Talking Democracy at the United Nations

Power, Regime Type and the Democratization of International Rule
The series offers a forum for the analysis and discussion of the contemporary challenges of world organization. It focuses on the United Nations and the global transformations that manifest themselves in new actors, structures and problems of world politics. Its perspective on “UN Studies” wants to encourage interdisciplinary exchange and the dialogue between practitioners and academia.

The United Nations and Global Change

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Volume 17
Talking Democracy at the United Nations

Power, Regime Type and the Democratization of International Rule
Acknowledgements

This book is based on my dissertation and writing it would not have been possible without the substantial support I received from many people. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Michael Zürn, who I am indebted to for his insightful comments, invaluable advice and professional guidance throughout the process of devising and writing my thesis. I am also thankful for the productive research environment he offered me at his research unit at the WZB Berlin Social Science Center and within the collaborative research project on “Contested World Orders.” The stimulating discussion and exchange of opinions within the research unit, particularly in the form of regular colloquia, and within the research project was extremely inspiring and vital in pushing forward my own research.

I am also indebted to Thomas Risse for his indispensable and constructive feedback on my project. His careful reading of my work and the generous amount of time he invested into thoroughly discussing it with me were invaluable to the advancement of my project. I really appreciate the support and enthusiastic encouragement he has provided me with throughout my study. I would also like to thank the other members of my dissertation committee, Anna Holzscheiter, Simon Koschut, and Jonas Tallberg, for their thoughtful feedback.

I benefited greatly from the chance given to conduct my thesis within the framework of the Berlin Graduate School for Transnational Studies (BTS). The three scientific institutes involved in the graduate school, WZB, Freie Universität Berlin, and Hertie School, have provided me with an extremely stimulating research environment for conducting my studies. As such, my sincere gratitude goes to both the BTS core faculty and the coordination team. Equally important, I thank my fellow BTS students for the fruitful exchange and helpful feedback they have provided me with both within and outside the context of numerous colloquia. I am also thankful for the many friendships that have developed inside the BTS and the WZB over the course of these years – with a special thanks to Henriette Müller, who has made this rollercoaster ride of writing a dissertation so much more enjoyable.

The Fritz Thyssen Foundation has supported my research with generous funding. I also wish to acknowledge the technical assistance I was provided
with in numerous contexts, especially by Roisin Cronin and by the members of the statistical consulting unit at Cornell University.

Special thanks also goes to Johannes Varwick, who provided the final push for publishing this book, to his co-editors, for offering me to become part of this NOMOS series, and to the NOMOS editorial team, for actually making it happen.

But most importantly, I am extremely grateful to my family, to Fred and our wonderful kids. Fred’s cheerful and motivating way was an important encouragement during the most intense time of the writing process and it sure helped me overcome many setbacks. Also, I am extremely thankful for how he covered my back wherever he could. Finally, without Cleo and Jakob, this book would probably be somewhat longer and certainly much better – but none of it would matter anyway.
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Acronyms and abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEE</td>
<td>Central and Eastern Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>FH</td>
<td>Freedom House</td>
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<tr>
<td>G4</td>
<td>Group of Four</td>
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<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>General Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>GATT</td>
<td>General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade</td>
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<tr>
<td>IO</td>
<td>International Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>LoA</td>
<td>Logic of appropriateness</td>
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<tr>
<td>LoC</td>
<td>Logic of consequences</td>
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<tr>
<td>LoMI</td>
<td>Logic of material interests</td>
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<tr>
<td>LoNC</td>
<td>Logic of normative consistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>Permanent Five (Members of the United Nations Security Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Security Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>Uniting for Consensus</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organization</td>
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CHAPTER I: Introduction

In order to function effectively, international organizations (IOs) require legitimacy. This claim has recently gained prominence in the international relations (IR) scholarship.\(^1\) Unlike domestic systems of rule, most international institutions do not possess the means to coerce actors into compliance or cannot use material incentives to induce obedience. Most of the time, they may only rely on the third of the “three currencies of power” (Hurd 1999: 379): legitimacy. Defined as constituencies’ belief in the rightfulness of rule, legitimacy is said to generate a feeling of moral obligation to comply. For this reason, it is very conducive to effective governance. The absence of legitimacy, by contrast, may endanger effectiveness and is thus “corrosive of power” (Reus-Smit 2007: 161).

In short, effective global rule relies on the perception that rule by IOs is legitimate. Yet, this does not imply that legitimacy constitutes a fixed property that institutions either possess or desperately lack. Quite the contrary, legitimacy is a political resource that is actively granted or withdrawn and is thus part of an ongoing political struggle – the struggle of legitimation.\(^2\) Communication plays a vital role in this process. That is to say, legitimacy is constructed and deconstructed through discourse and is thus “the (temporary) outcome of public debates” (Gronau/Schneider 2009: 2; see also Reus-Smit 2007: 161; Suchman 1995: 574) about appropriate standards for global rule and whether specific IOs live up to them.\(^3\)

Within these debates, one standard seems to have gained particular traction: the standard of democracy. In fact, many scholars claim that there is now a “dominant answer to what legitimacy requires in global governance” (Bernstein 2011: 21). This answer is democracy. According to this view, democracy has become a core standard of rightful rule beyond the state and a central narrative in the legitimacy debates about IOs (Dingwen).

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1 See, for instance, Buchanan/Keohane (2006: 407); Hurd (2008b); Reus-Smit (2007); Risse (2006); Tallberg/Zürn (2019).

2 See also Barker (2001: 28), who describes “legitimation as an active, contested political process.”

3 In addition to discursive practices of legitimating or delegitimating international organizations, Tallberg and Zürn (2019) also point to behavioral practices. Among others, they include efforts to reform IOs as well as protests against these organizations.
erth et al. 2019a; Dingwerth et al. 2015; Nullmeier et al. 2010). Some scholars even describe it as “the paramount legitimizing principle of world politics” (Thèrien/Bélanger Dumontier 2009: 358). And in fact, in the debates on the reform of IOs, which traditionally feature fervent discussions about the legitimacy of IOs, the democratic narrative plays an important role. The reform debate about the United Nations (UN) Security Council (SC), the most powerful IO in existence today, is a case in point: references to the concept of democracy pervade the reform speeches countries have annually made inside the UN. The following four statements constitute but a selection of the many instances within the past decade where states have couched their reform proposals in the language of democracy:

Genuine United Nations reform can come about only when the Council is democratized and becomes a truly transparent structure that acts in a way that is consistent with the rule of law at the international level and deals appropriately with challenges around the globe.

The Council must reflect the political and economic realities of the world today. It must have the necessary democratic legitimacy to act on behalf of the international community in discharging its mandate under the Charter.

We need a new Council that is able to take up the various challenges in accordance with the law and with impartiality, transparency and credibility. That is sadly lacking in the Council today because of a lack of democracy and the presence of a threatening atmosphere.

Reform of the Council must reflect internationally accepted standards of democratization.

Against this backdrop, the project seeks to offer a better understanding of the democratic narrative, the patterns this narrative takes, and how it actually functions. More specifically, the project tackles two sets of questions, one descriptive and one explanatory: First, which countries advocate for democratic rule by IOs and what do they promote in the name of democracy? And second, what drives states’ use of the democratic narrative? There are several reasons to take a closer look at how countries talk about democratic IO rule. One reason is the striking prominence of this narrative. As

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4 Strictly speaking, the SC does not constitute an IO but an IO body. For the sake of convenience, I will nonetheless refer to IOs when I speak about the Council and other IO bodies that are the focus of this study.
the statements just quoted reveal, states eagerly apply democratic ideas to IOs. Yet, these statements share a strange commonality, which is the second reason to examine them more closely: contrary to what one might expect, none of the above democratic references were made by democratic countries. In fact, they were all issued by authoritarian regimes: The first statement was made by Cuba in the 2012 debate on Council reform. The second one, which invokes the democratic principles of law, impartiality and transparency, was made by Tunisia in 2003, when the prominent regime type index Freedom House (FH) still categorized it as one of the world’s autocracies. Finally, the third and fourth statements were made by Sudan in 2007 and China in 2008 – two countries that received the lowest and second-lowest scores that FH awards for the democratic quality of a country. While dictators seem to show little reticence when invoking the notion of democracy, references to the concept are conspicuously absent from the speeches made by many of those countries that FH scores as solidly democratic: This includes countries both from the Western core like Australia, Belgium, or Sweden, as well as democratic states from other regions of the world like Micronesia, Japan, or Benin.

One may argue that the data presented offer no more than eclectic insights into states’ democratic discourse. In any case, it is insufficient evidence of an overarching pattern. These doubts are legitimate, yet baseless. When taking a more systematic look at the democratic discourse that revolves around the SC, the patterns described prove fairly robust: Compared to their authoritarian colleagues, democracies are surprisingly silent on the issue of democratic IO rule. Figure I and Figure II clearly capture this difference. The figures all rely on a conceptualization of democratic and autocratic states as provided by one of the main regime type indices used by political scientists, namely the aforementioned Freedom House Index. Based on their scores on political rights and civil liberties, FH rates countries on a scale from 1, the score for consolidated democracies, to 7, the score for highly autocratic regimes (Freedom House 2010).

When comparing the percentage of states that invoke the language of democracy in their yearly reform speech about the SC – in this study, I refer to them as country years – among both consolidated democracies and strong autocracies between 2003 and 2013, democracies prove considerably more reluctant to invoke the idea of democracy. In fact, Figure I reveals reversed patterns: among the 223 democratic country years only about a

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5 I use the notions of talk, language and discourse interchangeably. For this reason, I refer to discourse in the singular.
quarter invokes the language of democracy. Among the 39 autocratic country years, by contrast, it is only a quarter that avoids the term.

Figure I: Comparing consolidated democracies and highly autocratic regimes: share of country years that do/do not invoke democracy in the SC reform debate

When these patterns are further disentangled to account for the frequency with which the two regime types invoke the democratic narrative in their yearly reform speeches over the same period, the difference is no less striking (see Figure II). For every given number of references to the democratic idea, the gap between democracies and autocracies is substantial: While democracies “outperform” autocracies when it comes to avoiding references to democracy (see the first column in Figure II), autocracies are much more strongly represented among the country years that invoke the language of democracy once, twice or even more often.
Comparing consolidated democracies and highly autocratic regimes: share of country years for each number of references to democracy in the SC reform debate

Applying a higher democratic quality of domestic governance is linked to lower support for democratic principles internationally. This finding is highly puzzling in the light of existing theories. In fact, it strongly contradicts liberal constructivist accounts of IR and what these accounts suggest about the impact of a state’s domestic regime type on its foreign policy conduct. According to these scholars, democratic states strive to “export [their] democratic norms from the domestic level to the international one” (Grigorescu 2015: 21). That is to say, state representatives advocate norms on the international level that match the standards they have internalized and adhere to domestically. In essence, this claim is based on the following reasoning: if certain norms become constitutive of actors’ identities, they should guide their behavior irrespective of the level of rule at which actors engage (Davies 2013: 216; see also Tallberg et al. 2016: 44). As a result, “domestic commitments to particular political values and institutions” (Tallberg et al. 2016: 63) will induce a “spillover” (Tallberg et al. 2013: 44) of democratic standards of rule onto the international realm.6

Yet, if this is the case, why are democracies so silent on the topic of democratic IO rule? What keeps democratic countries from embracing the

6 See also Risse-Kappen (1996: 368), who claims that democratic states “form democratic international institutions” by embedding their own domestic standards within international structures of rule.
language of global democracy? There are a number of possible explanations. Most importantly, the democratic discourse states engage in might simply not follow the liberal constructivist logic outlined above. The regime type pattern observed may well be produced by something else and may thus turn out to be spurious once this factor is controlled for. That is to say, differences in the willingness to invoke democratic ideas might not be induced by states’ domestic democratic record but by some other factor that is strongly associated with it. While this is one conceivable option, there is no need to discard constructivist insights so quickly. After all, the regime type pattern could prove unsurprising once we account for the meaning that states invest in the notion of democratic IO rule. Possibly, the interpretation of global democracy that dominates international debates is simply at odds with how democracies govern themselves. This, in turn, could be a compelling reason for democratic representatives to avoid the democratic narrative.

The combination of these two factors – the prominence of the democratic narrative in international legitimacy debates and the puzzling behavior of democratic countries – points to a larger question that inspires this project: It is the question of what drives states’ discourse about democratic global rule? If democracy truly constitutes one of the most important current narratives of legitimate rule beyond the state, scholars should seek to better understand the language of global democracy. This has to encompass insights into both the actual shape of the democratic narrative and its functioning. More precisely, scholars need to better understand who the advocates for democratic IO rule are, what they promote in the name of democracy, and what rationale informs their talk of democratic rule beyond the state. Given the puzzling finding about the behavior of democratic states, what role does states’ domestic democratic record play in this regard? What alternative factors have an impact on states’ democracy talk? And what does this tell us about the overall logic that underpins states’ talk of democratic global rule? This study tackles these questions. The answers, I argue, may not only help to understand the functioning of the global democratic narrative; they may also help to assess the correctness of a claim that some scholars pessimistically make: namely that democracy has become an “empty signifier to which any and all can attach their dreams and hopes” (Brown 2010). That said, the insights generated by this project should not only be useful for scholars; they may also be of practical relevance: After all, they have important implications for the prospects of democratizing global rule.
Note that while I use a variety of expressions, including global and international democracy, democratic rule beyond the state, or IO democracy, these do not point to separate phenomena but are used as synonyms for what is the central focus of this study: the democratic design of IOs.

In tackling the central question of this project, I build on a comprehensive novel dataset. I cover the democratic discourse of 159 countries on two IO bodies over the period of a decade and supplement this data with the insights from semi-structured elite interviews conducted with representatives of 41 countries. In theoretical terms, I advance two logics that may drive states’ democratic discourse. While each of them relies on existing scholarship on the use of norms, I extend both accounts in important ways. With regard to its methodological approach, the project draws upon both qualitative and quantitative methods, combining their unique advantages to further the various aims of this study. More precisely, I assess the explanatory power of the two theoretical approaches by means of qualitative content analysis and statistics and use the results of the interviews for closer insights into the mechanisms that drive states’ use of the democratic narrative.

The chapter is structured as follows. I first present the research design, including the data and methods used in this project (1.1) and then proceed to introduce the main argument (1.2). After highlighting the theoretical contributions of the project (1.3), I briefly outline the structure of the book (1.4).

1.1. Research design

The existing literature has not comprehensively mapped the democratic discourse states engage in. Despite the assertion that democratic demands addressed by states to IOs have increased substantially, these demands have never been mapped on a large scale. Partial evidence of the use of democratic language does exist. However, the scholarship has not yet offered a

7 See, for instance, Nullmeier et al. (2010) and Stephen (2015). The study that most explicitly scrutinizes meanings of democracy as a standard for IO rule, notably in the context of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)/World Trade Organization (WTO) and the African Union is offered by Dingwerth et at. (2019b). The authors show that the GATT/WTO bureaucracy defended the organization against growing, albeit rather unspecific, public criticism of a democratic deficit by highlighting the organization’s consensus-based decision making. By linking democracy to the principle of consensus, GATT/WTO officials “put forth their
broader overview of which actors do and which do not invoke the language of global democracy. We also do not know what those who embrace the democratic narrative actually mean by it. To date, the emphasis scholars place on the contested meaning of norms and concepts has not been translated into a closer evaluation of the democratic understanding(s) espoused by different actors. This project helps to fill both voids. In doing so, it relies on a novel dataset and a multi-method approach.

The dataset it introduces covers the discourse of 159 states on two IO bodies over the period of a decade. It constitutes the first large-N account of states’ democratic discourse and includes information on both the frequency with which different countries refer to the notion of democracy when evaluating IOs, and on the interpretations of democratic IO rule that states apply. Both types of information are derived from the reform debates of two central but fundamentally different UN bodies, namely the Security Council and the General Assembly. From 2003 to 2013, 159 states participated in the debate, amounting to 1014 country years for which reform speeches are available.\textsuperscript{8} The project supplements the large-N dataset with semi-structured elite interviews, which were conducted with diplomats from the Permanent UN Missions of 41 member states.

