How to Win Friends and Influence the UN: Donor Influence on the United Nations' Bureaucracy

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WORK IN PROGRESS. COMMENTS WELCOME.

Abstract. Do states benefit from having their nationals on the staff of international organizations (IOs) and, if so, how? It is well-known that states seek to get their nationals hired into IOs, but the reasons behind this are less well-understood. This paper argues that one benefit that states derive is that the more nationals a state has on the staff of an IO, the more similar the policy preferences of that agency become to the state's. Not all states, however, have an equal ability to get their nationals hired by IOs. Examining an original dataset on UN staff nationalities, this paper demonstrates that major donors to voluntarily-funded UN development agencies have a larger number of their nationals on staff than do similar non-major donors. It further shows that those agencies' aid portfolios look more similar to countries that have a large number of their nationals on the agency's staff. Interestingly, this effect is driven not by those countries that existing theories of informal influence would lead us to believe should be most influential—namely the G5—but rather by other, less powerful, bilateral donors. This suggests that a much larger number of countries can informally influence IOs than is usually thought.

Each Member of the United Nations undertakes to respect the exclusively international character of the responsibilities of the Secretary-General and the staff and not to seek to influence them in the discharge of their responsibilities.

Article 100, Charter of the United Nations

The image of the impartial international civil servant, of the person with no nationality, is one that the United Nations (UN) has aspired to maintain since its inception. Indeed, the impartiality of the organization's staff is enshrined in the foundational document of the organization. And yet, we know that hiring at the UN is often an intensely political process and there are well-established norms regarding appointments to various top-level positions in the organization. Jockeying for particular positions, however, is known to reach well beyond heads of agencies or other high-profile positions within the organization, to include staff members at virtually every level of the organization.[1]

In light of Article 100 of the UN Charter, quoted above, why is it that states are so interested in getting their nationals hired into the UN system? When asked, most diplomats answer citing prestige or being seen as active and committed to the goals of the organization, essentially what we think of as descriptive representation (Pitkin, 1967). Evidence, however—at least as far as senior hires are concerned—suggests that states may benefit more from their nationals than that. For example, Werker and Novosad (2014) note that senior hires are often political appointees of their national governments and retain a sense of loyalty to home. When it comes to more junior staff members, given their relatively limited direct influence over the policies and mandates of UN departments and agencies, we might think that the most states can benefit from their presence is through an enhanced perception of engagement in the institution.[2] This, however, would be a considerable underestimation of

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[1]See Werker and Novosad (2014) for discussion of hiring for senior-level positions within the UN Secretariat and G.A.O. (2010) for evidence, corroborated through numerous interviews, that states care a great deal about the number of their nationals employed by the UN.

[2]This, in and of itself, can be beneficial to states when, e.g., they choose to run for a seat on one of the

the potential implications for countries of being well-represented within institutions such as the UN.

In virtually every policy debate that takes place within the UN, the organization relies on its experts to formulate specifics, prioritize needs, etc. If the staff members tasked with these duties have even an implicit bias towards the policies of their home countries, it is not hard to envision this being reflected in their choice of policies or benchmarks, for example. And indeed, this is what we often observe anecdotally within the institution. A frequent criticism by developing countries is that the UN is too "donor-centric," or overly influenced by the global North (two groups that enjoy considerable overlap).[3]

If it is the case that UN staff members are biased in favor of their home countries— regardless of whether the home country is overtly trying to influence them—that highlights a potential avenue for states to wield informal influence over the organization. Moreover, it provides an avenue that is open to all countries, not only the most powerful ones. This is an important distinction to make because the literature has heretofore largely focused on the ability of the most powerful countries to wield informal influence over IOs (cf. Stone, 2011).

If we allow for other states to also have this type of informal influence, then it is no longer sufficient to only consider the outsized role of the most powerful actors, but rather means that we need to take into account the possible endogeneity of preferences of IO bureaucrats more generally. The literature on international bureaucrats has heretofore largely assumed that bureaucrats' preferences are exogenous to state preferences and that they either seek good policy or self-advancement, or both. Allowing for state influence on the preferences of bureaucrats, however, calls into question the extent to which we can talk about the

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the Economic and Social Council, the Human Rights Council, or the Security Council.

[3]Easterly (2009) and Van der Hoeven (2012) both discuss this in terms of the development of the specific benchmarks for the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), a process that included both state representatives and experts from international bodies.

preferences of agencies and states as distinct. In addition, it adds a new dimension both for thinking about which states can influence IOs as well as the conditions under which they are able to do so.

In order to demonstrate that this is an avenue of influence that states are able to exploit, we must show not only that the nationality of staff influences the policies of IOs, but also that states are able to influence hiring processes. Through focusing on a subset of UN agencies— namely, the programmes and funds—this paper is able to do both. The UN programmes and funds have two main features that enable this analysis. First, they are voluntarily funded, so they have incentives to be responsive to demands from member states, in particular their main donors. Second, they are providers of multilateral aid. This is crucial, as it allows us to capture the policy preferences of the organization, as measured by its distribution of aid to various recipient states. This distribution can then be compared with those of bilateral aid donors to investigate the drivers of similarity between the two.

Leveraging these features of the programmes and funds, I use data on major donors to these agencies as well as an original dataset on staff nationalities to examine both whether major donors have more staff members than do non-major donors and whether the nationality of staff matters for the similarity of aid distribution between the agencies and bilateral donors. Using both linear regression as well as mediation analysis, I find that not only are major donors to UN agencies disproportionately represented on the staffs of those agencies, but that major donors are able to influence agency policy through those staff members.

In particular, the more of its nationals that a country has within an agency, the more that agency's aid policy reflects the state's bilateral aid preferences. Furthermore, by investigating separately the effects for G5 countries—the economic powerhouses of the world— and non-G5 countries, I am able to show that this effect holds for all relevant states, not just the powerful

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ones. While these findings cannot speak to whether the congruence in policy between the state and the agency is due to deliberate placement of staff for that very purpose or whether it is merely a side-effect of attempts to enhance a state's descriptive representation, they do point to an avenue of influencing IOs that states can exploit should they see fit. Furthermore, these results suggest that complaints of developing countries that UN agencies are driven by donor preferences may well be warranted. These findings combined lend support to a central contention of this paper: that preferences of international bureaucrats are less independent than has previously been thought and that they may, indeed, be endogenous to the states that pushed for the bureaucrats' hire to begin with. The paper also demonstrates that a larger number of countries than the literature generally focuses on are able to wield informal influence within IOs and that our failure to understand the influence that they have may lead us to miss an important dimension of how IOs operate.

