role of bureaucracies.

[103] Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 'What kills international organisations?'.

[104] As an example for this understanding, one UNFPA staff member said: "at UNFPA, for better or for worse, we approach this very differently than other U.N. agencies because we have such an important mandate, but our mandate is a very sensitive one and it's a political one. And accordingly, we have to engage and advocate in ways that might be a bit different from other U.N. agencies" (interview #1).