In collecting and evaluating both sets of data, the project relies on both qualitative and quantitative methods. The research aim is in part interpretive: Two goals of the project, namely that of reconstructing states’ democratic understandings and that of grasping the motivations underlying countries’ use of the democratic narrative, call for interpretive methods. As such, the qualitative part of the study relies on qualitative content analysis (Chapter 3) and semi-structured elite interviews (Chapter 5).

I use qualitative content analysis based on an inductively established coding scheme to uncover and systematize countries’ understandings of democratic rule beyond the state. Apart from its focus on two core components of the democratic concept – namely the central principles and the subjects of democratic rule, both of which are stressed in the literature on global democracy – the coding process was deliberately left open. That is to say, the interpretations of democracy states adopt were derived induc-

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\textsuperscript{8} Not every country made a speech in every single year.
tively. In doing so, the study sought to avoid a reliance on (Western) democratic theory and the models of democracy espoused therein as its exclusive point of reference. Instead of imposing a Western perspective on the study, my hope was that this procedure would allow me to identify democratic visions beyond the “usual suspects” – that is, beyond the model of liberal democracy that dominates the literature. In sum, I thus combine the benefits of inductive approaches, which allow me to remain open to the diverse conceptions of democratic rule that states may put forward, with the advantages of being guided by a coding scheme, which ensures that the act of interpreting countries’ statements happens in a systematic and rule-guided fashion.

Qualitative content analysis is particularly suitable for identifying actors’ understandings of the concept of global democracy. Semi-structured interviews, in turn, offer valuable insights into actors’ motivations for engaging with this concept in the first place. Since the reasoning that underpins states’ use of the democratic narrative is central to this study, I complemented the data gathered by analyzing countries’ reform speeches with insights from interviews conducted with state representatives. More precisely, I talked to diplomats from 41 countries’ UN missions. By openly engaging those responsible for devising states’ speeches on IO reform, I was thus able to gain deeper insights into the incentives states had for including or excluding the language of democracy. This was particularly useful to gain a better understanding of the puzzling behavior of democratic states. The interviews with representatives of consolidated democracies not only helped me to identify their motives for avoiding the language of democracy; the interviews also helped me to clarify how the reasoning that underpins democracies’ treatment of the global democratic idea relates to the domestic democratic practices of these countries.

But the research aim is not only interpretive in nature; the project also seeks to explain patterns of democratic discourse within the international community at large. As will be shown in Chapter 3, countries are largely consistent in their democratic interpretations. Yet, they are clearly divided between those that embrace the language of democracy and those that avoid it. To account for these differences, the study relies on quantitative methods. More precisely, I use logit regression to test the explanatory power of two different logics, each of which provides alternative answers to the question of which states invoke the language of democracy and why they do so (see Chapter 4). This quantitative analysis offers the unique benefits associated with statistical methods: most importantly, it allows me to assess
the causal effect of different factors that may drive states’ democratic discourse.

In sum, the project draws upon and combines the strengths of three different methods, each of which offers unique advantages for the study’s various aims. Taken together, they promise to generate comprehensive as well as in-depth insights into the patterns of states’ democratic discourse and how these may best be explained.

1.2. Two drivers of states’ democratic discourse: domestic norms and material interests

The project finds that states’ democratic discourse is characterized by two patterns. The first pattern is one of disagreement: As suggested in the introductory paragraphs and supported by statistical evidence later on, countries differ in their willingness to invoke the democratic narrative. Put differently, states are divided into those that use the concept of democracy and those that prefer to avoid it. The second pattern, however, is one of unity: countries that embrace the democratic idea are very consistent in how they interpret it. In fact, states that invoke the democratic narrative agree on both the main subjects of democratic global rule and share a basic set of principles they associate with the democratic idea. In essence, countries advocate a statist conception of global rule that emphasizes the principles of representation, equality, and elections. In this regard, their democratic reasoning suggests a strong leaning towards the idea of representative democracy that is known from the domestic context of rule in the Western core. It is a conception of rule by elected representatives, which grants everyone “equal chances to influence the shaping of government” (Saward 2010: 86). Yet, the original subjects of democratic government, namely people, play no role in this conception. From the perspective of countries, global democracy is a democracy among states. Despite this overall pattern of agreement, states’ discourse is not entirely exempt from interpretive differences. In fact, all of the most important democratic principles – above all, representation, equality, and elections – are subject to dispute over their correct meaning. Yet, the project reveals that these interpretive disputes constitute low-level disagreements rather than instances of outright contestation.

Thus, the way in which states use the democratic narrative features two main differences – a major and a minor one. Both require explanations: the more serious type of divide separates states that are willing to invoke
the democratic narrative from countries that are reluctant to do so. The minor divide separates states according to the interpretation of democratic rule they embrace. I advance two logics that may account for these differences, each of which is anchored in a different theoretical approach to the use of norms. Accordingly, states’ discourse on global democracy may either follow a logic of normative consistency (LoNC), as suggested by a reasoning that is dominated by constructivist insights, or it may rely on a logic of material interests (LoMI), as suggested by a reasoning that prominently features rationalist arguments.

According to the LoNC, states seek to align the norms they promote on a global level with the standards they have adopted domestically. Consistency either results from states’ internalization of domestic norms or from their desire to maintain a good reputation and to avoid normative self-entrapment. Either way, any differences in the way states engage in global democratic discourse originate in the domestic context of rule. I contend that two types of domestic factors are particularly influential: These are, first, the democratic quality of states’ domestic institutions, and second, the democratic understandings that pervade these countries’ domestic societies. If the LoNC applies, only those states that view the understanding of global democracy embraced by the international community and the standards they adhere to domestically as matching are likely to invoke global democratic ideas. If countries perceive a misfit, they may opt to avoid the democratic narrative. Alternatively, countries need not stick to the definition of democracy advanced by other states. Instead, they may simply reinterpret global democracy in ways that match their own political structures and domestic democratic understandings.

According to the LoMI, norm entrepreneurship is not driven by the standards countries have embraced domestically or by an aim among states to achieve normative consistency across the domestic-international divide, but by their ambition to realize self-interested aims. In short, states appeal to norms when it furthers their aims. Most importantly, countries strive for power within IOs. After all, a position of power is still the best (though not exclusive) guarantee that one will be able to shape IO policies. Divergent uses of the democratic idea, I contend, should thus reflect differences in the power positions states occupy within IOs and in the power struggles they are involved in. Generally speaking, the strong defend their privileges, while the marginalized strive to dismantle them. But the disempowered engage in yet another fight, namely the struggle between those among them who seek to ascend to formal power positions and those who attempt to obstruct these aims. If the LoMI applies, only those states that
will benefit from the implementation of global democracy should speak up for it. If democratic global rule – as understood by the international community – runs counter to states’ strategic interests, they may opt to avoid using the term. If, however, the global level does not feature a dominant interpretation of democratic global rule, states have an alternative option: they may simply reinterpret the concept in their own favor.

I find that both logics offer important insights into states’ use of the democratic narrative. Clearly, power differences and the conflicts of interest they prompt are a powerful determinant of the way states use the language of democracy. In fact, divergent power interests may help to account for both differences in the way countries interpret the idea of democratic rule beyond the state as well as to explain differences in their willingness to invoke the idea in the first place. That said, institutionalized power inequalities take priority over differences in countries’ material capacity. More precisely, the struggles states fight out in the name of democracy take place between those who possess and those who lack institutional power on the one side, and between those who aspire to formal power status and those who seek to frustrate these efforts on the other. Generally speaking, states that are excluded from institutional power status and have limited chances to ascend to power are much more eager to invoke the democratic narrative than countries that already occupy or have a reasonable chance to obtain positions of formal power. Differences in material clout only affect states’ democratic discourse where formal inequalities are not at stake.

While these findings lend strong support to the LoMI, the LoNC proves to be an equally important driver of states’ democratic discourse. Although it does not shape the interpretive disputes that states fight out, concerns for consistency clearly inform countries’ decisions to invoke or avoid the language of democracy. In essence, the project reveals a relevant role for both the democratic practices inscribed in states’ domestic institutions and for the democratic understandings embraced by their societies. The regime type pattern observed in the introductory paragraphs does not turn out to be spurious. The statistical evidence offered in Chapter 4 confirms this pattern as significant: the more democratic a state’s domestic institutions, the less likely it is that this country will invoke the democratic narrative. Yet, the behavior of democratic states is clearly reconcilable both with constructivist insights in general and with the LoNC more specifically. In fact, some diplomats interviewed clearly linked their reluctance to speak of democratic rule beyond the state to a mismatch between the conception of democracy that dominates on a global level and the way their countries
govern themselves. They prefer to avoid the democratic narrative because they find the statist interpretation of global democratic rule to be inconsistent with their own domestic democratic understandings, which place people at their center. Most importantly however, democracies eschew the global democratic narrative simply because they find themselves incapable of adequately translating a concept that they firmly locate in the domestic realm for the global level. Unable to redefine the concept without compromising its original domestic meaning – and thus risking becoming inconsistent – these states choose to avoid the notion altogether. In addition, the empirical results also reveal a relevant role for regional differences in the domestic interpretations of democratic rule embraced by countries. Where the concept of global democracy furthered by the international community neatly fits the domestic democratic understanding that prevails inside a specific region references to the global democratic narrative are particularly frequent. This is the case for Latin America. The thrust of the democratic idea applied to IOs appears to neatly fit the domestic understanding of democratic rule that prevails in many countries of the region. This understanding strongly emphasizes the idea of emancipation from relationships of subordination (Maia/Santoro 2013; Pavlova 2013).

In drawing these threads together, the project generates several important insights. First and foremost, it established that the notion of global democracy constitutes a keyword for a specific conception of legitimate global rule: in essence, this is a conception of legitimacy that rejects inegalitarian relations of power in favor of sovereign state equality. As such, the democratic narrative constitutes a narrative of the weak and for the weak – a strong discourse of empowerment that supports the struggle of those who are disadvantaged by the power structures of IOs. In this function, it underpins a discourse of justification that is meant to delegitimize the power positions of the privileged and the ambitions of those who seek to join their ranks.

1.3. Theoretical contributions

In its effort to uncover the patterns and drivers of states’ entrepreneurship with regard to democratic IO rule, the project contributes to several strands of literature. Most importantly, it contributes to the two strands of research that underpin the LoNC and the LoMI. As both the logics themselves and how this project contributes to the literature that underpins them will be extensively dealt with in Chapter 2, I will keep it short here:
While the LoNC draws on scholarship of norm externalization and its emphasis on processes of socialization and internalization, the project complements these studies with comprehensive insights into the reasoning that guides states in their decision to upload the norms they have internalized at home to the global level. Rather than implying an automatism whereby politicians inevitably extend these norms to “all levels of political organization” (Tallberg et al. 2016: 63), the project asks why – and under what conditions – decision-makers conclude that their domestic standards can and should also be applied beyond the state. The scholarly work that underpins the LoMI, on the other hand, has plausibly suggested that actors invoke norms to justify self-serving aims. Yet, it has provided few insights into when a norm actually fulfils the function that its users expect it to fulfil. Put differently, what does (and what does not) constitute a strong justificatory norm that may help to persuade others that one’s claims are legitimate? Most scholarly work in this tradition suggests that strong justificatory norms are those that resonate widely within the international community. This project introduces a set of criteria that may help to evaluate the justificatory power of norms and uses the criteria to empirically assess the justificatory strength of the norm of global democratic rule.

But the theoretical contribution of this project is not limited to the literature just mentioned. The project also contributes to three further branches of scholarship. First, it relates to research on the social legitimacy of IOs, which scrutinizes the changing normative contours of legitimate global governance. The project contributes to these scholars’ efforts to explore and explain the rise of democratic requirements of legitimate global rule. Second, it engages scholarship on the contested meaning of norms and political concepts. By accounting for differences in actors’ understandings of global democracy, the project pays due attention to scholars’ insights into the ambiguity of norms. It also helps to fill a void left by these analysts, who have offered few guidelines for the empirical assessment of norm contestation. Lastly, the project contributes to global democracy research. Scholars – Western ones in particular – have been vividly debating whether and how to elevate democracy to the international level. Yet, they have not explored the political debate on this topic. By filling this gap, the project examines the extent to which Western academic thought resonates with practitioners. By being sensitive to the ideas espoused beyond the West it also helps to democratize global democracy research.

I will look at the three strands of literature and elaborate the project’s contribution to each one.
1.3.1. Research on the social legitimacy of international organizations

This project scrutinizes the role of democracy for countries’ perceptions of IO legitimacy. As such, it speaks to scholarship on the social legitimacy of IOs, also termed empirical legitimacy research (ELR). Scholarly interest in this phenomenon has risen only recently and it has thus complemented the largely normative research tradition on legitimate rule beyond the state. Rather than advancing theoretically inspired conceptions of legitimacy, these scholars empirically examine whether an IO is granted the right to rule by states and their domestic societies (Dellmuth/Tallberg 2015: 452). Aware of the critical link between an organization’s effectiveness and its perceived legitimacy, this increasing body of literature has provided valuable insights into the normative demands and evaluations that state representatives, non-state actors and national publics address to IOs. Sensitized to a broader normative transformation towards democratic principles of global rule, these scholars are particularly interested in the democratic demands made of IOs. Yet, current studies of ELR reveal two gaps: First, despite their interest in the rise in demands for IO democracy, legitimacy scholars have failed to systematically examine who these norm entrepreneurs are and what drives their democratic advocacy. Equally importantly, ELR as conducted so far has largely neglected questions of norm interpretation. As such, it has failed to account for the concrete ideas actors associate with global democracy. Without such knowledge, however, it is impossible to make sense of the rise in demands for democratic international rule. The project contributes to closing both gaps.

9 For overviews of the research agenda of empirical legitimacy scholarship see Schneider (2010), Tallberg/Zürn (2019), and Tallberg et al. (2018).

10 Since the writings of Max Weber (2005 [1922]), two understandings of legitimacy have been used: a normative or prescriptive understanding on the one hand and a sociological or descriptive one on the other (Steffek 2003: 253). The normative perspective seeks to determine the general criteria of rightful rule, which are frequently derived from democratic theory. Approaches in this tradition do not ask what actors accept as rightful grounds to acknowledge some entity’s right to rule; they ask which grounds ought to be accepted by these actors (Bernstein 2011: 19). Within the sociological or empirical perspective, on the other hand, “[…] rule is legitimate when its subjects believe it to be so” (Clark 2003: 79). Sociological approaches often draw on Suchman’s (1995: 574) definition of legitimacy as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions.”

11 For a notable exception, see Dingwerth et al. (2019b).
As stated earlier, legitimacy is deemed essential for effective IO rule. Yet, many current IOs seem to be facing a legitimacy crisis. In fact, scholars claim that international institutions have never been more contested. Their right to rule is not only challenged by citizens (Hooghe/Marks 2009) and new transnational actors or social movements (O’Brien et al. 2000; Zürn/Ecker-Ehrhardt 2013), but also by the traditional constituency of international relations, namely states (Binder/Heupel 2014; Cooley 2015). According to scholars, IOs have long been able to act below the public’s radar. Essentially an elite affair, these organizations have profited from a “permissive consensus” (Hooghe/Marks 2009), a time of “passive acceptance” (Dellmuth/Tallberg 2015: 451), or something that might even be described as “indifference” (Hurrelmann et al. 2015: 43) by the world audience. It seems this logic no longer applies. Critical awareness of global governance institutions is on the rise. This has been witnessed by the protests that accompany almost every global political summit since Seattle in 1999, by the “NO” votes of two nations in the European Constitution referendum in 2005, and by efforts on the part of rising powers to create their own institutions in opposition to existing Western ones.

Moreover, it seems the growing contestation of IOs is being accompanied by another process, namely a transformation of the very foundations of international legitimacy. More specifically, the formerly unchallenged logic of effective problem-solving, of “good functional governance” (Steffek 2011: 2) beyond the state, seems to no longer suffice. Technocracy, analysts claim, faces strong competition from a new logic of rule that emphasizes good global governance and the fulfilment of democratic principles of rule (Zürn 2018; Zürn et al. 2007: 150). In fact, some scholars argue that “democracy is becoming the paramount legitimizing principle of world politics” (Thérien/Bélanger Dumontier 2009: 358). IOs themselves seem to have acknowledged this trend, as evidenced by their growing use of the democratic narrative in self-legitimation strategies (Dingwerth et al. 2019a).