The paper continues in four parts. The next part further positions this paper in the extant literature and elaborates on the proposed mechanism through which this influence operates. Part three presents the data and empirical analysis. The concluding section situates these findings within the broader research question of this paper and suggests avenues for further exploration.

Influencing the United Nations

Scholars have long debated the importance of international organizations in international relations (Keohane, 1984; Keohane and Martin, 1995; Mearsheimer, 1994/1995). One facet of this debate has revolved around the reasons states delegate authority to international organizations (Abbott and Snidal, 1998; Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal, 2001; Nielson and Tierney, 2003; Hawkins et al., 2006a; Koremenos, 2008). Many of those who have sought

to answer these questions employ a rationalist approach, arguing that delegation at the international level can be described within a standard principal-agent framework (Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal, 2001; Hawkins et al., 2006a).

Most of this literature views the organization as a unitary agent with states as its principals. This is, in essence, a common agency framework where the agent is unitary but the principal is not. In addition, a dinstinction is frequently made between multiple and collective principals—where the agent has the ability to negotiate independently with each principal only in the case of multiple principals, but not in the case of a collective principal (Vaubel, 1986; Lyne, Nielson and Tierney, 2006; Copelovitch, 2010).

A salient feature of principal-agent (P-A) relationships is the existence of slack, i.e., the ability of the agent to act independently from the principal, often in ways she finds undesirable (Hawkins et al., 2006b). Furthermore, when the principal is not a unitary actor, there is usually greater room for slack than with a single principal (Olson, 1965; Pollack, 1997; Lyne, Nielson and Tierney, 2006; Vaubel, 2006). However, in a common agency framework, the definition of slack becomes more complicated, due to the frequent divergence of opinion between different principals: what one principal may find undesirable action on the part of the agent, another may find desirable. Not only, as McCubbins, Noll and Weingast (1989) note, does this often lead to a lack of coordination among principals and, consequently, less oversight over the agent and more room for shirking, it also means that principals may not see eye to eye on desired outcomes or goals for the agent.

Some of this work has focused on the role of the agent in the P-A relationship. Frey (1986), Vaubel (1986) and Barnett and Finnemore (2004) all argue that the objectives of international bureaucrats need not reflect those of their state principals. Johnson (2013) and Johnson and Urpelainen (2014) claim that international bureaucrats influence the de-

velopment of new intergovernmental organizations to a significant degree, sometimes despite opposition from the constituent member states. Kleine (2013) argues that agencies can be "captured" by certain member states, often in exchange for letting other states exert dominant control in some other agency.[4]

In addition, they argue that the ultimate objectives of international bureaucrats are material security, legitimacy, and the advancement of policies they deem fitting. The claim that bureaucrats care about material security is relevant for this analysis because it means that they are likely to respond to threats of defunding and to rewards of greater funding. This may make them more susceptible to complying with states pressuring for hires or give greater weight to the views and emphases of major donors than of others. It may furthermore mean that bureaucrats, who are hired into the UN system in part by virtue of their governments lobbying for them, may feel a greater sense of responsibility to represent their country's values within the organization.

Thus, it may well be the case that what is perceived as slack may not be slack at all but rather bureaucrats from the agency responding to influence from only one or a handful of principals. This is conceptually distinct from McCubbins, Noll and Weingast (1989) in that it is not a side-effect that one of the principals benefits from shirking but that it may occur as part of a deliberate strategy by one or more principal. This suggests a central point about delegation to IOs: while states necessarily delegate with some level of discretion, this may not only serve the interests of the agent, but may also facilitate various principals influencing the agency when preferences diverge among the principals. This could be further exacerbated by the reduced incentives that principals have to monitor their agent in cases where there are multiple principals, as each individual state's share of the agency's revenue is smaller

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[4]This hypothesis lends itself particularly well to international organizational "families," such as the United Nations and the European Union, where these trades can more easily be made.

(Vaubel, Dreher and Soylu, 2007).

The above discussion assumes that the principals in these relationships have the ability to influence the agent in some way. While this ability varies among states, there are several ways in which they can at least attempt to influence IOs. One way in which states can do this is suggested by Stone (2011). He argues that states that have outside options (i.e., the ability to "go it alone," or work outside the organization if needed) are granted greater informal powers within international organizations in exchange for giving other states more formal power (e.g., in terms of voting procedures and other such mechanisms). Thus, there is a tacit agreement in place between the various member states that when the state with outside options really wants something, the others won't obstruct it. This has a corollary in the relationship between those states and the bureaucracy of the organization as well. Bureaucrats may be less likely to go against the wishes of a state that they know could functionally abandon the agency and "go it alone."

This dynamic, however, describes the relationship between the organization and only a handful of member states (and in many cases, only one). Others do not have a credible threat of abandoning the organization, so they must rely on other tools to influence the agent. One such tool might be threatening to withhold funding from the organization. Depending on how significant a donor a particular country is, coupled with its ability to work through alternative organizations (such as may often be the case with various UN agencies) or to simply decrease its activity in a particular policy domain for a while, this could well prove a credible threat.

States may also try to reduce agency slack by decreasing the organization's policy discretion. Indeed, there is evidence that, in the last couple of decades, donor contributions to the UN development system have increasingly become earmarked for specific projects[5] to

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[5]This is usually referred to as multilateral-bilateral aid, or multi-bi aid. See Eichenauer and Reinsberg

the detriment of core agency funding, thus making multilateral development aid resemble bilateral aid to a greater extent than before (Graham, 2015; Mahn, 2012). Due to this, there are reasons to believe that international organizations have an incentive to be responsive, to some extent, to the preferences of their major donors.

Another, related, mechanism through which states may seek to influence particular agencies is by influencing the staffing composition at these agencies. In particular, states may seek to promote the hiring of "friendly" bureaucrats, i.e., bureaucrats who are likely to implement policies in a way that behooves the state that pushed for their hire or, more simply, bureaucrats who are amenable to suggestion when desired. This mechanism is the most plausible when we are able to discern some policy impact of those bureaucrats that states are seeking to place within the IO. Interestingly, this mechanism does not rely on a state deliberately pushing a particular policy agenda via its nationals into the agency. All that is required for this mechanism to result in an influential member state is for the staffer to, on average, act in a way that is favorable to its home government, whether or not that is deliberate. Thus, even a staffer that believes him- or herself to be an international civil servant through and through could implement policies in a way that favors his country of birth. If there is congruence between a bureaucrat and his home government on what constitutes "good policy," then we might see the agencies influenced in favor of that bureaucrat's home country, despite no deliberate attempts to make that happen.