It is precisely for these reasons that legitimacy scholarship has gained momentum. Yet, to make sense of the finding that IOs have attracted an unprecedented amount of attention and have become the target of democratic demands and evaluations, we need to identify the advocates for democratic IO rule, what they promote in the name of democracy and why they embrace the global democratic narrative. Put differently, efforts to account for the (changing) normative contours of global governance

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12 See Reus-Smit’s (2007) seminal article on “International Crises of Legitimacy.”
cannot bypass the “communities that grant legitimacy” (Symons 2011: 2557), as well as their understandings of central concepts of rightful rule and their motives for applying them to IOs.

Current approaches have not yet provided these insights. Admittedly, an increasing number of studies has engaged in mapping the normative demands addressed towards a variety of IOs and has thus offered valuable information about the norms and standards embraced by different actors, countries in particular (see, for instance, Eisentraut 2013 and Nullmeier et al. 2010). Yet, most of these studies do not account for differences in actors’ norm entrepreneurship. The few existing explanatory accounts in ELR – mostly public opinion studies – have excluded norm-based demands from their scrutiny. Using proxies for legitimacy beliefs in international organizations like “support” (Ecker-Ehrhardt 2016), “trust” or “confidence” (Dellmuth/Tallberg 2015), or simply negative and positive assessments of the respective organization (Binder/Heupel 2014 and Johnson 2011), these studies have provided valuable insights into the sources of ac-

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13 The most comprehensive research project in this regard was conducted as part of the Bremen Collaborative Research Center “Transformations of the State.” The associated scholars analyzed the media discourses of four Western democracies on the legitimacy of the UN, the European Union and the G8 (Nullmeier et al. 2010). While their findings highlight that IOs are still mostly evaluated in terms of their functionality, the results also reveal that states consistently promote democratic standards of global rule (Biegón et al. 2010: 161; Schmidtke/Nullmeier 2011: 133,140). At the same time, these findings cannot be easily generalized given the small size of the sample and its exclusive focus on Western states. One of my own earlier studies is based on a more diverse sample of countries (Eisentraut 2013). It scrutinized the GA speeches of 57 state representatives for standards of legitimacy that these countries seek to realize in the Assembly. The study’s primary interest was in normative differences between democratic and autocratic countries, which it found to be surprisingly absent. Hence, despite its more representative design, the study was not meant to detect and explain more general patterns of disagreement over the Assembly’s (democratic) legitimacy.

14 In explaining the foundations of IO legitimacy, scholars have drawn attention both to IO features (“polity-centered” factors as described by Rixen and Zangl (2013)) and characteristics of those who grant legitimacy (Rixen and Zangl call them “society-centered” factors, even though the main constituency of legitimate global rule need not only include national societies but also transnational actors or states). An example that combines both foci is the study by Dellmuth and Tallberg (2015). More recently, Tallberg et al. (2018) have suggested a framework for empirical legitimacy research that includes institutional, individual, and social-structural sources of legitimacy beliefs vis-à-vis IOs.
tors’ legitimacy beliefs, of citizens in particular. Yet, they have not advanced insights into the normative standards that underpin these beliefs and why they may differ. As Tallberg and Zürn (2019: 582) rightly argue, “we still know little about the factors and processes that drive and shape legitimacy beliefs.”

By focusing on the granters of legitimacy, their normative preferences and how and why these may differ, this project moves beyond existing research. Focused on states, it thus contributes to a more thorough understanding of actors’ advocacy for more democratic global rule and what drives those who engage in it.

In this effort, the project also addresses another void left by legitimacy research. More precisely, it asks about the meanings actors attach to the democratic idea. If the legitimacy of global governance has come to hinge on its democratic quality, scholars need to examine what global democratic rule actually means to those who shape international politics. Current ELR has been largely oblivious to questions of norm interpretation. Instead of examining actors’ understandings of the norms and principles they promote beyond the state, analysts have often relied on their own interpretations of the concepts in question. However, this approach is problematic. It is not only likely to blind analysts to possible alternative understandings adopted by their research subjects (Bilgin 2008: 11; Draude/Neuweiler 2010: 6f; Puchala 1997: 129); it may also have another undesired effect: studies of ELR may simply overlook more subtle manifestations of normative disagreement between actors. Countries that appear united in their demand for more democratic global rule need not agree on what that actually means (Zürn 2013: 180). As scholarship on essentially contested concepts and the contested meaning of norms has highlighted, actors may attach fundamentally different ideas to the same notion. This project takes these insights seriously: bearing in mind that states’ motives for pushing for democratic global rule can only be assessed with better knowledge of the democratic understandings they apply, this project scrutinizes states’ interpretations in-depth.

15 For an overview of studies on citizens’ sources of legitimacy beliefs see Dellmuth (2018).
1.3.2. Research on essentially contested concepts and the contested meaning of norms

In exploring how the idea of democracy is understood and how its interpretation may differ between states, this project also draws on literature on essentially contested concepts (ECC) and on the contested meaning of norms. Both strands of scholarship have made important contributions to raising scholars’ awareness of conceptual and normative ambiguity. Its representatives claim that abstract norms and concepts are often contested and that scholars who ignore this fact are blinded to an important source of dispute between actors. At the same time, both branches of research have offered few guidelines for empirically assessing meaning contestation and for distinguishing disputes that are normal from the serious kind. Thus, it comes as no surprise that the label has been used in an inflationary manner. According to Waldron (2002: 148), it is “clearly vulnerable to overuse.” Almost any norm or concept is contested today – at least this is the impression one gets when examining the literature.16 Undoubtedly, democracy is at the forefront of these concepts.

As a matter of fact, when Walter Gallie coined the term essentially contested concept (ECC) in 1955/56, democracy served as his prime example. According to Gallie (1955/56: 169), concepts are essentially contested “the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes (...) on the part of their users.” In short, actors disagree deeply on the correct interpretation of these concepts. By sensitizing people to the issue of contestation, Gallie and numerous scholars who followed in his footsteps hoped to enhance the quality of conceptual debates both within academia and among practitioners. In order to provide more structure to conceptual discussions, Gallie introduced seven criteria of contestation (Collier et al. 2006: 211-214; Waldron 2002: 162-163).17 Despite the fact that sooner or later almost all

16 For an overview of studies of contested concepts, see Waldron (2002: 149).
17 In brief, Gallie (1955/56: 171-180) relates the essentially contested character of concepts to the following criteria: First, concepts need to be appraiseive, meaning they are intimately linked to positive – or as Collier et al. (2006) and Freeden (1994) add, negative – normative appraisals. According to Gallie, the concept of democracy clearly fulfils this criterion. More precisely, “during the last one hundred and fifty years it has steadily established itself as the appraiseive political concept par excellence” (Gallie 1955/56: 184). Furthermore, a concept needs to be internally complex and, as a result, variously describable. This is to say, the multiple possible components that constitute a concept like democracy – which may include majoritarian rule, individual freedoms, or other ideas – may lead users to
of these criteria themselves became the subject of heated scholarly debate – with scholars either criticizing the vagueness of individual criteria or questioning their relevance altogether – the criteria were never discarded.\footnote{For an overview of critical evaluations of Gallie’s criteria see, for instance, Collier et al. (2006). Apart from the quarrel surrounding individual criteria, some scholars have raised more fundamental concerns with Gallie’s approach. For one thing, Gallie was accused of conceptual relativism. His idea of essential contestability was seen to negate entirely the possibility of distinguishing more reasonable from less reasonable interpretations of a concept (Clarke 1979: 125-126). Others scholars criticized Gallie’s lack of awareness of the “moral political perspective” (Gray 1977: 336) that renders the thinking about essentially contested concepts possible. More precisely, these analysts claim that Gallie’s approach is firmly anchored in the pluralist liberal perspective that dominates Western societies (Gray 1977: 337).}

Quite the contrary: to this day, Gallie’s account still constitutes the dominant framework for evaluating ECCs.

Yet, his framework is not a good basis for evaluating the contested character of specific concepts. Even Gallie himself preferred to describe his seven points as conditions, rather than criteria of contestation. For this reason, scholars have charged Gallie and others who have followed his approach of failing to provide a clear guideline for empirically assessing the contested quality of concrete concepts (see Ehrenberg 2011: 227; Garver 1990: 252). Yet, this absence of empirical guidelines need not surprise the reader. After all, most work on ECCs is strongly philosophical in character. As such, its authors have had little interest in the empirical scrutiny of acts of contestation. What they cared about was a concept’s contestability, namely its potential to prompt incessant disputes. Determining this potential, in turn, requires a philosophical, not an empirical evaluation of “the nature and limits of rational discussion” (Gray 1977: 338) about a specific concept. According to Gray (1977: 388), one thus needs to distinguish the
“weak, empirical” notion of contestation from a “stronger,” more philosophical understanding in terms of contestability. Still, this important distinction has not prevented scholars outside the philosophical or linguistic tradition from adopting the notion of ECC and from using Gallie’s framework as if it were just that: a list of empirical indicators to detect instances of conceptual contestation. This has led to an inflationary use of the label contested without much reflection on whether the attribute is actually valid.\textsuperscript{19} As a result, concepts like sovereignty, legitimacy, and – above all – democracy have been characterized as essentially contested.\textsuperscript{20} In short, the notion of ECC has been “appealed to more often than thought about” (Garver 1990: 251).

Despite their focus on norms rather than political concepts more generally, a more recent strand of research has re-evaluated the contestation surrounding many of the same notions that are also of interest to scholars of ECC. This scholarship on the contested meaning of norms has particularly flourished within the past years. Coming mainly from the critical constructivist camp, its representatives have come to criticize what they term an inconsistent approach to norms adopted by early constructivist research in IR. This research, critical constructivists contend, has approached norms as if their meaning was fixed. That is to say, it has “treat[ed] norms as ‘things’ that remain fairly stable in terms of content” (Krook/True 2012: 108; see also van Kersbergen/Verbeek 2007: 219) – a treatment that is clearly at odds with the dominant constructivist understanding of norms as intersubjectively constituted.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19} For this argument, also see Wiener (2017: 109).

\textsuperscript{20} For instance, Besson (2004) has affirmed the contested character of the notion of sovereignty, Hurrelmann (2007) has done the same for the concept of legitimacy, and democracy has been labelled an ECC among others by Gallie (1955/56) himself, and more recently by Collier et al. (2006). For an overview of other contested concepts, see Waldron (2002: 149). Yet, it would be incorrect to suggest that scholars have not at times been reluctant to award this label. For instance, Ehrenberg (2011) concludes her study on the concept of law with the verdict that it is largely uncontested. For the concept of democracy, Beetham (1994) arrives at the same conclusion. In his opinion, “the extent and significance of such disagreements has been greatly exaggerated” (Beetham 1994: 27).

\textsuperscript{21} Constructivist IR scholarship has long referred to a mutual constitution of agent and structure (Wendt 1992; Hurd 2008a). Yet, its initial empirical interest has been largely confined to one side of this mutually constitutive relationship between norms, ideas and their meaning on the one side and actors’ behavior on the other. The way constructivists analyzed how norms “shape interaction among […] actors” (Krook/True 2012: 104) suggested the existence of relatively stable norms with clear meanings that actors mobilized to define their own interests.
This inconsistency can best be explained by looking at the primary research aim of early IR constructivism, namely the aim to show that norms mattered (Finnemore/Sikkink 2001: 396). But this central objective – to prove that norms had an independent effect on actors’ behavior – did not just result in the sweeping of concerns with ambiguous normative meanings under the rug; it also required a research methodology that was hard to reconcile with a dynamic understanding of norms. As Krook and True (2012: 106) note, for scholars interested in the spread and adoption of norms, conflicting interpretations and changes in a norm’s meaning were secondary. But the requirements of positivist research also played a role: After all, it appeared futile to determine a norm’s effect on behavior unless the norm was fixed and thus able to unambiguously specify how to comply with it (Hofferberth/Weber 2015: 80). As a consequence, Hofferberth and Weber (2015: 75) contend that the original understanding of norms as being “constantly renegotiated in social interaction” had perished “in the translation of social-theoretical claims […] into empirical research agendas.”

More recent constructivist approaches have challenged this picture of norms as uncontested and static constructs. They have also made the conflicts surrounding normative meaning a central focus of both their conceptual and empirical work. In this spirit, Hofferberth and Weber (2015: 82) highlight the “potential differences […] in how a norm is understood,” van Kersbergen and Verbeek (2007: 234) point to “conflicts over the precise meaning” of a norm, and Wiener (2009: 183) refers to the “clash of normative meanings,” which may provoke serious disputes.

By drawing attention to conflicting understandings and actors’ recurring attempts to redefine a norm, critical constructivists also meant to remedy the impression that a norm’s meaning remains stable over time:

and to guide their behavior towards others. The opposite direction, the ways in which social interaction could transform the normative structure itself, was clearly acknowledged – most prominently by Wendt (1992). For a long time, however, it did not come to influence the empirical work conducted by constructivists.

Wiener (2007b) describes the traditional constructivist approach to norms as “behavioralist” and more recent critical constructivist accounts as “societal.” According to her, only the latter seriously considers the intersubjective constitution of norms, whereas the former clearly “cram vents” (Wiener 2007b: 51) it.

“[n]orm adoption does not necessarily mean the end of debate” (Chwieroth 2008: 135). Instead, a norm’s meaning is always subject to change. Clearly, this view of norms and their meanings is much more consistent with the initial conceptualization of norms as intersubjectively constituted constructs. Put differently, rather than being reduced to independent variables that affect actors’ behavior, norms are themselves conceived of as outcomes of interpretive processes of exchange among actors (Hofferberth/Weber 2015: 81).

Like scholars of ECC, however, critical constructivists have created the impression that meaning contestation is the rule. After all, this is what scholars like Wiener (2007b: 58) suggest: if all norms evolve in interaction and if this intersubjective process of construction is bound to provoke disputes over their meaning, then “norms are contested by default.” Yet, if contestation is the rule, the concept loses much of its scientific utility. Most importantly, it becomes useless to scholars who seek to distinguish negligible levels of interpretive disagreement from grave disputes that “are likely to spark conflict” (Wiener 2007b: 48). But this distinction does not only touch upon the issue of conflict. As some scholars rightly contend, it concerns the stability of the norm itself. If norms constitute shared expectations of appropriate behavior, there must be a limit to interpretive differences. If this limit is crossed, too little is shared – and the norm ceases to exist (Deitelhoff 2013: 28). Put differently, we need an answer to the question when a “controversy begin[s] to weaken […] a norm’s stability” (Deitelhoff/Zimmermann 2013: 4). To my knowledge, the only scholars that suggest an answer to this question are Deitelhoff and Zimmermann (2013). While their primary focus is not meaning contestation but contestation in general, as well as its consequences for norm stability, the two types of discourse that may target a norm that the authors distinguish are highly useful not only for evaluating the seriousness of the overall challenge faced by a norm but also for judging the severity of interpretive dis-

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24 This impression is confirmed by Deitelhoff and Zimmermann (2013: 4), who claim that critical constructivists perceive interpretive struggles as the “normal practice.”

25 See also Deitelhoff (2013). I here rely on the 2013 version of the study by Deitelhoff/Zimmermann (2013) rather than the more recent version (Deitelhoff/Zimmermann 2020). While the authors have further developed and refined their approach, to my perception, the gist of their main argument and their basic typology of two types of norm discourse has remained unaltered.

26 In the 2020 version of this article, the authors focus on a norm’s “robustness” (Deitelhoff/Zimmermann 2020)
Disputes over its meaning. Deitelhoff and Zimmermann distinguish principled discourses that revolve around the basic expectations raised by a norm “independent of a given situation” (2013: 5) – what the authors call “justificatory discourse” – from discourses that do not touch upon the validity of the norm but concern the norm’s correct implementation in a concrete case (“applicatory discourse”). According to the authors, a norm is not destabilized just because actors question how to correctly apply the norm in a specific situation. In fact, disagreement on this matter is common and – if it results in the norm’s clarification – may even serve to strengthen the norm. If the norm is questioned in a principled way, by contrast, this challenges the very core of the norm and thus puts the norm itself at risk (Deitelhoff 2013: 31-33). While not the authors’ primary focus, I find this distinction highly useful for distinguishing negligible from serious disagreement over a norm’s meaning. Based on it, I argue that interpretive dispute of a principled kind – that is, disagreement over the core expectations raised by a norm – is a necessary condition to talk of norm contestation. Yet, I do not consider it a sufficient one. The mere existence of principled disagreement, I argue, need not jeopardize the norm as such. In Chapter 3 I add two additional factors that I argue determine whether or not the meaning of a norm may be described as contested (see 3.4.1).

In essence, the concept of contestation demands concrete indicators that specify how to empirically detect its presence or absence. This clear delineation is required if the concept is not to cover each and every instance where normative understandings diverge. Against this backdrop, this project makes two important contributions to scholarship on ECC and the contested meaning of norms. First, building on the work of Deitelhoff and Zimmermann (2013), it introduces an empirical conceptualization of meaning contestation that may guide the empirical analysis of interpretive disagreement. The conceptualization helps fill the void left by scholars of ECC, who have sensitized scholars to normative ambiguity but have failed to offer proper guidelines for the empirical assessment of contestation. But the conceptualization may also enrich scholarship on norms in IR. More precisely, it helps to distinguish normal levels of interpretive differences from a concept’s outright contestation. While critical constructivists draw on rich empirical examples of normative disagreement, their readers are often left to guess whether the disputes analyzed remain within the normal range or amount to serious contestation.27 Second, the project seeks to remedy what it perceives to be an inflationary depiction of norms and

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27 Clearly, the work of Deitelhoff and Zimmermann (2013) is an exception.
concepts as contested. It does so by subjecting one of these concepts to a
closer empirical scrutiny based on the indicators developed. Instead of sim-
ply alleging that democracy constitutes an (essentially) contested norm or
concept, it examines the disagreement surrounding the notion and evalu-
ates whether the label of contestation is actually deserved. This study, in
turn, may serve as the basis for future research into other concepts that
may – but also may not – be contested.

1.3.3. Global democracy research

Finally, the project engages with the literature on global democracy. For
several decades, scholars have vividly debated whether it is feasible to ele-
vate democracy to the international level. A vast literature has documented
many divergent visions of democratic rule beyond the state. Yet, the debate
has never left its theoretical fortress. Within all those decades, discussion
with practitioners was largely avoided. As a result, we know little to noth-
ing about the democratic views of practitioners – of those actors who
could put ideas of global democratic rule into practice. Do politicians con-
sider global democracy a goal worth pursuing? If not, why not? And if they
do, what is their vision of democratic rule beyond the state? In tackling
these questions, the project contributes to filling a significant void left by
the current scholarship. The insights it generates are of practical relevance:
First and foremost, they help assess the viability of the global democratic
project. But these insights are also valuable from a scientific point of view.
After all, they reveal the size of the distance between two spheres of demo-
ocratic debate – the academic and the political.

As scholars of global democracy propose, the profound changes and
challenges implied by globalization processes require a radical reorienta-
tion of traditional democratic thinking. Their argument is as follows: Rule
is no longer confined to the boundaries of nation-states. Hence, the debate
on how to democratically tame it also needs to move beyond the state. The
starting point for this argument is a simple observation: IOs have grown
considerably more assertive. The scope and depth of their activity has in-
creased substantially, and they have come to command considerable au-
thority over both members and non-members alike. By now, as Buchanan
and Keohane (2006: 406) note, IOs “are like governments,” which are capa-

28 Alternatively, Zürn (2000: 186) suggests the notion of “societal denationaliza-
tion.”
ble of making rules and of sanctioning their violation. With their authority growing, however, IOs’ traditional source of legitimacy, technocratic rule, becomes deeply insufficient (Zürn 2018). Instead, the need for democratic legitimation increases. This is particularly vital given that powerful IOs may “limit the exercise of sovereignty by democratic states” (Buchanan/Keohane 2006: 407). If global institutions are able to impair the democratic functioning of domestic systems, scholars argue, it is even more important that they themselves follow democratic principles. Put differently, “the vitality of democracy within nation-states is intimately connected to the democratization of world order” (McGrew 2003: 406).

Yet, neither the desirability nor the feasibility of global democratic rule is a matter of consensus among scholars. The contrary is true: the literature is loaded with accounts of skepticism. Even those who embrace the democratic idea do not necessarily share a common agenda. Generally speaking, research on global democracy revolves around two central questions that are fervently debated: First, is global democracy desirable and feasible? And second, if this may be confirmed, what could global democracy look like? That is to say, what model should democratic rule beyond the state follow? I will give a brief overview of both discussions.

According to skeptics, democratic rule beyond the state is either absolutely undesirable or simply not feasible. These scholars offer several reasons for this claim. The first is linked to a trade-off between global rule that is either democratic or effective – but never both; the second refers to the anarchical structure of the international system, which resists attempts to introduce democratic control; and the last one points to the absence of a global demos, which could engage in meaningful democratic self-governance.

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29 As Bernstein (2011: 18) contends, “the extended scope and reach of contemporary ‘global governance’ has increased the need for political legitimacy beyond the state.”

30 Among these skeptics are scholars like Dahl (1999), de Wilde (2011a), Miller (2010), and Schmitter (1996), to mention only a few of them.

31 Clearly, these questions do not arise in a theoretical vacuum. Quite the contrary, both more traditional democratic theory and modern theorizing about democratic global rule is dominated by Western scholars. As a result, it is the Western conception of liberal democracy that often serves as their point of reference. More precisely, scholars debate whether Western democratic ideas can be transferred to the global realm, under what conditions this is possible, and what concessions need to be made in the process.
The first concern about global democracy can be summarized as follows: If we value effective rule beyond the state, global democracy is not a goal worth pursuing. As Zürn (2000: 184) elaborates, the argument is based on a perceived incompatibility between effective rule, which generates legitimacy via outputs, and democratic decision-making, which is associated with high input legitimacy. In this view, the “time-consuming and cumbersome” (Höreth 2001: 13) effort of democratically involving important constituencies cannot but hamper IOs’ “problem-solving capacity” (Majone 1998: 21). In light of the many challenges confronting the international community today, the costs of greater participation, representation, and consideration of conflicting views appear unbearable. Hence, so the conclusion, global democracy is undesirable. Yet, not all scholars subscribe to this view. They see no reason to regard effectiveness and democracy as contradictory objectives. Quite the contrary: Zürn (2000) submits that by contributing to effective problem-solving, international institutions may even strengthen the input side of democratic rule. More precisely, effective IO rule may help mitigate one of the consequences of societal denationalization, namely the problem of a growing incongruence between those who make decisions (the rulers) and those affected by them (the subjects). Moreover, many democratic procedures for gathering input – deliberation being one example – are specifically meant to enhance the quality of outputs (Sternberg 2015: 625).

Another concern frequently raised relates to the structure of international rule. According to scholars like de Wilde (2011a: 5, 14), hierarchy is a necessary condition for democracy. The international system, however, is perceived as anarchic. In de Wilde’s account, democracy is about controlling power and preventing its abuse. Yet, the global diffusion of power and the lack of a central global authority blur the target of democratic control.

32 To make matters more complicated, the conflict between a system’s input and output legitimacy – terms that were introduced by Scharpf (1997, 1999) – may even be portrayed as a conflict internal to the democratic idea. Clearly, Scharpf (1999) linked both dimensions of legitimacy to the concept of democratic rule. He distinguished democracy as exercised by the people – that is, democratic input – and democracy as rule for the people – that is, democratic output. In other words, if the idea of effectiveness is hard to disentangle from the democratic idea of “generating benefits for the people” (Dellmuth/Tallberg 2015: 455), trade-offs between input and output seem to constitute a “democratic dilemma” (Sternberg 2015: 616). Apart from Scharpf (2003), other scholars who highlight this imminent tension are Dahl (1994); Höreth (2001); and Katz/Wessels (1999).

33 See, for instance, Sternberg (2015) and Zürn (2000).
As such, there simply is no *cratos* – a “world government to be democratized” (Bienen et al. 1998: 289). Others argue that democratic global rule is tied to certain conditions, the enforcement of which calls for a world government with coercive powers (Song 2012: 58; see also Cohen/Sabel 2005: 773). Most importantly, these analysts refer to a set of basic rights that have to be guaranteed in order to allow for democratic self-governance. The breach of these rights requires sanctions. Since the international level lacks adequate measures to do so, global democracy is deemed impracticable. Needless to say, both types of concern hinge on a rather rigid understanding of hierarchy: it either exists or does not. Yet, global authority may also be perceived in terms of degrees, comprising many intermediate forms between its complete absence (anarchy) and its full realization (a world government). This more nuanced understanding finds considerable support in the literature. Many scholars have alluded to authoritative international institutions, which do not constitute a world government but are still able to bind actors against their will and may sanction non-compliance with their rules (Cooper et al. 2008; Cronin/Hurd 2008; Hurd 1999; Zürn et al. 2012). In this view, *cratos* is not absent from the global level – and the prospects for democracy thus less dim.\(^{34}\)

The last impediment to global democracy is probably the strongest of all – and clearly the most frequently voiced: democratic rule requires a *demos*. But since “there is no global demos, […] global democracy is infeasible now” (Valentini 2014: 796). Democracy, so the argument goes, requires a political community characterized by “internal cohesion” (List/Koenig-Archipugi 2010: 96), a “minimum of shared values” (Bienen et al. 1998: 290), “relationships of mutual trust” (Valentini 2014: 793), and a “sense of solidarity, rooted in a shared political culture” (Song 2012: 59). If these preconditions are not fulfilled, there is no *demos* and the most defining element of democratic rule, majoritarian decision-making, is thus bound to fail. After all, it is the feeling of trust and solidarity that leads actors to accept the risk of being outvoted by others (Miller 2010: 145). While many nation-states provide well-established frameworks that nurture internal cohesion, this framework is missing on a global scale. As Keohane (2006: 77) submits, even the European community, often cited as a role model of a well-developed transnational society, does not possess (all of) the traits linked to a *demos*. The democratic necessity of a *demos* is largely uncontroversial among scholars. What is hotly disputed, however, is the current sta-

\(^{34}\) As Hurd (1999: 401) puts it: “If we accept that some authoritative international institutions exist […], then the international system is not an anarchy.”
tus of the *demos* – that is, whether or not it is already sufficiently developed. Disentangling all the elements that may constitute a global *demos*, Zürn (2000) comes to a much less pessimistic conclusion than Keohane and others. According to the author, some of these elements are already present on a global level (Zürn 2000: 200).\(^{35}\) Moreover, Zürn and others suggest that a *demos* needs time to grow – and (democratic) international institutions may help it develop. Clearly, it would not be the first time that the experience of “sharing common institutions has given birth to a *demos*” (Archibugi 2004: 461; see also Zürn 2000: 212).

Evidently, the academic disagreement on these matters is well documented. Yet, we know little to nothing about the corresponding political debate. How do policy-makers perceive the relation between effective international rule and the idea of global democracy? And do they justify objections to democratic rule beyond the state with reference to international anarchy or the lack of a global *demos*?

While these three bones of contention have received a fair amount of scholarly attention, the bulk of the research on global democracy offers concrete models and conceptions of democratic rule. Within the past decades, scholars have advanced a plethora of democratic visions, ranging from global stakeholder (MacDonald 2008), postmodern global (Scholte 2014), and transnational democracy (Dryzek 2006; Morrison 2003), to global (Cohen/Sabel 2005; Holden 2000), postnational (Habermas 2001), and cosmopolitan democracy (Archibugi 2008; Archibugi/Held 1995; Held 1995).\(^{36}\) A comprehensive overview of these and other approaches to democratic rule beyond the state could fill entire volumes. And in contrast to the project at hand, not all of these accounts center on the political aspects of global democracy or on formal institutions.\(^{37}\) At the risk of oversimplification, I claim that the accounts that restrict themselves to these two aspects differ in two main ways: first, they place different democratic principles at the center of their conception, and second, they focus on different subjects of democratic rule.

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\(^{35}\) For instance, among OECD countries and its citizens, trust “appears to be relatively well established” (Zürn 2000: 197).

\(^{36}\) For a brief overview see, for instance, Archibugi (2008: 125).

\(^{37}\) McGrew (2003: 410), for instance, is utterly critical of approaches which unduly limit the concept of democracy to the sphere of politics while neglecting economic or other aspects. The same is true for scholars involved in the project on *Building Global Democracy* (2010). In addition, they contend that “democracy extends well beyond formal institutional arrangements” (Building Global Democracy 2009).
The concept of democracy may include a variety of principles, among them those of “liberty, equality, participation, [and] contestation” (Canache 2012: 1134), to mention just a few. Depending on the model of democracy embraced, some principles move into the background, while others become the center of attention. Hence, scholars’ commitment to different conceptualizations of democracy can be read from the principles they stress most – and from the ones they disregard entirely. The idea of deliberative (global) democracy, for instance, is associated with a special emphasis on the principles of participation, public discourse, and consensus.

As regards the subjects of democratic global rule, two kinds of foci may be distinguished: a focus on states and a focus on individuals. Some accounts of global democracy rely on a statist conception of international rule. They regard states and their governments as the primary subjects of rule by IOs. People have no role to play independent of the states that represent them. Other conceptions, by contrast, perceive people as democratic subjects in their own right and thus embrace what is commonly termed a cosmopolitan understanding of global democracy (Archibugi et al. 1998).

But how do these ideas resonate with practitioners? If states embrace the concept of global democracy, which principles and subjects do they choose to highlight? While scholarly approaches abound and often differ fundamentally, practitioners’ views on these matters are basically unexplored.

In sum, despite their empirical relevance, all these discussions have remained “introspective intellectual debates” (Scholte 2014: 5) among academics. This project breaks with this one-sided focus and explores the views that practitioners hold on the main pillars of the academic debate. In doing so, it tackles the following questions: are states willing to embrace democracy as a standard of legitimate global rule? If this is not the case, how do they justify their reluctance? That is to say, are considerations about effective global rule, about anarchy, or the lack of a demos decisive in this regard? Lastly, if states espouse the aim of global democracy, what model of democracy do they embrace? Taken together, these insights allow me to assess whether and which academic thoughts resonate with practitioners. As such, they also allow inferences about the relevance of the academic debate for the current and future conduct of democratic global rule.

Furthermore, insights into practitioners’ thinking may also break new ground for what Scholte (2013) terms the “democratization” of global democracy scholarship. As Scholte rightly argues, current research on democratic rule beyond the state is characterized by an exclusive reliance on Western conceptions and theories “with little or no involvement from
other life-worlds, other grammars, other values” (Scholte 2013: 3; see also Scholte 2014: 5; Hidalgo 2008: 193). By contrast, the democratic views examined in this study stem from Western practitioners as much as from actors from outside the Western core. Hence, this project extends what has already been embraced by scholarship on domestic democratic rule, but is conspicuously absent from the literature on global democracy: an interest in and sensitivity for non-Western experiences with and understandings of democratic rule.

1.4. Structure of the book

The remainder of the book is structured as follows: The next chapter conceptualizes the dependent variable, states’ democracy claims, and introduces the theoretical framework of the project. In short, it outlines two main logics that may drive the democratic discourse of countries and presents the hypotheses that may be derived from them. This involves contrasting a LoNC, which emphasizes countries’ efforts to align their global norm entrepreneurship with the standards they have embraced domestically, with a LoMI, which regards the way states engage the language of democracy as a case of what Hurd (2007: 2) terms “norm instrumentalism.” Norm instrumentalism highlights states’ use of norms in support of their self-serving material aims.

The subsequent chapters put these two theories to the test. More precisely, the theoretical framework is followed by three empirical chapters that subject states’ democratic discourse to an in-depth analysis in line with the two accounts outlined in Chapter 2.

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38 A remarkable exception is the Building Global Democracy program that was carried out from 2008 to 2013 (Building Global Democracy 2010). It united scholars and practitioners, including civil society actors, politicians, and journalists from all regions of the world, to discuss the meaning and practice of global democracy. Its output is available at http://www.buildingglobaldemocracy.org/ (last accessed on April 1, 2020).