Staffing in United Nations Programmes and Funds

The United Nations is composed of six main organs—the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council (now defunct), the Sec-

(2015) for further discussion of this type of aid.

retariat, and the International Court of Justice—as well as a myriad subsidiary agencies. The Secretariat—headed by the Secretary-General of the UN—is the executive arm of the organization. Chapter XV of the UN Charter discusses the Secretariat and has the following to say about how it should be staffed:

> "The paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity. Due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible."
> (Article 101, UN Charter)

In order to meet this standard, the Secretariat runs a Young Professionals Program (YPP) for entry-level hires (formerly the National Competitive Recruitment Examinations (NCREs)). These are open only to young professionals from countries that are underrepresented on its staff. Before shifting to the YPP, the NCRE had been found to be effective in enhancing the geographical distribution of the staff and providing the Secretariat with high-quality staff members (Posta and Terzi, 2007). However, as it is only one avenue for entry into the Secretariat, it can only guarantee that the spirit of Article 101 is followed to a limited extent.

Although the Secretariat is generally considered important for policymaking and agenda setting within the UN, it is funded entirely through assessed contributions from member states of the organization, which are then allocated to various UN departments via the 5th Committee of the General Assembly (Novosad and Werker, 2014).[6] Thus, while Secretariat staffing is undoubtedly of great interest to scholars seeking to evaluate member state influence

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[6]Assessed contributions are the mandatory contributions that states make to the UN as part of their membership obligations. Not every UN entity is funded through the assessed contributions, so a large number of agencies rely on additional voluntary contributions for their operations.

on the UN bureaucracy, it is harder to make the case that states are able to use their donations as leverage for Secretariat hires.

However, the UN comprises a great deal more entities than only the six main organs listed above. The UN system includes over 30 affiliated organizations that have varying levels of autonomy from the main organs. Part of these are the UN Programmes and Funds, a group of 13 agencies[7] that, for three main reasons, lend themselves well to examining whether major donor states to a particular agency have a disproportionate number of staff members at that agency and whether there is a discernible impact on policy due to staff nationalities. First, they are almost entirely funded through voluntary contributions, a significant amount of which comes from member state donations. Second, their hiring policies follow those of the UN Charter, meaning that they are also striving for geographic balance in their hiring. Third, a number of these agencies are primarily focused on various aspects of development aid, which means that they are multilateral donor agencies. Due to this, we have data on their operations and can examine empirically the extent to which their policies appear to be influenced by donors.

Data

The empirical analysis in this paper proceeds in two parts. The former is two-fold, employing two distinct regressions to examine, on the one hand, whether major donors have a greater

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[7]These agencies are the International Trade Centre (ITC), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UN-AIDS), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UN Women (UN Women), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and the World Food Programme (WFP). Out of these, I was able to get data for seven, or the UN-AIDS, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNRWA, WFP.

number of their nationals on staff at the UN programmes and funds and, on the other hand, whether the presence of staff within a UN agency influences its policy portfolio. The latter analysis combines the aforementioned regressions in a mediation analysis to explore directly the extent to which major donors are able to influence agencies through their nationals on staff.

To examine the question of whether major donors try to influence hires into the UN agencies described above, the number of staff members from each member state are regressed on major-donor status to see whether a statistically significant relationship can be discerned. This analysis makes use of an original dataset on the nationalities of staff members in the seven UN Programmes and Funds for which data on major donors were available.

The dependent variable in these regressions is a count of the number of professional staff from country i in year t in agency a funded through voluntary contributions by member states. It includes only those staff members employed in so-called "professional and higher categories" (P and D categories), i.e., those staff members who work directly on policy issues, and excludes technical or administrative staff (G category). These staff members are internationally recruited and are generally expected to have an advanced university degree as well as prior work experience. These data were compiled from reports from the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (UNSCEB), which has issued reports entitled "UN System HR Statistics Report" since 1991. As of 1996, these reports include the nationalities of staff members in the various UN agencies, so my dataset spans the time period 1996-2013.[8]

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[8]As each agency does not have staff members from every member state in every year, there is a concentration of zeroes in the dataset. Furthermore, the data suggest that the mean of this variable is much lower than its variance, indicating overdispersion, which makes a negative binomial model preferable to a Poisson model. A likelihood ratio test comparing the negative binomial and the Poisson confirms this. Given the distribution of the data, a zero-inflated model might seem like a reasonable choice. However, there is little to suggest that the underlying data-generating process includes two distinct processes (one that generates only zeroes and one that generates both zero values as well as all the other values in the dataset), which is when a zero-inflated model would be called for. Despite this, I run a zero-inflated Poisson regression as

Figure 1 shows the total number of staff per agency in each year. We can see that all of these agencies experience growth in staff over time, with the exception of UNRWA, which remained fairly steady after a significant decline in 2000. This growth mirrors an increase in donations to these agencies over time, as seen in Figure 2.
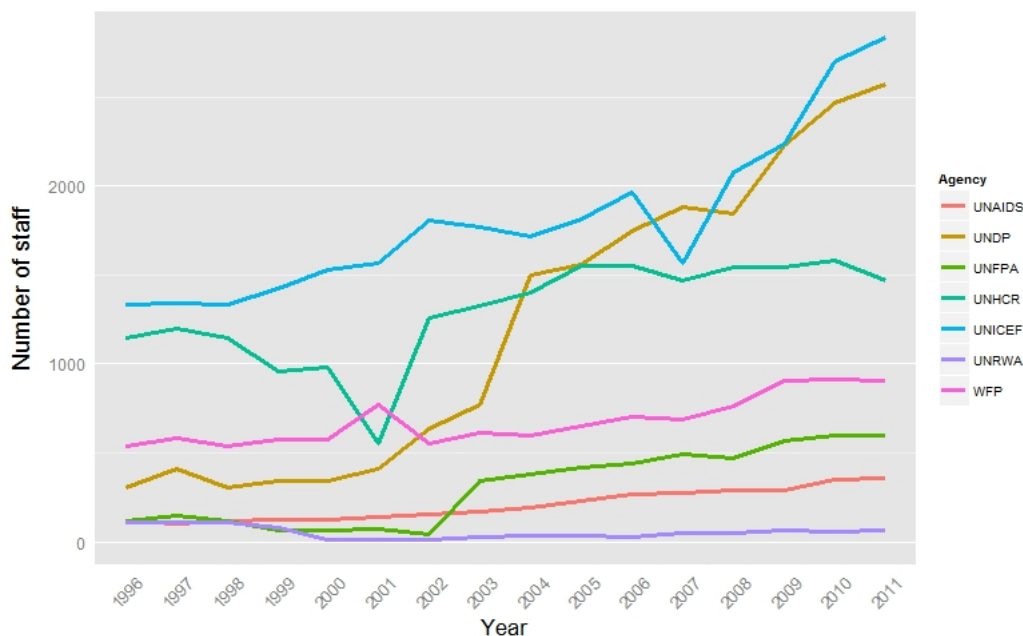