39 The lack of empiricism that characterizes global democracy scholarship oddly deviates from research on domestic democratic rule. In contrast to the former, the latter has an impressive record of empirical studies on democratic attitudes and understandings (see, for instance, Inglehart 2003 and Norris 1999). Although it long focused on Western contexts, this research has recently expanded its focus to the study of democratic understandings beyond the West (see, for instance, Baviskar/Malone 2004; Bratton et al. 2005; Bell 2006; Canache 2012; Chu et al. 2008; Lu/Shi 2015; Sadiki 2004; and Schaffer 2000).
To begin with, Chapter 3 engages in a thorough mapping of the differences and similarities in the way states use the democratic narrative. In doing so, the chapter relies on an original and comprehensive dataset of the democracy claims with which 159 states have targeted two main UN bodies, the Security Council (SC) and the General Assembly (GA), over the period of a decade (2003-2013). After providing a first overview of the broader patterns of use and avoidance of the notion of democracy, states references to the democratic idea are carefully analyzed by means of qualitative content analysis. This method allows me to systematically compare and account for differences in the democratic understandings entertained by states. Apart from offering novel insights into countries’ references to and interpretations of global democratic rule, the chapter pursues a further objective: it seeks to establish whether given certain disagreement over the meaning of global democracy, it is justified to speak of contestation. While this is suggested by many analysts, these scholars have offered few guidelines for determining when interpretive differences constitute instances of outright contestation. Chapter 3 introduces such a framework and applies it to the patterns of interpretive disagreement detected among states.

Chapter 4 seeks to explain these discursive patterns and thus aims to identify what drives the differences in the way states use the democratic narrative. More precisely, I test the explanatory power of the LoNC and the LoMI by asking whether differences detected in Chapter 3 are better explained by states’ domestic democratic backgrounds, or whether they result from different power positions and material interests pursued by countries. I first focus on conflicting democratic interpretations among states and explore which variables generate the greatest overlap with the coalitions of countries found on either side of the interpretive divides. The second part of the chapter focuses on why some states are willing but others reluctant to invoke the idea of democracy. I use statistical analysis to test the explanatory power of all independent variables. I thus ascertain which of them – and hence, which of the two logics introduced in Chapter 2 – may best explain who invokes and who avoids the language of democracy.

Lastly, Chapter 5 supplements the findings of the previous chapters with insights from semi-structured elite interviews conducted with the authors of states’ democratic discourse. The interviews conducted with the diplomats from 41 Permanent Missions to the United Nations – all of which were involved in drafting the speeches analyzed in this project – serve two main purposes: First, they help to make sense of the reasoning that guides the democratic discourse of consolidated democracies and how it relates to...
the LoNC. And second, the interviews contribute to a better understanding of the norm of global democratic rule, how it works, and how powerful it is. This, in turn, is vital for thoroughly understanding the democratic narrative and assessing how well it serves to justify states’ parochial interests.

Finally, Chapter 6 summarizes the findings of this project and stresses its contributions to the scholarly literature.
2. CHAPTER II: Explaining states’ democratic discourse: theories and hypotheses

This study tackles the question of the drivers of states’ democratic discourse. In this chapter, I outline the theoretical framework that guides the study’s answer to this question. After introducing the dependent variable, namely states’ democracy claims, I propose two logics that may drive the discourse of states, each of which is anchored in a different theoretical approach to the use of norms. I present each of the two logics and their underlying assumptions in turn and highlight the testable hypotheses that may be derived from them. The chapter closes with some preliminary conclusions.

I contend that countries’ democratic discourse – whether states invoke the language of democracy, and if so, what interpretations of democracy they adopt – may either follow a logic of normative consistency (LoNC) or a logic of material interests (LoMI). Even though both logics combine insights associated with both the logic of appropriateness (LoA) and the logic of consequences (LoC), the LoNC relies somewhat more strongly on a constructivist reasoning, whereas the LoMI draws more heavily on rationalist research on norms. From the point of view of both approaches it is highly unlikely that states agree on the need for and the meaning of democratic global rule. Yet, the concrete predictions that may be derived from the two accounts differ fundamentally.

Building primarily on the work of constructivists, I predict that differences in the way states engage in the narrative of global democracy will run in line with differences in the norms actors embrace domestically. That is to say, countries align the standards they promote on a global level with the standards they have adopted at home. States do so because they have either internalized domestic norms or because they fear the reputational costs of being inconsistent. Hence, they will only invoke the notion of global democracy if the concept’s interpretation by the international community fits their own domestic political structures or understandings of domestic democratic rule. States whose domestic experiences are inconsistent with this conception of global democracy will avoid invoking the

40 On the logic of appropriateness and the logic of consequences see March and Olsen (1998).
concept. Alternatively, the international community may lack a uniform interpretation of global democratic rule. In this case, states have the chance to reinterpret the democratic idea. They may simply increase consistency across the domestic-international divide by investing the notion of democratic rule beyond the state with a meaning that matches the standards inscribed in their own domestic institutions and the understandings of domestic democratic rule that pervade their societies.

In line mainly with rationalists, I predict that the patterns of global democratic discourse will reflect states’ conflicting strategic preferences. States appeal to norms simply because it is in their material interest to do so. The starting point for this prediction is a constructivist argument, namely that discourse on a global level is heavily constrained by norms: states are forced to disguise their self-serving motives and to justify their behavior with reference to the common good rather than their own self-interest. Yet, more relevant to the logic of material interests is the rationalist argument that builds on this constructivist insight: rationalists, Hurd (2005: 496) claims, argue that there is a “complementary relationship between norms and strategic interests.” According to these scholars, only countries that will benefit from implementing a norm will eagerly embrace it. If the norm runs counter to their interests, states will avoid it – and may turn to another norm instead. As an alternative to avoidance, countries may simply interpret the norm to their own advantage. Yet, this should only work when a norm’s meaning is sufficiently vague. By choosing this option, states may enjoy the benefits involved in joining the global normative discourse, but can simultaneously make sure that norm advocacy does not put their material interests at risk.

The two logics are not necessarily incommensurable. Both logics may complement each other in driving states’ democratic discourse. Yet, states’ quests for normative consistency and their pursuit of material interests may also conflict. It is these instances that are most revealing with regard to the main drivers of states’ democratic discourse. That is to say, the clearest evidence for or against one or the other logic is provided by those cases where being normatively consistent generates serious material costs.

While the reasoning that anchors both logics is familiar to students of norm use and communicative behavior, these approaches have never been systematically applied to account for both actors’ readiness to invoke a specific norm and their interpretations of the norm. Put differently, whereas research on norm entrepreneurship has sensitized scholars to the multiple motives for actors to promote a norm (see, for instance, Elster 1995; Erickson 2013; Finnemore/Sikkink 1998; Schimmelfennig 2003), these accounts
have remained largely isolated from the ones that highlight the contested meaning of norms and the different reasons for interpretive disagreement (see, for instance, Krook/True 2012; Sandholtz 2008; van Kersbergen/Verbeek 2007; Wiener 2007a). As a result, at present we know little about the relationship between different motives for and types of engagement with a norm. That is to say, a series of questions have still remained unanswered: For instance, when do actors decide to redefine a norm and when do they simply avoid it in favor of a different standard – thus relying on a pick-and-choose strategy? And are material or normative concerns more relevant to one or the other way of engaging with a norm? By expanding the two logics to encompass both actors’ interpretations of the concept of democracy as well as their willingness to invoke the democratic narrative in the first place, this study seeks to connect two branches of scholarship that still remain largely isolated from one another.

The remainder of the chapter is structured as follows: I first conceptualize the dependent variable, democracy claims (2.1), and then proceed to introduce the two logics that may drive states’ democratic discourse, starting with the LoNC (2.2), followed by the LoMI (2.3).

2.1. Conceptualizing democracy claims

The study focuses on democracy claims that states address towards specific IOs in the reform debates about these organizations. The next section specifies this dependent variable. After defining the notion of democracy claims (2.1.1), it outlines two dimensions of states’ discourse that are of interest for this project: first, whether democracy claims are made (as opposed to not made), and second, what meaning the notion of democracy is invested with by those who invoke it (2.1.2). After a brief overview of scholarship on contested concepts and concept analysis (2.1.3), I introduce two components of the concept of democracy, both of which may prompt interpretive disagreement between actors: the basic principles (2.1.4) and the subjects of global democratic rule (2.1.5).

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41 For a notable exception, see Hurd (2005). The author maintains that the strategic use of norms is not restricted to actors’ choice of norms but also includes the act of norm interpretation itself.
2.1.1. Definition of democracy claims

I define democracy claims as countries’ statements about a specific IO that invoke the concept of democracy. These statements take the form of evaluations of or reform demands directed towards the respective organization that are made with reference to the democratic or undemocratic quality of the institution. Such judgments are ‘legitimizing’ if they draw on the notion of democracy to endorse the IO (that is, they describe it as democratic), while ‘delegitimizing’ statements build on the concept of democracy for criticism or disapproval (that is, they find fault with the organization’s undemocratic quality) (see also Schneider 2010: 48). Some scholars have termed these type of statements legitimacy judgments (Schneider 2010: 48f), while others prefer to describe them as instances of claims-making (Koopmans/Statham 1999: 207). Following Koopmans and Statham, I call them democracy claims. An example of a democracy claim is the following statement issued by the representative of Bolivia in the 2007 reform session on the UN Security Council that took place inside the UN General Assembly: “We take the view that the fundamental principle of democracy is the equality of all the components of the Organization. But when we have a Security Council in which there are countries with certain privileges in comparison to others that is not democracy.” Clearly, the Bolivian representative uses the notion of democracy in an utterly critical fashion. That is to say, the diplomat finds fault with the democratic deficit of the Council.

2.1.2. Dimensions of democracy claims

States’ democratic discourse may vary in two respects: First, it may differ with regard to the frequency with which states make democracy claims in the IO reform debate from a given year. I thus choose country years as the unit of analysis. This is based on the assumption that the frequency of democracy claims need not only differ across states at any given point in time. A country’s willingness to use the language of democracy may itself be subject to change over time. These changes may occur in response to shifts in the state’s material interests or to changes in its domestic norms (see sections 2.2 and 2.3). Hypothetically, the frequency of democracy claims per country year may vary from zero to any given number. Yet this study is only interested in the binary distinction between the presence and the absence of democracy claims in countries’ reform statements from a given year. One reason is empirical, the other theoretical. The empirical
data show that, by and large, country years either make no democracy claims in the reform debate or they make exactly one (see Figure IV and Figure V in the next chapter). It is extremely rare that they invoke the democratic idea more often than once. This suggests that countries are either willing or reluctant to invoke the democratic narrative. Their decision is not one of placing a stronger or weaker emphasis on democratic ideas; it is one of embracing or not embracing these ideas in the first place. This is also consistent with the theoretical explanations that will be advanced in the course of this chapter. These theories follow a binary logic: they suggest factors that either prompt states to invoke the democratic idea or that keep states from doing so. The first central question guiding the analysis is thus: Does a country make a democracy claim about the respective IO in a given year’s reform debate or does it avoid the language of democracy?

Second, states may not just differ in their willingness to invoke the democratic language; those that do may rely on entirely different interpretations of democratic rule. This raises two separate but closely related questions. The first question is: if countries make democracy claims, do they agree or disagree on the meaning of democratic rule by IOs? I will answer this question by mapping states’ democracy claims according to the information they provide on two core aspects of the concept of democracy (more on this later). Yet, a comprehensive overview of states’ democratic understandings and the differences therein alone does not suffice. More precisely, it does not illuminate whether the meaning of global democracy is truly contested among states. In a nutshell, the second question refers to the difference between minor interpretive disputes and instances of outright contestation – a question that current scholarship on norm contestation has hitherto largely set aside. In the following sections, I propose a framework to answer the first question: How do states’ understandings of democratic IO rule differ? Whether these differences amount to outright contestation is examined in the next chapter (see section 3.4).

2.1.3. Concept analysis and the concept of global democracy

Scrutinizing differences in the way states understand and conceptualize global democracy requires insights into the basic structure of political concepts. For this purpose, I rely on Michael Freeden’s (1994, 1996) work on conceptual morphology, which elaborates on the link between the structure of political concepts on the one hand and their specific meaning(s) on the other. Freeden studied the patterns of relationships among
the concepts that constitute political ideologies. His characterization of "ideologies as multi-conceptual constructs" (Freeden 1996: 88) is particularly useful for this study. I argue that norms of legitimate rule, just like ideologies, constitute multi-conceptual constructs. According to Freeden, it is the selection of conceptual components as well as their internal relationship that invests a multi-conceptual construct with its specific meaning. More precisely, Freeden distinguishes core and adjacent components: The core components encompass the central ideas that are frequently attached to the overarching concept, whereas adjacent components “are locked in to that […] core in a limited number of recognizable patterns” (Freeden 1994: 149) and thereby serve to specify the core. This specification occurs along the lines of basic questions that each core component inevitably raises. While there are multiple possible answers to each question, the questions themselves follow logically from the core (Freeden 1994: 151-152; Freeden 1996: 65-66). To provide one of Freeden’s own examples, a core component of the concept of liberty may be the idea of non-constraint. However, non-constraint remains an empty idea if one fails to specify whose constraint is at stake and what kind of restraint should be avoided (Freeden 1996: 63-66). Thus, by specifying the core idea of non-constraint, adjacent components help to concretize and clarify the meaning of the concept of liberty itself.

Against this backdrop, I argue that states’ conceptualizations of democracy may differ in two ways. States may, first, base their democratic understandings on different core components of the concept of democracy. And second, states may agree upon the core components of the democratic idea, yet define them in fundamentally different ways. In this case, it is the adjacent components they disagree about.

In a comprehensive conceptualization of global democracy, I contend, the core and adjacent components of the democratic concept need to cover the following information: First, they need to specify the basic principles or values associated with the democratic idea. As emphasized by Canache (2012: 1134), the concept of democracy may include various principles, among them – but not limited to – those of “liberty, equality, participation, contestation, republicanism, representation, and the protection of citizens’ rights.” Second, these principles need to be specified further in order to clarify how they themselves are understood. And lastly, the core and

42 The third component Freeden specifies, the peripheral or contingent component, will not be considered here. As Freeden himself claims, it has “no bearing on the fully fledged concept” (Freeden 1996: 66).
adjacent components of the concept of democracy need to provide information on the subjects – that is, the main actors – of global democratic rule. I derive the relevance of these two aspects, namely democratic principles and subjects, from core theoretical work on the concept of global democracy (Archibugi 1998; Archibugi/Held 1995; Beetham 2003). Certainly, states need not allude to each and every aspect in every single democracy claim. In fact, countries need not elaborate their democratic understanding at all. Among those that do, some claims may draw a more comprehensive picture of the speaker’s democratic understanding than others. Yet, the two aspects should theoretically cover the whole spectrum of relevant information that a democracy claim may contain and that are core to this study. In the following, I will look at each of them in turn.

2.1.4. Principles of democracy

The primary components of states’ conceptualizations of democracy are the principles or values that epitomize the democratic idea. For instance, the Bolivian representative quoted earlier mentions equality as “the fundamental principle of democracy.” Other principles that are frequently associated with democratic rule in the domestic context of Western democracies are rights, freedoms, elections, and the rule of law. Depending on the number of claims made as well as their degree of specification, countries may invoke several of these principles and ideas in order to clarify their understandings of a democratic IO. Yet, states’ democratic discourse need not be restricted to the principles just mentioned. They may well go beyond what we know from the Western context of domestic democratic rule.

These principles constitute what Freeden has termed the core components of the concept of democracy. Yet, they may themselves be understood in many different ways. For this reason, concept analysis in the tradition of Freeden goes one step further. It also scrutinizes the meaning states invest in these principles and values themselves. This shifts the focus to the adjacent components. Adjacent components are specified along broader categories of questions raised by the core elements (Freeden 1994: 152). For instance, the notion of participation, which could inform states’ conceptualizations of democratic global rule, does itself raise a series of questions. Most importantly, these are the questions of who should participate, and potentially also what form participation should take. It is difficult to argue that states that provide fundamentally different answers to these questions share a common understanding of democratic IO rule. Their
agreement on the democratic relevance of participation should not conceal grave dissent over what precisely that means.

I argue that by looking at the principles countries mention and at how they define and relate them to one another, scholars can draw conclusions about states’ commitment to different models or conceptualizations of democracy.43 Put differently, “[f]rom these different value orientations – from different conceptual commitments attached to democracy and different hierarchical positioning of values – arise different […] models of democracy” (Kurki 2013: 112). Yet, a note of caution is required when talking of democratic models. As Kurki rightly claims, laymen are unlikely to entertain and openly promote fully fledged models of democratic rule (Kurki 2013: 27). But models, even if they are rather rough or unsystematic, may still guide actors’ thinking (Kurki 2013: 108). Put differently, while we are unlikely to encounter fully fledged conceptualizations of democracy in states’ discourse, we may surely infer leanings towards such models from the principles and values states endorse. Differences in these conceptual leanings, in turn, indicate variegated understandings of global democracy.

2.1.5. Subjects of democracy

States may not only disagree about the principles of global democratic rule; they may also express different opinions on who constitute the central subjects of IO democracy: among whom is democracy to be realized? Who are the ones that hold democratic rights and obligations within international institutions (Bienen et al. 1998: 290)? Contrary to the plethora of democratic principles states may refer to, the selection of democratic subjects is relatively restricted. The basic – though not exclusive – choice here is between states and individuals. As Bienen et al. (1998: 290) note: “[f]rom the viewpoint of democratic theory, they are both eligible to be considered subjects of democracy.”

43 Held (2006: 6) defines models of democracy as “theoretical construction[s] designed to reveal and explain the chief elements of a democratic form and its underlying structure of relations.” As such, they are “complex ‘networks’ of concepts” (Held 2006: 6). Held identifies several classical models of domestic democratic rule (namely classical, republican, liberal, and direct democracy) as well as a few contemporary ones (competitive elitist, pluralist, legal, participatory, and deliberative democracy).
2. CHAPTER II: Theories and hypotheses

On the one hand, as Archibugi (2008: 153) and other authors note, actors may adopt a statist or intergovernmental conception of global democracy, which regards states and their governments as the primary subjects of IO rule. Rather than being perceived as democratic subjects in their own right, people have no independent role to play in this approach. Individuals only enter the game via the states that represent them. The state, in turn, acquires itself the status of a person (Bienen et al. 1998: 299; Jackson 1990: 39).

On the other hand, countries need not rely on an exclusively state-centered understanding of global democratic rule. Quite the contrary, they may also bring in individuals as important subjects of IO democracy. By allowing people or individuals a role that is independent of that of states, countries embrace (at least partially) what is commonly termed a cosmopolitan understanding of global democratic rule (Archibugi et al. 1998).

The democracy claim made by the Bolivian representative that was quoted earlier in this study indicates a statist democratic understanding. For Bolivia, democracy is about the equality of states as defined by the lack of exclusive privileges for only some countries. As a closer look at the Brazilian statement reveals, references to the subjects of democratic rule often appear in the form of adjacent components. That is to say, states typically specify the subjects of rule when they elaborate their understanding of key democratic principles. In sum, differences in countries’ choice of democratic subjects suggest different understandings of democratic rule beyond the state.

The basic features of states’ democratic discourse that are analyzed and compared in this project are summarized in Table I. States may differ in whether or not they invoke the language of democracy and in the meaning of democratic rule they apply. Divergent understandings of global democracy become manifest in the different principles and subjects of rule that states may specify. While I justify my focus on these two features of the democratic idea with reference to the literature, I derive their subcategories – that is, the concrete principles and subjects states may mention – inductively.
2.2. The logic of normative consistency (LoNC)

Table I: Dependent variable – states’ democratic discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of states’ democratic discourse</th>
<th>Question raised</th>
<th>Scores (examples)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occurrence of democracy claim(s)</td>
<td>Does a country year invoke the concept of democracy?</td>
<td>yes – no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation of democracy</td>
<td>1. Principles of democratic rule</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What core principle(s) of democratic rule does the country year invoke?</td>
<td>e.g. representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does the country year define the core principle(s)?</td>
<td>e.g. permanent vs. non-permanent representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Subjects of democratic rule</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which subjects of democratic rule does the country year invoke?</td>
<td>e.g. states</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2. The logic of normative consistency (LoNC)

According to constructivists, the prospects of normative agreement on a global level are dim (Clark 2005, Bozeman 1984, Bienen et al. 1998, Coicaud/Heiskanen 2001). What actors perceive as legitimate rule beyond the state is bound to vary significantly. This is especially true for the normative standards they seek to embed within IOs. In short, the existence of a shared legitimacy discourse that converges around the idea of democratic IO rule is highly unlikely.

But why is this so? In their explanation, constructivists and other scholars allude to the context dependency of normative beliefs (Bernstein 2004, Hurrelmann et al. 2007, Wiener 2007b, Wodak/Weiss 2004).44 These beliefs are said to “vary among actors according to their context of origin from which […] normative baggage evolves” (Wiener 2007b: 55). That is to say, actors’ ideas of legitimate rule beyond the state are rooted in their domestic experiences with and perceptions of rightful rule. As such, actors transfer the diversity that characterizes their domestic approaches to legitimate rule to the global level. Based on this constructivist line of reasoning, I argue that actors’ discourse about democratic global rule cannot be separated from the democratic experiences actors have had in their domestic contexts of origin. In essence, states’ democratic discourse about IOs fol-

44 Although they do not necessarily focus on norm promotion beyond the state, scholars of the contested meaning of norms and of essentially contested concepts like Freeden (1994), and Kurki (2010) also highlight the contextual embedding of norms and their meaning.
follows a LoNC, which links the domestic and the international level of rule and projects domestic differences in the standards and institutions to which states have committed themselves onto the global level.  

I contend that two types of domestic differences exert a particularly strong impact on states’ global democratic discourse and give rise to meaningful differences in this discourse. More precisely, these are differences in the democratic quality of states’ domestic institutions on the one side and differences in the democratic understandings that prevail within the domestic societies of states on the other. I will look at each of the two in turn.  

As Schneider et al. (2007: 152) maintain, “institutional arrangements” impact the ideas of and discourses about legitimacy that prevail in a country. That is to say, states’ discourse about democratic rule beyond the state takes place within the context of specific experiences with the political structures and decision-making procedures that characterize their own domestic political systems. Consciously or unconsciously, actors take these experiences into account when they embark on establishing and evaluating international institutions. Against this backdrop, Risse (1996) argues that the IOs established by democratic states mirror the democratic standards that are institutionalized within their domestic political systems (Risse-Kappen 1996). According to the author, the standards that anchor the political process and the decision-making procedures within nation-states shape the way these countries interact with one another within the framework of international institutions (Risse-Kappen 1996: 368).  

Put differently, the domestic political structures into which actors were socialized

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45 I argue that the LoNC leads states to externalize their domestic norms to the international level. To be sure, the link between domestic and international norms has received much more thorough attention for the opposite dynamic, namely domestic normative change that results from international normative pressure. Even so, the idea that actors strive to match domestic and global norms, which underpins the LoNC, also figures prominently in these studies (Checkel 1999: 86; see also Acharya 2004). For instance, Cortell and Davis (2000: 73) highlight, “if international norms are to become salient domestically, they need to resonate with domestic norms.” I claim that this logic also works in the opposite direction.  

46 While his focus is not on the type of IOs actors create but on their peace and conflict related behavior with one another, Russett (1993) highlights the same point. As he put forward in his seminal work on the democratic peace, “[i]n relations with other states […], decision-makers will try to follow the same norms [… ] as have been developed within and characterize their domestic political processes” (Russett 1993: 35).
impact their perceptions of legitimate rule beyond the state and hence the type of institution that actors create on a global level.\footnote{Also see a more recent study by Scholte, which argues that “legitimacy beliefs arise in some measure from the societal order” (2018: 80).}

However, I claim that countries’ approaches to democratic global rule may not only be shaped by the standards inscribed in their domestic institutions. Dominant understandings of and discourses about domestic democracy may have an independent effect on states’ global democratic discourse. Curiously, domestic institutions need not always mirror the understandings of democratic rule maintained by a society. In fact, both world society scholars and analysts of democracy promotion alert us to the fact that the two often diverge. The world society approach emphasizes that the domestic structures of states and the way countries conduct their political affairs are influenced by global rather than by domestic scripts of good and rational governance (Boli/Thomas 1999; Meyer et al. 1997; Thomas 2009). Scholars of democracy export, in turn, draw attention to the emergence of democratic polities in reaction to external pressure exerted by other states, or by international and regional organizations (Whitehead 2001). The most intensely studied issue in this regard is surely the conditionality policy used by the European Union (EU) in its process of enlargement (see Schimmelfennig/Scholz 2008). The insights from both branches of scholarship point in a similar direction: Rather than reflecting the democratic debates and understandings that prevail within national societies, the characteristics of states’ domestic institutions may well be the result of external influences. As such, the domestic understanding of democratic rule and a country’s own political structures may not only differ; they may also affect the global democratic discourse of its representatives in distinct ways. That is to say, if the LoNC correctly captures the patterns of countries’ global democratic discourse, we may expect these two types of domestic differences to translate into diverging approaches to democratic rule beyond the state.

I claim that, if externalized, domestic differences may affect states’ global democratic discourse in two important ways: First, they may lead to differences in states’ willingness to evaluate IOs according to their democratic quality. Not each and every country may care whether or not an IO conforms to democratic standards. As Coicaud argues, perceptions of legitimate global rule may be based on a “plurality of values” (Coicaud 2001: 538; see also Bernstein 2004: 7), among which democracy is only one. And second, even if countries agree on the relevance of democratic IO rule,
they need not agree on what exactly this means. Interpretations of democratic rule beyond the state need not be shared. Domestic differences may induce states to apply the concept with fundamentally different understandings in mind. In a nutshell, the first kind of difference refers to countries’ perception of the validity of this norm (“Is democracy an appropriate standard to evaluate the legitimacy of IOs?”). The second difference relates to conflicting interpretations of democratic IO rule (“What does it take for an IO to be called democratic?”).

2.2.1. Mechanisms that induce consistency

According to the LoNC, states’ global democratic discourse varies in line with differences in their domestic political structures and in the understandings of domestic democratic rule that pervade their societies. The link between both levels – the domestic and the international – is provided by actors’ urge for normative consistency across the two levels of rule. But what induces states to pursue this alignment? What are the mechanisms that bring about consistency?

Despite the frequency with which scholars allude to the domestic foundations of the language and practise actors adopt internationally, many existing studies are surprisingly vague when it comes to the mechanisms that link the two levels and induce rhetorical and behavioral consistency. For instance, in noting that “states willing to submit to the rule of law and civil society at the domestic level are more likely to submit to their analogues at the international level,” Kupchan and Kupchan (1991: 149) claim that the characteristics of a state’s domestic political system affect its foreign policy behavior and thus the norms that anchor its international interaction with other countries. Yet, the authors provide no further explanation for why this is the case. Similarly, Thèrien and Bélanger Dumontier (2009: 371) express doubt “that governments unreceptive to public debate and participation at home would adopt such values at the global level.” Still, the authors do not substantiate their claim that states’ domestic commitment to certain norms affects their willingness to promote the same norms on a global level. While the list of examples may be expanded, a last one shall suffice: in a study from 2004, Wodak and Weiss demonstrate that the model of Europe Germany promoted in the late 1990s and early 2000s

48 As Bozeman (1984: 405f) argues, there are good reasons to question “the existence (...) of a ‘globally meaningful system.’”
links back to the country’s own practice of domestic rule. As the authors argue, the European model promoted by Joschka Fischer, Germany’s foreign minister at that time, awarded a central role to the rule of law – an institution that was seen to be pivotal to Germany’s domestic political legitimacy. Fischer’s proposal thus amounted to what the authors call “a Verfassungspatriotismus\textsuperscript{49} which is extended (…) from the national to the supranational level” (Wodak/Weiss 2004: 246; see also Weiss 2003: 196f). Yet, Wodak and Weiss do not specify the mechanisms that are supposed to have prompted this alignment.

Other studies provide more detail. Here, I seek to bring their insights together to provide a systematic overview of the main mechanisms that I argue are guiding the LoNC. I posit that there are two primary mechanisms that induce states to aspire to normative consistency across the domestic-international divide: one mechanism relies on processes of norm socialization and internalization and may thus be associated with the LoA. The other one is based on states’ concerns about their credibility and about the dangers of self-entrapment and thus also invokes the LoC. I will start with the first of these two mechanisms.

2.2.2. Norm socialization and internalization

Scholars who analyze and account for the international effects of the standards that states adhere to domestically invoke processes of socialization and internalization.\textsuperscript{50} Based on their insights, one reason for state representatives to propose norms on the international level that match the standards they have embraced domestically is fairly simple: actors have internalized these norms and their dominant interpretation(s) in the course of socialization processes within their domestic communities. As a result, these norms serve as a point of reference for actors’ behavior even outside their domestic contexts of origin. Put differently, these norms “transcend the domestic-international division because they permeate the thinking of decision-makers who operate on both sides of that supposed divide” (Davies 2013: 216).

Hence, the two processes that are central to producing domestic-international congruency are the “socialization” into and resultant “internaliza-

\textsuperscript{49} This is the German translation of “constitutional patriotism.”
\textsuperscript{50} See, for instance, Grigorescu (2015); Risse-Kappen (1996); Tallberg et al. (2013); Tallberg et al. (2016).
tion” of relevant norms. Checkel (2005: 804) defines socialization as “the process of inducting actors into the norms and rules of a given community.” It is central to the process of socialization that actors are affiliated with a community (see Johnstone 2005: 188; Wiener 2009 193). In the course of interacting with their fellow community members, actors get acquainted with the norms their peers hold dear and learn how these norms are correctly understood. If effective, socialization leads to internalization. More precisely, community norms become part of the actor’s identity (see Checkel 2005: 805; Katzenstein 1996: 23; Risse-Kappen 1996: 366) and thus shape her understanding both of herself and of the behavior and interests that are deemed appropriate for her identity. For this reason, this behavior may be described as following a LoA.\footnote{According to the LoA actors are “following internalized prescriptions of what is socially defined as normal, true, right or good” (March/Olsen 2004: 3; see also Schimmelfennig/Sedelmeier 2005: 9).} Simply put, actors come to see compliance with community norms “as the ‘right thing to do’” (Johnstone 2003: 442; see also Checkel 2005: 804).\footnote{As a result, some scholars argue, norm compliance ceases to be a conscious choice. That is to say, an internalized norm “achieve[s] a ‘taken-for-granted’ quality that makes conformance with the norm almost automatic” (Finnemore/Sikkink 1998: 904). For other scholars, this is just one possible understanding of internalization. For instance, Checkel (2005) argues that norms that are internalized are not necessarily taken for granted and unconsciously complied with. Instead, socialization may result in what the author describes as “conscious role playing” (Checkel 2005: 804).} Based on these insights, scholars conclude the following: If norms become constitutive of actors’ identities, they should guide their behavior irrespective of the level of rule at which actors engage (Davies 2013: 216). Put differently, actors will apply the standards they have internalized in the course of domestic socialization processes “to all levels of political organization” (Tallberg et al. 2013: 44; see also Wiener 2009: 185).

In his study on the formation and persistence of the transatlantic alliance, Risse analyzes the international effects of the norms and standards democratic states have embraced domestically. Processes of socialization and internalization play a central role in his account. The author argues that NATO is a product of the liberal democratic identity of its membership. More specifically, decision-makers of Western democratic states are socialized into the norms and institutions their countries uphold domestically. This liberal democratic identity, in turn, shapes states’ perception of other democratic states and of the way interactions among them should be
structured and institutionalized. As a result, in their external relations, countries follow the same standards of democratic rule that they have come to embrace and internalize at the domestic level (Risse-Kappen 1996: 366-369). Put differently, their emphasis on equal participation, on consensus and compromise in international politics is a result of their domestic democratic identity (Risse-Kappen 1996: 368).

More recent studies by Grigorescu (2007, 2015) and Tallberg et al. (2013, 2016) also invoke processes of socialization and internalization to explain how domestic democratic norms have come to shape countries’ preferences for democratic rule beyond the state. According to the authors, democratic states derive these preferences “from domestic commitments to particular political values and institutions” (Tallberg et al. 2016: 63), which they have come to internalize and now strive to apply to other levels of rule. In doing so, these countries induce a “normative spillover” (Tallberg et al. 2013: 44), which contributes to the democratization of IOs. More precisely, Grigorescu (2007, 2015) demonstrates that IOs composed of many democratic member states are more likely to adopt standards of transparent and accountable rule, whereas Tallberg et al. (2013, 2016) show that having a substantial democratic membership induces IOs to open their doors to civil society.