Figure 1: Total number of staff per agency over time

Donor data was obtained from the Global Policy Forum, which has compiled data on the top ten member state donors for a number of agencies in the UN system for the period 1974-2014 (or from date of inception for agencies that have not existed since 1974), as well as total member state donations to the organization per year.[9] The top ten donors to each agency collectively donate approximately 70-90 percent of all of the agency's revenue from

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a robustness check and it has very little influence on my coefficient size and none on the significance level. Due to this, I present the negative-binomial regression results in my main models.

[9]These reports were compiled from a variety of sources, including reports from the UNSCEB and annual reports of the agencies themselves.
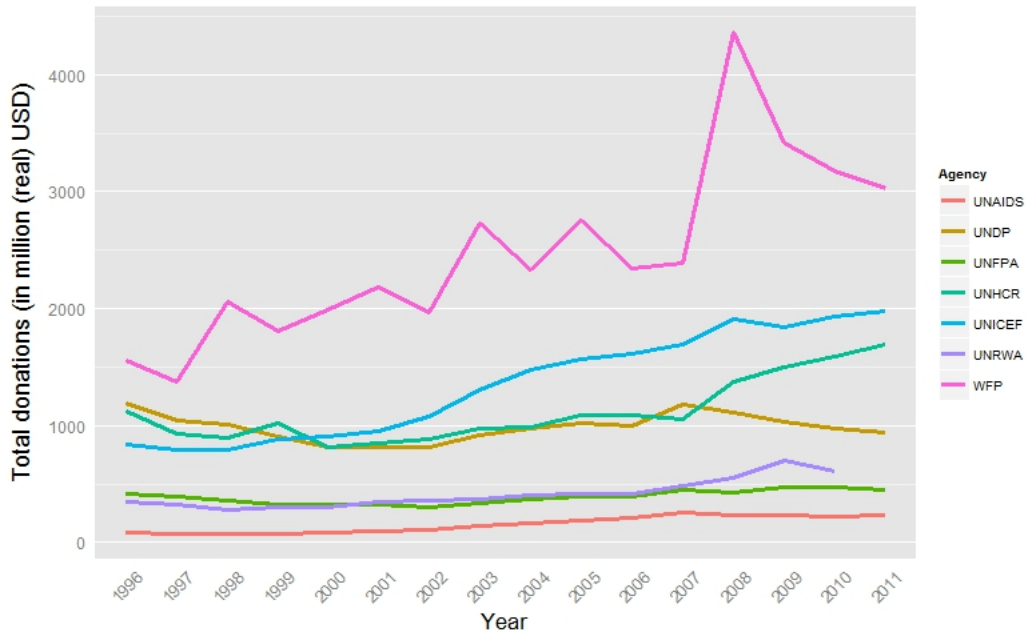
Figure 2: Total revenue from member states

member states in a given year. A total of 21 countries count as major donors for any agency in any year.[10]

These donors provide from 1.25 percent to 67.80 percent of the total member state donations to a given organization in a particular year, with a mean of 8.74 percent.[11] From these data, the main independent variable of interest, *"Major Donor,"* was created. It is a dichotomous variable, which takes the value 1 when a state is one of the top ten donors for a particular agency in a particular year, and 0 otherwise.[12]

As these agencies all have to be staffed with people who herald from *some* nation, each

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[10]A list of these countries, as well as descriptions of the agencies used in this analysis, can be found in the Appendix.

[11]The standard deviations is 8.65 and the median is 6.23.

[12]As robustness checks, various definitions of the Major Donor variable have been used, including top five donors, donors who contributed more than five percent of the agency's operating budget in a given year, and donors who contributed more than ten percent of the agency's operating budget in a given year. The results are robust to all these permutations of the Major Donor variable. The substantive interpretation and levels of significance remain the same regardless of specificiation.

member state likely has a representation of staffers within each agency that might be termed "natural." This would be the number of staff from each member state in the absence of any sort of bias in hiring. Thinking of this purely in terms of labor demand and supply, we can hypothesize that the size and education levels of each country's labor force would be central determinants of the supply of qualified staff members. In order to control for these in my analysis, I add to the regression the size of the working-age population (people aged 15 to 64) in each country and, as a proxy for education levels, the per capita GDP for each country in each year.[13] Both of these variables were obtained from the World Bank Databank.[14] To control for agency capture by a particular state, I add a dummy variable for the nationality of the director of each agency. This variable was coded manually.[15]

The second dependent variable in this analysis is a measure of the similarity between UN agencies and donor states. We know that bilateral development aid represents not only the objective needs of the recipients, but also the donor's preferences over who gets aid and how much, whatever the underlying reason may be (Alesina and Dollar, 2000; Kuziemko and Werker, 2006; Dreher, Sturm and Vreeland, 2009a,b; Carter and Stone, 2015). Whatever the rationale that states employ to determine their development aid portfolios, they would presumably prefer that the UN follow the same principle in its own overall aid distribution. Thus, greater similarity between the two would suggest that the state in question has some ability to influence the aid portfolio of the agency.

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[13]Data on tertiary education is sparse among all but a handful of countries. Despite these limitatations, as a robustness check, I ran these regressions including a control for the percentage of the population enrolled in tertiary education. As expected, I lose about 75 percent of my data when I do this, but the main results are unaffected by both the inclusion of this variable and the subsequent loss of data. Because of the drastically reduced sample size when I include education data, however, I do not present it as one of my main models.

[14]Both variables are presented in log-normalized form, due to skewness. Zero values are dealt with by adding 1 to each observation before taking the log value.

[15]In those years where there was a switch in the agency director, I coded as director the country that held the position for more than six months.