While studies in this tradition have mostly focused on the type of standards actors project onto the international level, norm externalization is not only a question of the choice of norms embraced and promoted globally. It is also a question of how these norms are understood. For this reason, this project accounts for different democratic interpretations that actors may have internalized in their domestic contexts and then apply to global politics. Moreover, scholars of the international effect of states’ domestic regime type have convincingly elaborated why democratic standards of rule pervade the thinking of democratic decision-makers. Yet, they have not explained why this democratic conviction should translate into what appears to be an automatism whereby politicians apply democratic standards to all levels of rule (Tallberg et al. 2016: 63). This automatism is only plausible if norm internalization is understood as a process that precludes any form of conscious reasoning about the norm in question. But this does not seem to be the understanding of internalization adopted by the scholars in question. Clearly, if the act of exporting domestic norms to other levels of rule relies on conscious decisions taken by democratic representatives, the reasoning behind these decisions needs to be made explicit: why – and under what conditions – do states think their domestic standards can and should be applied in a different context of
rule? This project engages in a comprehensive effort to scrutinize the reasoning that guides democratic states’ decisions to extend or not extend their own domestic standards to the international level of rule. In this effort, it relies on in-depth interviews conducted with diplomatic officials from UN member states. As such, the project does not only provide information on an important step in the process of norm externalization that was largely set aside in previous studies; by offering insights into the reasoning of state representatives it also expands scholars’ understandings of the scope conditions under which democratic decision-makers are willing to transfer the standards they honor at home.

2.2.3. Reputational concerns and normative self-entrapment

Internalization is only one conceivable mechanism that prevents states from acting inconsistently across the domestic-international divide. While it is the dominant mechanism invoked in the literature, I argue that another one is equally convincing: It focuses on the normative pressures states are exposed to if they engage in behavior that is normatively inconsistent. Most importantly, this mechanism highlights states’ concerns for their own reputation and the likelihood of normative self-entrapment. In its emphasis on the detrimental consequences that states anticipate in their dealings with norms, this mechanism suggest a relevant role for the LoC.\footnote{Hence, this mechanism combines insights from both constructivist and rationalist scholarship. As Schimmelfennig argues, scholarly work on shaming does “not fit either rationalism or constructivism neatly” (Schimmelfennig 2001: 65) because it emphasizes states’ concerns for their own reputation as much as it highlights actors’ norm-deviating behavior that becomes the target of criticism by others.} In essence, I argue that states fear two consequences of normative inconsistency: First, they fear damage to their reputation as credible norm entrepreneurs, as others may publicly shame states for failing to globally embrace what they promote and adhere to domestically. And second, states worry that their global advocacy for norms that they disrespect at home may lead to rhetorical self-entrapment and force them into domestic compliance with undesired norms.

From this perspective, states may engage in two types of normative inconsistency: on the one hand, they may embrace lower standards of rule on a global level than they have committed to domestically. On the other
hand, states may speak up for more demanding standards on the international level than they themselves adhere to at home. Both types of inconsistency are unlikely to go unnoticed. Others, be they transnational actors (Keck/Sikkink 1998), a state’s own domestic audience (Erickson 2013; Fearon 1994), or the normative community of states a country belongs to (Johnstone 2005; Schimmelfennig 2003), are likely to expose the discrepancy. Being shamed in this manner is highly damaging to a state’s reputation. Hence, it is safe to assume that countries will rather avoid being inconsistent than put their credibility at risk or risk having to bear the costs associated with closing the normative gap.

States can be viewed as inconsistent if they fail to promote the same demanding standards of rule on a global level that they claim to cherish and practice in their own domestic contexts. This discrepancy may arise when states’ material and normative goals conflict. In certain instances, states may prefer to achieve important material interests, the pursuit of which contradicts prior normative commitments. Yet, by doing so, they risk charges of hypocrisy and may seriously compromise their normative power. States’ reputation as credible norm entrepreneurs is closely tied to their consistent endorsement of a norm irrespective of the context. That is to say, countries cannot simply embrace and promote a norm domestically but dispute its validity beyond the state. They also cannot invest the norm with one understanding in their domestic context of rule and interpret it in another way when applied to the global realm. Hence, if countries care about their credibility as norm entrepreneurs, they will forgo material interests in favor of normative consistency. As Erickson (2013: 227) contends, states are aware that consistency is essential “if their promotion of norms in world affairs is to be seen as credible.”

This powerful effect of reputational concerns has been highlighted by several scholars (Erickson 2013; Johnstone 2005; Keck/Sikkink 1989; Schimmelfennig 2001). While their focus has not been the discrepancies between the standards of rule countries promote inside and beyond the nation-state, the general idea that guides these studies is the same: because states care about their credibility, they will abandon normatively inconsistent practices. For instance, Schimmelfennig (2001, 2003) argues that it was a concern for their own credibility and reputation that made EU members accede to the admission of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. Because enlargement was clearly against their economic self-interest, many member states initially rejected the idea of expansion. They only changed their minds when the membership aspirants started to expose normative inconsistencies in the EU’s approach and thereby risked damag-
ing member states’ reputation as credible norm entrepreneurs. More specifically, CEE countries reminded European member states of their commitment to honoring and spreading the liberal norms of the European community – a commitment the EU had never failed to make publicly known – and accused the EU of hypocrisy when it denied membership to countries that shared these liberal values (Schimmelfennig 2001: 66-68). In the end, EU member states admitted new countries. They did so, because they were entrapped in prior normative commitments and thus forced to deliver on them “in order to protect their credibility and reputation as community members” (Schimmelfennig 2001: 77).

At the same time, states are not only inconsistent if they fail to globally embrace important domestic norms. They are no less inconsistent if they speak up for norms on a global level that they fail to honor at home. Again, this may include globally promoting norms that one disrespects domestically; but it also includes instances when countries internationally invest a norm with a meaning that deviates from how the norm is used and understood inside these states. Both types of behavior are proof of a discrepancy between the domestic and the international use of norms. And this discrepancy is dangerous. As scholars of rhetorical self-entrapment have illustrated, inconsistent norm use can have undesired consequences (Elster 1992; Hurd 2005; Hurd 2008b; Keck/Sikkink 1998; Risse 2000; Schimmelfennig 2003). It may push countries into domestic compliance with the ambitious standards they have invoked on a global level. Rhetorical entrapment may thus force a state to comply with a norm – even against its will.

While studies of rhetorical entrapment have not primarily focused on the discrepancies between countries’ domestic norms and the principles of global governance they espouse, these studies have drawn attention to the common underlying process – that is, the process of being forced into domestic compliance with the high normative standards one has invoked elsewhere. Again, reputational concerns play a significant role in this process.\(^54\) That is to say, once a state has publicly committed itself to a specific norm or principle, others may use these statements to expose discrepancies that result from the country’s domestic disrespect for the norm in question (Keck/Sikkink 1998: 24; Schimmelfennig 2001: 70). If it cares about its

\(^{54}\) In this case, at stake is not so much states’ credibility as norm entrepreneurs but their credibility as reliable partners. States rely on a good reputation if they aim to reap the benefits of cooperating with other states in the future (Johnstone 2005: 187).
2.2. The logic of normative consistency (LoNC)

own reputation, the shamed state will try and “save face” (Keck/Sikkink 1998: 24) by reducing the gap between its public rhetoric and its domestic practice. It will attempt to match “words with deeds” (Risse 2000: 32-33). This dynamic is nicely summarized by Hurd (2008b: 213), who contends that “[i]nternational talk may be cheap, but it is never free.” Clearly, states want to avoid falling into a normative trap. Because they do not want to be forced into domestic compliance with undesired norms, they are likely to avoid this type of inconsistency from the outset. Put differently, states should be unlikely to promote principles of global rule that exceed the standards they honor at home.

To conclude, countries’ concern for their own credibility and their fear of normative entrapment should have the same impact as norm internalization: Both mechanisms keep countries from engaging in domestic-international inconsistency and prompt them to align the standards they promote on a global level with those they embrace at home. Hence, if the logic of normative consistency applies, differences in states’ domestic political structures and in the understandings of domestic democratic rule should translate into fundamental differences in states’ international democracy claims.

2.2.4. Domestic differences

According to the LoNC, states project their domestic differences onto the international level. But why is it reasonable to assume that there are differences in the democratic quality of states’ domestic institutions and in the understandings of domestic democratic rule adopted by national societies?

Scholars have put forward a plethora of indices to measure and compare the democratic quality of states’ domestic political structures. Among these, Freedom House (2010) and Polity IV (Marshall et al. 2011) are certainly the most prominent. Other indices include the Political Democracy Index (Bollen 1980), the Polyarchy Dataset (Vanhanen 2000), and the Democracy and Dictatorship Index (Alvarez et al. 1996). While each of these measures conceptualizes domestic democratic rule in somewhat different ways, all of them share the same interest in the democratic characteristics of domestic political systems and how these may vary from one

55 Schimmelfennig (2003: 218) highlights that self-entrapment is highly unlikely where concerns for credibility are absent. That is to say, we may not expect shaming to be effective if the targeted actor does not care about its reputation.


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country to another.\textsuperscript{56} Despite the fact that the indices arrive at somewhat divergent conclusions as to the democratic ranking of individual states and the magnitude of the differences across countries, their findings have been proven to correlate strongly (Hadenius/Teorell 2005). All of them clearly show that the democratic quality of domestic institutions varies significantly around the world. This domestic diversity, in turn, may inspire the global democratic discourse of states and thus suggests plenty of room for normative disagreement.

The same is true for domestic democratic understandings. While the data on societal understandings of democracy in the domestic context is nowhere near as sound and comprehensive – and hence as comparable – as the data on states’ domestic political structures, the first studies on this subject suggest that the former vary just as much as the latter. The point of departure for most of these studies has been a particular interest in non-Western conceptions of domestic democratic rule and how they compare to those of the Western core. Over the past decade, scholars have provided some initial insights into conceptualizations of democracy from Africa (Bratton et al. 2005), Asia (Bell 2006; Chu et al. 2008), Latin America (Baviskar/Malone 2004; Canache 2012; Morozov 2013), as well as from Arab (Sadiki 2004) and Eastern European countries (Simon 1998). Their findings highlight that understandings of democracy do not only differ considerably across the various regions of the world; they also attest to significant differences between ‘Western’ and ‘non-Western’ conceptions of democratic rule. Especially “Western-style liberal democracy” (Bell 2006: 5) seems to attract little approval beyond the West – if it is not perceived as a form of Western-democratic imperialism and thus entirely rejected (Sadiki 2004: 62; see also Bell 2006; Lu/Shi 2015; Morozov 2013). These results seem to support the often-expressed “doubt (…) that there is one model [of domestic democratic rule] which is simultaneously applicable to all regions of the world” (Archibugi 1998: 214; also see Abromeit/Stoiber 2007: 35). In sum, interpretations of domestic democracy seem to vary considerably across the globe. Hence, understandings of democratic rule beyond the state that build on the domestic analogy should differ no less.

\textsuperscript{56} See Munck and Verkuilen (2002) for an in-depth evaluation of these alternative measures of democracy.
2.2.5. Hypotheses

In essence, the LoNC suggests that the global democratic discourse espoused by a country has its origins in the domestic context of rule. States strive to align the standards they promote on a global level with the ones they have adopted domestically. Hence, patterns of global democratic discourse should reflect the differences that characterize countries’ domestic political structures and the interpretations of democratic rule that pervade national societies. Based on this general expectation, I specify two sets of hypotheses. In doing so, I pay attention to the different aspects of a state’s domestic context that may affect its global democratic discourse. These are, first, the democratic quality of a state’s domestic institutions, and second, the dominant understanding of domestic democratic rule adopted by its society. In addition, I also consider the different ways in which states may achieve normative consistency across the two levels of rule: states may simply adopt an interpretation of global democracy that fits their own domestic context. Yet, if the international community is rather united in its understanding of democratic IO rule, this option may not be viable. In this case, states can only decide to invoke or avoid the concept: countries with domestic institutions or democratic understandings that conflict with the global concept will likely avoid it, while those who see a fit should be eager to invoke it.

First, states’ domestic political structures vary greatly. This should also affect their global democratic discourse – that is, their democracy claims:

\[ H_1: \text{Democracy claims vary in line with differences in the democratic quality of states’ domestic institutions.} \]

This overall expectation may be broken down into two more specific hypotheses.

\[ H_{1A}: \text{States’ interpretations of global democratic rule will vary in line with differences in the democratic quality of their domestic institutions.} \]

\[ H_{1B}: \text{If the international community agrees on the meaning of global democracy (that is, if a dominant interpretation exists), states with domestic political structures that are compatible with this interpretation are more likely to make democracy claims.} \]

A state may promote its own interpretation of democratic rule on a global level. Yet, there is likely to be a cascading effect to this effort. If increasing
numbers of states come to share an interpretation of global democracy – that is, if one understanding becomes dominant – the incentive for states to further alternative interpretations and thus deviate from the larger community will likely decline. Rather than promoting an alternative understanding of global democracy that better fits their domestic context, countries will opt to avoid the concept.

Second, understandings of domestic democratic rule may differ fundamentally across nation-states. Consequently, I expect democracy claims to differ between countries with varying understandings of domestic democracy.

\(H_2: \) Democracy claims vary in line with differences in countries’ understandings of domestic democratic rule.

Again, this overall expectation may be broken down into two more specific hypotheses.

\(H_{2A}: \) States’ interpretations of global democratic rule vary in line with differences in their understandings of domestic democracy.

\(H_{2B}: \) If the international community agrees on the meaning of global democracy (that is, if a dominant interpretation exists), states with understandings of domestic democratic rule that are compatible with this interpretation are more likely to make democracy claims.

The logic of normative consistency is not the only possible driver of states’ democracy claims. The logic of material interests provides an equally persuasive alternative account.

2.3. The logic of material interests (LoMI)

A country’s use of norms need not be inspired by the urge to be consistent. States may appeal to norms simply because it is in their material interest to do so. Schimmelfennig (2001: 48) terms this “rhetorical action” or “the strategic use of norm-based arguments,” in which actors embrace the language of norms when they believe it furthers their aims.\(^{57}\) Hence, while constructivists predict that differences in states’ global normative appeals

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\(^{57}\) The same link between strategic behavior and norm entrepreneurship is also highlighted by Hurd (2005, 2007).
will reflect the different standards actors have embraced domestically, a more rationalist interpretation comes to a different conclusion: it predicts that divisions will align with states’ conflicting strategic preferences. According to these scholars, norms may well be espoused for selfish purposes. As such, states’ demands for more democratic global rule may be “in line with, though not necessarily inspired by” (Schimmelfennig 2001) democratic beliefs. As such, they add up to nothing more than a “self-interested claim dressed up as an impartial one” (Elster 1992: 18). According to Schimmelfennig (2001, 2003), the behavior of CEE countries during the Eastern enlargement process of the EU is a case in point. As described in the previous section (2.2), Schimmelfennig argues that CEE countries were able to overcome resistance to their membership because they framed the refusal of enlargement as inconsistent with core community norms. Whether or not CEE countries truly believed in the liberal standards of the EU is irrelevant here. What matters is that they invoked these standards in a self-serving fashion, knowing that this would increase their chances to acquire membership and the clear material benefits involved.