Data on both multilateral and bilateral aid were obtained from AidData, using aid commitment values, in line with the vast majority of the aid literature. Of the seven UN Programmes and Funds, only four have sufficient data on aid commitment to be used in the regression analysis, so the second portion of the analysis uses data from UN-AIDS, UNICEF, UNDP, and UNFPA.[16]

In order to calculate the similarity between the agencies and donor states, I rely on a measure developed by Schneider and Tobin (2013). This measure calculates the percentage of donor country i's total bilateral aid in year t that went to recipient country k as well as the percentage of agency a's total multilateral aid in year t that went to recipient country k. It then takes the absolute value of the difference between these two numbers, and averages it across all aid recipients. The resulting number is multipled by negative one in order to make higher values indicate greater similarity. Lastly, for ease of interpretation, the score is normalized to range between 0 and 1, where 0 indicates that the agency and the donor states do not share any recipients in a given year and 1 indicates that the agency and donor's aid portfolios are identical.

To examine whether staff nationality has a discernible impact on the portfolio similarity, the staff variable, which constitutes the dependent variable in the first regression, is now the main independent variable.[17] The Major Donor variable used in the first analysis continues to be an important control variable, as we might expect major donors to be influential in a number of ways other than by increasing the number of their nationals on staff. I further control for the effect of size and economic power using data on adult population and per capita GDP (using purchasing power parity).

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[16]As a robustness check, I also regress staff on major donor using this same subset of data and find that my results are robust to the exclusion of the other three agencies.

[17]This variable is log-normalized in this regression. Zero values are dealt with by adding 1 to each observation before logging.

To investigate whether the effects in the data are driven purely by the powerful G5 countries[18], I include regression models that interact my main independent variables of interest—*major donor* status in the former analysis and *number of staff* in the latter—with a dummy variable for *G5* that takes on a value of 1 when a country is one of the G5 countries, and a 0 otherwise. Descriptive statistics for all my main variables can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Min	Mean	Median	Max	St.Dev.
Number of personnel	0.00	4.452	0.00	457.00	14.11
Major donor	0.00	0.05	0.00	1.00	0.22
Portfolio similarity	0.00	0.27	0.27	0.61	0.15
GDP per capita (2011 US dollars)	261.7	15300.00	8564.00	134100.00	18364.35
Size of labor force (in millions)	0.04	22.61	4.94	1004.00	88.35

Empirical Analysis

As was noted above, the dependent variable in the first portion of the analysis is a count of the number of professional-level staff members from a given country in a particular agency and year.[19] The mean number of staff members is considerably lower than the variance, which suggests overdispersion in the data. Due to this, I use a negative binomial regression model for my analysis.

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[18]France, Germany, Japan, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

[19]This analysis includes only those staff members who are funded through voluntary contributions. Due to the nature of these agencies, that includes most staff members. The results in the paper are robust to the inclusion of all professional-level staff members, also in those cases where some are funded through the UN regular budget. Although we might expect there to be systematic differences in the ability of major donors to affect staffing for voluntarily funded positions and positions funded through the regular budget, these agencies do not have a sufficient number of staff members in the latter category to have a meaningful impact on the results.

The first main regression model is thus:

$$Staff_{ait} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 MD_{ait} + \beta_2 \ln Y_{it} + \beta_3 \ln LF_{it} + \beta_4 Director_{ait} + FE + \epsilon_{ait}, \qquad (1)$$

where $Staff$ is a count of number of personnel, MD is a dummy for whether a country is a Major Donor to a particular agency, Y is per capita GDP, LF is the size of the labor force, $Director$ is a dummy for the nationality of the director of each agency in each year, and FE are the fixed effects used in the various models.

In the second part of the analysis, the dependent variable is the similarity score between donor countries and the UN Programmes and Funds. The estimation uses ordinary least squares (OLS) regression.[20]

The second main regression model is thus:

$$Sim_{ait} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 MD_{ait} + \beta_2 \ln Staff_{ait} + \beta_3 \ln Y_{it} + \beta_4 \ln LF_{it} + FE + \epsilon_{ait}, \qquad (2)$$

where Sim is the portfolio similarity between agency a and country i and other variables are the same as in Equation 1.

Table 2 displays the results of the negative biniomal regression analysis of number of staff on major donor. The first model provides a baseline model, using the relevant controls and fixed effects. In order to examine the differences between G5 and non-G5 countries, the second model additionally interacts a dummy variable for $G5$ (which takes on a value of 1 when a country belongs to the G5) with the *Major Donor* variable.[21]

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[20] The results are robust to clustering standard errors on agency, country, and time.

[21] The United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Japan constitute the G-5 countries. These are countries that are generally considered influential in the international system due to their size and affluence so we might expect them to have greater informal influence than other states within IOs. China and Russia would also be contenders for this group of "influentials," especially due to their permanent membership on the UN Security Council, but are not in my dataset as they are never major donors to the

Table 2: Negative Binomial Regression Results

	Dependent variable: Number of Personnel (Staff)	
	(1)	(2)
Major Donor	0.195***	
	(0.044)	
G5 Major Donor		0.525***
		(0.104)
Non-G5 Major Donor		0.132***
		(0.051)
GDP per capita (ppp), logged	0.416***	0.417***
	(0.062)	(0.062)
Labor Force, logged	0.432***	0.431***
	(0.111)	(0.111)
Director	0.349***	0.346***
	(0.072)	(0.072)
Observations	22,225	22,225
Log Likelihood	−34,119.720	−34,116.630
θ	2.835*** (0.066)	2.837*** (0.066)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
Includes agency, country, and time fixed effects

The first thing to notice is that, in both the baseline and the interaction models, being a major donor is associated with highers numbers of staff. This suggests some bias in the hiring of staff within UN agencies. As the interacted model reveals, this bias appears to be stronger for G5 countries than for non-G5 countries, but this is not unexpected, as these are the countries we would expect to be influential. More interesting is the significant term on the non-G5 countries, as it indicates that even those major donors who are not G5 members may be able to influence hiring within these agencies.

As for the magnitude of the effect, as this is a negative binomial regression, the coefficients cannot be directly interpreted. However, what we can examine with relative ease are the incident rate ratios, which we can obtain by exponentiating the coefficients. These are reported in Table 3. The incidence rate ratio should be interpreted such that, e.g., in model 1, the incidence rate for Major donor = 1 is 1.22 more than when Major donor = 0. Thus, being a major donor is associated with a 22 percent increase in the number of co-nationals on staff.[22]

Table 3: Exponentiated coefficients from negative binomial regression

Dependent variable: Number of personnel		
	(1)	(2)
Major Donor	1.22	
G5 Major Donor		1.69
Non-G5 Major Donor		1.14
log(GDPpc)	1.52	1.52
log(Labor Force)	1.54	1.54
Director	1.42	1.42

Model 1 suggests that major donors have approximately 21 percent more staff members than do non-major donors. Notably, the variable for the agency director, which is intended

agencies in question during this period.

[22]The coefficient is transformed to a percentage change through the following formula: $(e^b - 1)100$.

to control for agency capture by a particular state, is associated with approximately 42 percent more staff within an agency. It is particularly interesting that agency directors appear to have such a big impact on the nationality of staffers, and provides some support for the contention that nationality of staff matters. We know that the process for very senior hires (such as agency directors) is highly politicized and that directors are often viewed as representatives of their country to some degree, so it is notable that they would be associated with such a large increase in the presence of their nationals on agency staff. Combined, these variables support the notion that staff nationality is something that really matters.

As noted above, the effect of G5 major donors is hardly surprising, given our theories and knowledge about the influence of powerful countries within IOs. What is more interesting is the coefficient on the non-G5 major donors. As mentioned, these are wealthy countries, but not usually those we would associate with this kind of informal influence. In addition, during interviews of diplomats who represent their countries vis-à-vis the United Nations, several noted that they view their nationals who work within the UN as independent and not as extensions of their home country's foreign ministry. Many even noted that this distinction was necessary in order to maintain the legitimacy of the organization. Notably, this viewpoint was especially common among representatives from smaller, developed countries. These results are suggestive of major donors' desired involvement with the agency in question on multiple levels.

The second empirical analysis explores the effects of major donors and staff in greater detail and investigates whether states appear to be benefitting from having their nationals on staff. Table 4 provides OLS estimates of the influence of staff on the similarity between the multilateral aid given by the UN agencies in question and bilateral aid by donor states. Models (3) and (5) provide baseline regressions of portfolio similarity on the number of

staff and other controls, while models (4) and (6) separate out the effects on similarity of G5 nationals and non-G5 nationals, to investigate whether the former group is especially influential. In these regressions, the sample is reduced to four agencies (UN-AIDS, UNDP, UNICEF, and the WFP) largely due to data availability.[23] As noted in the table, models (3) and (4) include agency fixed effects while models (5) and (6) add country fixed effects as well.

Model (3) demonstrates a significant impact of staff nationality on the similarity between the agency and member states. When a member state is also a major donor to the agency, the similarity is even greater, which suggests that major donors can have a direct impact on the agency in addition to their ability to influence staffing. The magnitude of the effect of staff nationality on similarity is also quite large. To give the coefficient substantive value, I take the median number of staff from an individual country in the reduced dataset used for this analysis, which is four. There are seventy-five observations in the data where a country has this number of staff members in an agency; for example, Switzerland at the UNFPA in 2009. If Switzerland were to add just two more of its nationals on staff (a 50 percent increase in representation within the UNFPA), this would result in an increase in the similarity score of 0.028, which we can interpret as an approximately 2.8 percentage point increase in the similarity between the two.

As in the previous regressions of staff on major donor status, model (4) separates the effect of G5 and non-G5 staffers. Interestingly, the coefficients are virtually identical (and are, indeed, statistically indistinguishable), which implies that, even though G5 countries tend to have a greater number of staff members within UN agencies, the impact of each

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[23]Unlike the others, data was available for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Middle East (UNRWA) but due to the specific mandate of that agency, which leads it to donate only to three countries, it was impossible to calculate meaningful similarity scores between it and bilateral donors.

Table 4: Ordinary Least Squares Regression Results

	Dependent variable: Portfolio similarity			
	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Number of co-nationals, logged	0.055***		0.008***	
	(0.002)		(0.002)	
Number of co-nationals, G5 (logged)		0.054***		0.009***
		(0.003)		(0.004)
Number of co-nationals, non-G5 (logged)		0.055***		0.007***
		(0.002)		(0.003)
Major Donor	0.072***	0.072***	0.005	0.005
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
GDP per capita (ppp), logged	0.117***	0.118***	0.113***	0.113***
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.020)	(0.020)
Labor Force, logged	0.010***	0.010***	0.146***	0.147***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.017)	(0.017)
Director	−0.092***	−0.091***	−0.026**	−0.027**
	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Agency Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Country Fixed Effects			✓	✓
Observations	1,661	1,661	1,661	1,661
Adjusted R^2	0.652	0.652	0.869	0.869

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Includes agency and country fixed effects.

staffer is the same—i.e., staffers from G5 countries do not appear to have greater individual influence than their non-G5 colleagues.

Interestingly, the coefficient on the agency director is negative and statistically significant. This is somewhat unexpected, as we saw in the previous regressions that the nationality of the agency director had a very large impact on how many of her co-nationals were employed at the agency. In part, this result could be spurious, as identification of this variable stems from only six country/agency pairs.[24] However, due to the fact that directors are associated with about 40 percent more co-nationals on staff in the agencies in question, it is likely that the negative effect of the director is quickly overwhelmed by the positive coefficient on staff. These results, however, do suggest fruitful avenues for further research into the effect that directors have on the agencies that they lead.

Although most of the variation in the second analysis is cross-country, models (5) and (6) add country fixed effects to the regressions to account for unobservable differences between donors states and to examine within-country variation in staffing levels and major donor status. The coefficient on staff maintains its statistical significance, although the point estimate is naturally considerably smaller. Major donor status, however, is not robust to the addition of country fixed effects, which suggests that countries may establish themselves as significant contributors to an agency and then, even if they temporarily drop out of the top ten category, this does not greatly diminish their influence. Over a longer timespan, however, and with an expanded dataset of contributions to UN agencies, we may be able to better explore how persistent the influence of former major donors may be.

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[24]These pairs are UNAIDS/Belgium in 2001-2008, UNDP/New Zealand in 2010-2012, UNFPA/Saudi Arabia in 2001-2010, UNDP/United States in 1999, UNDP/United Kingdom in 2004-2005, and UNICEF/United States in 2001-2012.

Mediation Analysis

The mechanism advanced in this paper points to both a direct and indirect path for major donors to influence UN agencies. The direct effect comes from the fact that agencies have an incentive to be responsive to major donors due to the voluntary funding of the agencies. This might mean that major donors get greater access to the policy staff of the agency and might get more direct say over budgetary discussions within the agency than do non-major donors. Thus, we expect major donor status to be positively associated with any measure of influence that states can have over agencies, and this is, in fact, what we observe in the regression analysis above. In addition, this paper highlights a more indirect avenue of influence that states get from having their nationals on the agency staff. Specifically, we expect agency staff to be, on average, more sympathetic to the viewpoints of their country of origin and be more likely to seek policies that align with their home country. This effect is not dependent on major donor status; however, we would expect major donors to have an easier time advocating for their nationals to be hired within agencies where they play a significant role. We observed this in models (1) and (2), where number of staff was regressed on major donor status and other covariates.

The presence of both a direct and an indirect path of influence for major donors lends itself well to mediation analysis, which explicitly accounts for such dual paths between a main variable of interest (in this case, major donor status) and an outcome variable (portfolio similarity score) (Imai, Tingley and Keele, 2010). In a mediation model, major donor status would be considered the treatment, and the number of co-nationals on staff, through which some portion of the treatment's effect on outcome is channeled, is referred to as the mediator. In this case, the mediator is the number of co-nationals on staff. In order to properly identify treatment effects in this type of model, the sequential ignorability assumption must be

satisfied. This assumption states that assignment to treatment must be 'as if' random, and furthermore, that conditional on treatment, the mediator must be as if randomly assigned as well. Once the assumption is met, it is possible to identify both Average Direct Effects (ADE) and Average Causal Mediation Effect (ACME) of the treatment on the outcome.

As noted by Imai et al. (2011), treatment is not randomized in observational studies but we can include pretreatment covariates in the regression such that, once those are controlled for, we can more readily assume that assignment is as if random. In this analysis, treatment status is defined as being one of the top 10 major donors to a particular UN agency in a given year and the mediator is the number of co-nationals on staff at that agency. It is certainly the case that countries themselves determine their donations to each agency in each year and thus we might plausibly believe that assignment to treatment is far from random. However, there are two main ways in which we can mitigate the effect of non-random assignment to treatment. First, we can control for the same covariates used in the regressions above—per capita GDP, size of labor force, and the nationality of the agency director—as well as other unobservable and time-invariant covariates that might plausibly render assignment to treatment as if random, namely agency and country fixed effects. Second, although states determine the size of their contribution, assignment to treatment status is not self-determined. In other words, there is nothing special for the donor that comes with belonging to the top 10 donor group versus the top 12 or top 15 that would lead him to work to meet the top 10 threshold in particular. By combining these two, we can plausibly argue that assignment to treatment is as if random.

The second part of the sequential ignorability assumption—that of random assignment of mediator, conditional on covariates and treatment—is more easily met in this study. Controlling for factors we know to influence the number of staff members from a particular

country, the actual number of staff that is observed is likely determined by idiosyncratic factors, such as who had the best application and was available to come in for an interview at the right time.
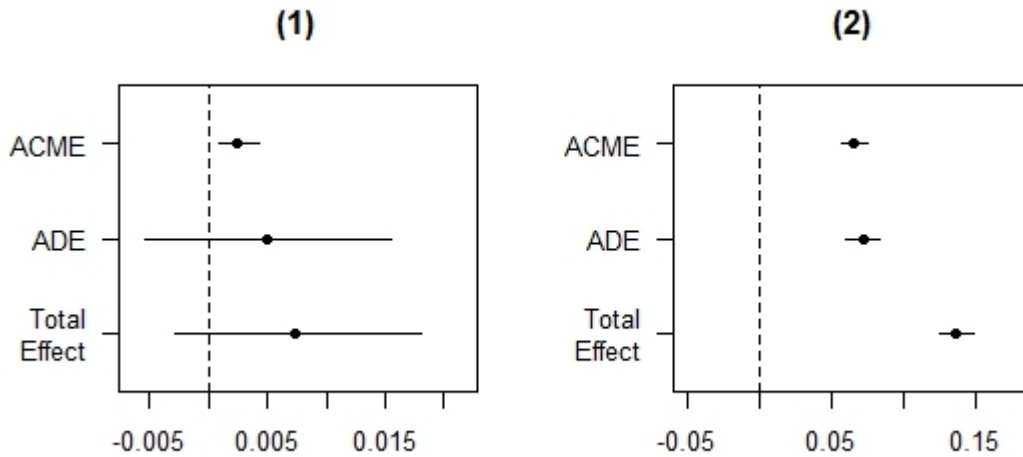

Figure 3: Results of Mediation Analysis

The estimated ADE and ACME results are presented in Figure 3. Panel (1) shows the effects of the mediation analysis with country and agency fixed effects.[25] The ACME estimate shows the effect that major donors have on similarity *through* their nationals on staff. The ADE estimate shows the effect that major donors have through *all other* avenues. The Total Effect estimate adds the two to show the overall effect of being a major donor on similarity. As is to be expected, given the results from the OLS estimation above, once we account for all unobserved, time-invariant differences between donor states, the effect of staff is quite small and the direct effect is statistically insignificant. However, the goal of this analysis is to establish the plausibility of the mediating effect of staff on similarity and to narrow down the range of possible explanations for the above results, and we do see a statistically

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[25]The full results of this analysis are available in the Appendix.

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significant effect of the mediating variable of staff, which supports this argument.

Panel (2) of Figure 3 presents the same mediation analysis without the country fixed effects. This specification allows us to better exploit the cross-sectional variation in the data, albeit at the cost of slightly relaxing the identifying assumptions of the analysis. We see that the magnitude of the estimates increase significantly, mirroring the effects of the OLS regression, and now both the ACME and the ADE paths are statistically significant.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that major donor states to UN agencies have more of their nationals on staff at UN programmes and funds. It has furthermore shown that having nationals present on staff has a positive and significant impact on the similarity between an agency and those nationals' home countries. Lastly, it has shown, through mediation analysis, that the mechanism through which a portion of the influence of major donors on UN agencies operates is through their co-nationals within those agencies. Combined, these analyses suggest that states do, indeed, benefit from having their nationals on staff. This finding holds even in the absence of direct evidence that states are trying to influence their nationals once they have been hired into the UN system.

There are two central points that emerge from this research. The first has to do with our current understanding of informal influence within IOs. To date, most of the principal-agent literature on international organizations has treated the agent as a unitary actor. Recent work has begun to unpack the nature of the agent and explore what varying agent preferences means for how we think about international organizations and how they affect world politics. This paper pushes this research agenda forward by identifying another avenue that states may use to exert influence within IOs, out of the public eye and oftentimes even out of the

eye of other member states. The results do indeed suggest that international bureaucrats' preferences are potentially endogenous. In particular, they suggest that major donors to UN agencies are able to wield influence that may usually go unnoticed. As a result, what we may see as "agency preferences" may not be the sincere preferences of the bureaucrats in question, but rather of the states that sought their hire in the first place.

Second and relatedly, this paper suggests that informal influence over IOs is not confined to the most powerful countries in the international system but, rather, can be held by any number of countries, provided they are able to have some influence over activities such as hiring. Indeed, this may be a particularly fruitful avenue for smaller states that are interested in increasing their influence in international affairs. One of the central ways in which politics happens within the UN is through personal ties and relationships, which means that having friendly staff within agencies can be a very effective tool for states to draw on in advancing their national interest.

This paper has suggested one way in which states influence international organizations through their bureaucracies. Undoubtedly, there are others. For instance, even though major donors are better able to push for their nationals to be hired into agencies in order to wield influence, that does not mean that other states do not try to establish ties with bureaucrats. Additionally, states with large delegations may be able to exert a lot of time and effort into building professional and social networks and ties with agency bureaucrats and, in that way, approximate the influence that major donors are able to have with their purse strings.

Another avenue to explore for how states influence IOs pertains to the flow of voluntary funding to international organizations. Because these agencies are part of the same organizational family, while largely separately funded, it is easier for member states to funnel donations into (or away from) particular agencies as behooves them. They may direct their

funding to those agencies which are most responsive to their suggestions, away from those which appear to be "captured" by other states with dissimilar preferences, or as a reward or punishment for particular agency behavior. Combined, these analyses would provide significant evidence that at least some states seek to take advantage of potential pathways of influence within international organizations in ways that have not previously been identified. This may particularly be true for smaller states who are not able to wield quite as big a stick as their larger counterparts but still wish to remain important players in world affairs.

Appendix

List of top donors to any agency in the period 1996-2013

Australia

Austria

Belgium

Brazil

Canada

Denmark

Finland

France

Germany

Ireland

Italy

Japan

Kuwait

Netherlands

Norway

Saudi Arabia

Spain

Sweden

Switzerland

United Kingdom

United States of America

UN Programmes and Funds used in the analysis

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UN-AIDS)

UN-AIDS is the most recent agency in the dataset, having been established in 1996. The role of UN-AIDS is to coordinate a global response to HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support. In 2012, 98 percent of its funding came from voluntary contributions, 93 percent of which was from government donors. It had 681 staff members in 86 countries. The major donors to UN-AIDS during the period of interest were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Japan, Norway, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. There have been two Executive Directors, from Belgium and Mali.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The office, as we know it today, came into being in 1951. Its central role is to seek international protection for refugees and other persons of concern. In 2012, 99 percent of its funding was through voluntary contributions, and 80 percent from government donors. Its 5,785 staff members worked in 126 countries across the world. Major donors to UNHCR during the period of interest were Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. High Commissioners during the same period were from Japan, the Netherlands, and Portugal.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF has been in existence since 1946, charged with addressing the needs of children in developing countries. In 2012, 98 percent of its funding was through voluntary contributions, 51 percent of which was from government donors. In the same year, it had 8,028 staff members in duty stations in 141 countries. Major donors to UNICEF during the period of

interest were Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Japan, Norway, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Throughout the period of interest (and, indeed, throughout the entire history of the agency), the Executive Director of UNICEF was an American.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDP began operations in 1966. In addition to its overarching mandate of development assistance, the UNDP has also served as the coordinator of global efforts to reach the Millennium Development Goals. In 2012, 93 percent of its funding came from voluntary contributions, 61 percent of which was from government donors. Its 6,474 staff members in 2012 worked in 154 countries. Major donors to UNDP during the period of interest were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Japan, Norway, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. During the same period, the Administrators of the UNDP held passports from the United States, the United Kingdom, Turkey, and New Zealand.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

The UNFPA began operations in 1967. Its core areas of work are activities relating to reproductive health issues, gender equality, and population and development strategies. It also supports data collection activities on various population issues. In 2012, 99 percent of its funding came through voluntary contributions, 56 percent of which was from government donors. Its 1,691 staff members were distributed across 126 countries. Major donors to UNFPA during the period of interest were Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Japan, Norway, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United

States. Throughout the period of interest the Executive Directors of UNFPA have been from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Nigeria.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

UNRWA was established in 1949, following the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict, and began operations a year later. As the name suggests, it provides services to Palestinian refugees both in the Palestinian territories and neighboring countries. In 2012, 95 percent of its operating expenses came through voluntary contributions, 68 percent of which was from government donors. Its staff of 200 (in 2012) worked in 7 countries. Major donors to UNRWA during the period of interest were Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Norway, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and its Commissioners-General were nationals of Denmark, the United States, and Italy.

The World Food Programme (WFP)

Lastly, the WFP—the world's largest humanitarian agency fighting hunger—dates back to 1961. In 2012, 96 percent of its funding was through voluntary contributions, 81 percent of which was from government donors. Its 4,170 staff members were spread across 225 duty stations in 100 countries. During the period of interest, major donors were Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Spain, South Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Executive Directors during this period have all been from the United States, but previously, there has been considerable variation in the nationality of the executive director.

Results from mediation analysis

Table 5: Country and agency fixed effects estimation (Panel 1 in Fig. 3)

	Causal mediation analysis			
	Estimate	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	p-value
Average Causal Mediation Effects	0.0024	0.0001	0.0044	0.00
Average Direct Effects	0.0050	-0.0054	0.0155	0.37
Total Effect	0.0074	-0.0028	0.0180	0.16
Prop. Mediated	0.2800	-2.0654	3.4922	0.16

Note: *Sample size used: 1599*
Quasi-Bayesian Confidence Intervals

Table 6: Agency fixed effects estimation (Panel 2 in Fig. 3)

	Causal mediation analysis			
	Estimate	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	p-value
Average Causal Mediation Effects	0.0651	0.0567	0.0745	0.00
Average Direct Effects	0.0719	0.0598	0.0835	0.00
Total Effect	0.1370	0.1252	0.1493	0.00
Prop. Mediated	0.4746	0.4181	0.5399	0.00

Note: *Sample size used: 1599*
Quasi-Bayesian Confidence Intervals

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