The strategic use of norms may pertain to both the choice of norms actors employ to support their parochial interests as well as the meanings they attach to these norms. Accordingly, only states that are likely to reap material benefits from implementing global democracy (or a specific version of it) should speak in its favor. Most radically expressed, “[n]orms are tools to be used, manipulated, and abandoned as shifting fortune dictates” (Davies 2013: 218). Yet, not all scholars believe that those who invoke norms in a self-serving fashion are being insincere. Instead, these scholars draw a clear line between actors’ strategic use of norms – that is, the act of advocating norms that support one’s interests – and their insincerity – namely actors’ lack of belief in the principles they espouse. As Elster (1992: 19) and other scholars rightly note, motivations are difficult, if not impossible to ascertain.58 In line with Hurd (2007: 14), I go one step further and argue that scholars may not be alone in finding it difficult to disentangle sincere from insincere normative discourse. Even the actors that embrace normative language may be incapable of separating their own normative convictions from their material prerequisites.59 Thus, in this work, I will

58 For the same argument also see Hurd (2005: 514, 522) and Schimmelfennig (2001: 66). Most explicit in this regard are Krebs and Jackson (2007: 36), who simply demand that we “avoid centering causal accounts on unanswerable questions about actors’ true motives.”
59 For a similar argument, see Abdelal et al. (2006: 700).
reserve the term strategic for claims that reveal a “complementary relationship between norms and strategic interests” (Hurd 2005: 496), without ascertaining or judging their sincerity.

But why do countries invoke normative language in the first place? Why can they not simply and openly state their selfish preferences and aims and bargain on the basis of these?

2.3.1. The pressure for and benefits of normative justification

The answer to this question refers us back to constructivist insights: Discourse on a global level, these scholars claim, is heavily constrained by norms. Put differently, the urge to make norm-based arguments is rooted in the discursive constraints of international communication. Actors, it is commonly claimed, are required to base their preferences and behavior on “reasoned rather than idiosyncratic grounds” (Kratochwil 1989: 214). States are required to justify themselves in front of the international community and provide community members with reasons for their behavior and goals (Risse 2000: 8). Not even hegemons are exempt from this requirement (Sandholz 2008: 110). Clearly, arguments referring to one’s narrow self-interest do not count as acceptable reasons. Quite the contrary, states have strong incentives to disguise their self-serving motives and reframe them in generally acceptable terms (Elster 1992: 18; Hurd 2008b: 200). By underpinning their discourse with powerful norms, actors may generate the impression of being impartial and genuinely concerned for the collective good (Johnstone 2005: 193; Coleman 1990: 393).

States may have well been socialized into this dominant practice of justification on the international level. That is to say, countries’ efforts to express their own demands in generalizable terms may simply result from the internalization of the ubiquitous pressure to justify themselves. After all, it is “the appropriate thing” to do for members of the international community. Yet, the fact that normative reasoning may also generate concrete benefits – benefits that states want to reap – also brings in the LoC: it suggests that the act of aligning material interests and normative discourse may well be based on conscious reflection on the advantages involved (Johnstone 2005: 187-189). In a nutshell, the benefits of engaging in norm-

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60 The idea of justificatory discourse has been elaborated in more detail by Chayes/Chayes (1995), Frank (1995), and later by Johnstone (2003).
based *justificatory discourse* are threefold. Norms may help states legitimize their own claims, delegitimize those of others, or simply facilitate polite social interchange. I will look at each benefit in turn.

First, the impression of impartiality one may create by invoking normative language increases states’ chances of succeeding in their aims (Davies 2013: 208; Elster 1992: 18-19; Johnstone 2003: 454). If countries are able to portray their self-interested goals as contributions to the greater good, others are more likely to perceive them as legitimate. Hence, a “normative cloak” (Youngs 2004: 421) allows states to “add cheap legitimacy to their position” (Schimmelfennig 2001: 63; see also Rein/Schön 1993: 151). This legitimacy, in turn, may increase the persuasive power of one’s arguments. It is not only considerably more difficult to openly oppose aims that appear legitimate (Schimmelfennig 2001: 72-73); it is also easier to endorse them: That is to say, legitimate arguments may win the support even of those actors who could not openly back someone else’s parochial demands.

But normative language may not only serve to enlarge a state’s own support coalition; it may also be used to discredit the strategy and behavior of opponents. Schimmelfennig (2003: 219) refers to this as shaming – the act of criticizing someone else’s aims as parochial and thus as illegitimate and unworthy of support. Accordingly, normative language can be used to accuse others of following their own self-interest rather than pursuing the community’s best interest. Unless the accused find strong (alternative) norms in support of their aims, they will be unable to refute these allegations (Krebs/Jackson 2007: 36) and will thus lose support.

Lastly, actors do not always seek to increase their own persuasive power or reduce that of their opponents. Sometimes, they may simply want to reveal their own preferences in ways that are conceived as socially acceptable. This thought informs the idea of “indirect speech,” which can be traced back to the politeness theory of the 1980s (Brown/Levinson 1987). More recently, Stephen (2015) has adapted this idea to apply to the phenomenon of international legitimacy discourse. Instead of directly communicating one’s material preferences and demands, Stephen argues, states resort to more abstract normative language, which – given that their interlocutors

Note that scholars use the notion of justificatory discourse with different meanings. Here, I use it in line with Johnstone (2003) rather than in line with Deitelhoff and colleagues (see section 1.3.2). Johnstone (2003: 441) introduces the concept to argue that actors that seek to persuade others need to defend their actions with reference to generally accepted principles rather than parochial interests.
know how to make sense of it – indirectly delivers their messages (Stephen 2015: 769,778). The most important advantage of this practice is the “façade” (Stephen 2015: 776) of polite social interaction, behind which parties may hide their bold practices of bargaining. As a result, both the winners and the losers may leave the negotiation process without losing face (Elster 1995: 248).

To cut a long story short: constructivists have alerted us to the fact that international communication is heavily constrained by norms. Rationalist, in turn, have focused on the consequences, namely the need for states to avoid open bargaining and instead mask their parochial demands in the language of norms. In sum, these accounts have plausibly argued that states will invoke norms to justify their self-serving aims. Yet, they have largely set aside another question: when does a norm actually fulfil the function that its users expect it to fulfil? Put differently, what does (and what does not) constitute a strong justificatory norm that may help to persuade others of the legitimacy of one’s claims? This project introduces a general set of criteria that may help to evaluate the justificatory power of a norm and applies them to the norm of global democratic rule.

The fact that many states invoke the norm of democratic global rule is certainly proof of their belief that the norm resonates sufficiently well. In itself, however, this does not tell us whether their belief is reasonable or misguided. Hence, this project fulfils two purposes. On the one hand, the study seeks to ascertain whether states’ references to the democratic idea coincide with their power interests, suggesting that states use the norm of democratic rule as if it were a strong justificatory norm – a norm that resonates widely and thus constitutes a generally acceptable argument in defense of one’s interests. On the other hand, the project examines whether (and to what extent) the norm fulfils these expectations. For this purpose, I introduce three criteria of norm resonance. I argue that a norm can only be said to resonate widely if:

- its meaning generates sufficient agreement among those who invoke the norm\(^{62}\);
- only few actors openly reject it as an inadequate standard for the matter under discussion\(^{63}\); and

\(^{62}\) For more information on how I conceptualize and measure this criterion see 3.4.1.

\(^{63}\) This criterion might remind the reader of the kind of discussions that Deitelhoff and Zimmermann (2013) subsume under the term “applicatory discourse,”
only few actors openly challenge it by introducing alternative norms they claim may better fit the matter under discussion.

I use these criteria to assess the strength of the norm of global democratic rule. In Chapter 3, I examine whether states openly contest the norm’s relevance for international rule and scrutinize the extent of disagreement surrounding the meaning of democracy. In Chapter 5, I analyze whether those who avoid the language of democracy (openly) advocate alternative standards of legitimate rule beyond the state. While countries’ references to the idea of global democracy may be made strategically, their persuasive power clearly depends on how well the norm scores with regard to the three criteria.

2.3.2. Using norms and redefining them

The strategic use of norms may take two forms. First, countries may pick and choose among different norms in order to back their parochial claims with reference to those standards that are most congruent with their goals. As Elster (1992: 18) notes, the plethora of norms out there increases actors’ chance “to find some norm that corresponds, at least roughly, to their self-interest.” States will thus choose the standards that best fit their purposes. However, selecting among different norms is not the only way for states to generate a broad overlap between their strategic interests and their normative language. Countries that pursue fundamentally different interests may all base their claims on the same norm. This is consistent with Stephen’s (2015: 781) finding that despite largely different preferences for reforming IOs, states’ normative discourse is often surprisingly coherent. Yet, this finding is no longer surprising when we account for the fact that states may interpret a norm in manifold ways.64 Abstract norms in particular

namely discussion about “whether […] a norm is appropriate for a given situation” (Deitelhoff/Zimmermann 2013: 5; see also Deitelhoff 2013: 29). Deitelhoff and Zimmermann dismiss disputes about norm application as incapable of compromising a norm’s stability. Yet, the authors are mainly interested in examining when a norm ceases to constitute “a shared normative expectation” (Deitelhoff/Zimmermann 2013: 4). My project, by contrast, is also interested in whether the norm helps to justify the goals one pursues in an IO. A norm may not serve this purpose well if its applicability to the IO is openly questioned.

64 Also see Dixon (2017) on norm interpretation as a form of resistance to international norms.
may be invested with multiple meanings and may thus be easily interpreted “in the service of parochial interests” (Hurd 2005: 502; see also Erickson 2013: 227). A prominent example of the strategic reinterpretation of norms is Hurd’s (2005) study of the Libyan negotiations during the sanctions regime of the 1990s. According to Hurd, the Libyan government successfully warded off the regime imposed on it by the UN Security Council simply by redefining the norms of “liberal internationalism” and delegitimizing the sanctions as inconsistent with them. Thus, Libya employed and strategically defined norms that were incongruent with its own domestic practices of rule but were consistent with its interest in the elimination of sanctions. The study shows that a norm’s meaning may easily be adapted to fit the strategic purpose it is meant to fulfil. As some scholars claim, this may go to such lengths that the same norm is invoked “for opposite ends” (Hurd 2005: 495). The norm of democratic rule need not be an exception. Apparently, politicians have never been shy in adapting the idea of domestic democracy to their own needs (Fierlbeck 2008: 184). If they did not mind doing so on a domestic level, they certainly will not mind when it comes to global rule.

2.3.3. Material interests as power interests: formal and informal hierarchy

But what are the material interests countries pursue within IOs? How do states’ self-serving goals – and hence the normative discourse they put to their service – differ? I argue that in IOs, countries’ material interests are first and foremost linked to their power position. While states entertain multiple preferences about a specific IO, its structure, procedures, and pol-

65 In his account of norm localization, Acharya (2004) argues that actors may adjust the meaning of international norms when implementing them domestically. They do so when implementing the original norm may incur unacceptable costs, for instance, because it “might harm the existing social order or increase the risk of social and political instability” (Acharya 2004: 246).

66 Some scholars suggest an alternative to the strategic reinterpretation of norms: they claim that actors may simply want to keep a norm’s meaning as ambiguous as possible (Hobson/Kurki 2012: 8). By keeping it vague and thus useless to assess compliance, actors do not have to fear accusations of norm violation. Even so, with a view to states that seek to realize strategic interests this argument is not very convincing. Clearly, these countries need to make their interests known to others. They need to avoid being misunderstood even when they cast their demands in normative terms (Stephen 2015: 773). This, in turn, is only possible if states specify their understanding of the norm invoked.
icies, their ability to put these ideas into practice is predominantly (while not exclusively) linked to the position of power states occupy in the organization. Power in IOs may be institutionalized or may result from states’ material capacity, which opens informal channels of influence.

Institutionalized power is granted and perpetuated by the formal rules of an organization. These rules privilege some countries over others by providing them with special rights and thus with special institutionalized influence over the proceedings of the organization (Johnson 2011: 60). By doing so, these rules give rise to what Hurrell (2006: 9) terms “institutionalized hierarchy” and Zürn (2007: 694; own translation) calls a “formalization of inequality” within IOs. The most apparent manifestations of institutionalized power privileges are found within voting rules and membership rights that diverge from the principle of state equality. For instance, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund rely on a voting procedure that links a country’s share of votes to its economic strength. As a consequence, the voting outcomes clearly favor rich countries over those in the developing world. Similarly, the SC privileges five countries with permanent seats. They can thus avoid having their mandates renewed via elections, which is required of every other Council member. These five countries also possess the exclusive right to veto every decision. Both their permanency and their veto rights permit the permanent five (P5) to wield unparalleled influence over the Council.

Not all IOs exhibit such patterns of formalized hierarchy. Many organizations, including the GA and the OECD operate on the basis of formal state equality. Their membership is inclusive, all votes count equally and decisions are either taken by majority voting or by means of consensus (Smith 2006: 149). Yet, a lack of institutionalized forms of hierarchy does not imply that an organization is unfettered by power inequalities. Even states that lack formal privileges may still exert a disproportionately high influence over an organization if they possess great material power – for instance, the kind bestowed by superior economic or military resources (Strange 2011: 241; Keohane 1967: 222). As such, states’ power within IOs is closely linked to their material power in international relations more generally (Caron 1993: 563; Cox/Jacobson 1973: 27f). Superior resources provide states with a whole set of advantages. For instance, materially powerful states may use rewards or sanctions to buy other actors’ support (Caron 1993: 563), they are able to send larger delegations, which provide them with a comparative advantage in terms of expertise and negotiation skills (Held 2004: 96), and these states may simply use their resources to push for quasi-membership – a strong informal mechanism to assert their
interests (Hurd 2002: 42; Stone 2011: 1; Strange 2011: 241). But most importantly, only powerful states possess outside options, which increases their leverage over outcomes substantially (Krasner 1985: 4).

Even within the GA, an organization that lacks any form of institutionalized inequality, power disparities are at work. Several studies have drawn attention to the practice of resource-rich countries garnering the support of others by means of financial “incentives.” For instance, Dreher et al. (2008: 157) suggest that the United States systematically used development aid to affect recipient states’ voting patterns in the Assembly.67

Moreover, even IOs characterized by institutionalized power disparity may manifest another layer of inequality that is based on differences in material capacity. The SC is a case in point. Not least because election campaigns for non-permanent seats involve considerable costs, economically powerful countries occupy these seats much more frequently than states that lack the resources (Kuziemko/Werker 2006: 909). And even without the benefits of frequent non-permanent representation, strong countries get favorable treatment in the Council. As Hurd (1997: 142) demonstrates, the SC has substantially increased its informal consultation with non-member states that are able to offer respectable financial and military support to the organization. These consultations, in turn, boil down to “a kind of de facto membership” (Hurd 1997: 136) for the materially powerful. Weak states, in turn, are deprived of these means to influence the course of IOs in line with their preferences.

The power inequalities, formalized or not, that characterize IOs give rise to diverging power interests and turn these organizations into relevant sites of power struggle between countries (Hurrell 2006: 10). Generally speaking, the strong defend their privileges, while the marginalized seek to dismantle them. Yet, power struggles fought out in IOs need not only revolve around inequalities that already exist. They may also revolve around future ones. These struggles are related to the traditional story of power transitions. They connect questions of economic clout and institutionalized influence and pit those who seek formal power against those who try to obstruct these efforts. International institutions, it is often argued, are epiphenomenal to states’ material power. Powerful countries create IOs and make sure they match their interests (Mearsheimer 1994: 13; Stone

67 Other scholars also observe that superior financial resources help buying support at the UN (Keohane 1967: 223; Strange 2011: 241).
2.3. The logic of material interests (LoMI)

As new powers rise, they will seek to change the institutional status quo to their advantage (Ikenberry/Wright 2008: 16). However, their efforts to secure influence commensurate with their might will likely be met with resistance. This resistance should come from both the established powers, which prefer not to share their elevated status with others, and from the institutionally marginalized that see limited chances of empowerment for themselves.

2.3.4. Norm-based power struggles

Yet, these conflicting power interests and the struggles they prompt are not themselves the focus of this study. At the heart of this project is the normative dimension implied in them. As Hurd (2005: 496) rightly contends: “power politics is far from limited to military confrontations.” Quite the contrary, power can also be wielded and contested on the basis of norms. Inasmuch as normative meanings help to legitimize and stabilize power relations, they may also serve to delegitimize and unhinge them (Kurki 2013: 221; Reus-Smit 2007: 161). As a result, the fights and struggles actors engage in are likely to be reflected in the norms actors endorse and the meanings they invest them with (Kurki 2010: 377).

The notion of democracy does not seem to be an exception. Kurki’s (2013) study on definitions of domestic democracy and the conflicts involved in specifying the concept’s meaning is impressive in its sensitivity to this matter. As the author highlights: “Engaging in conceptual debate on democracy (...) is not just an abstract conceptual exercise, but in itself implicated in important global struggles over social and political power” (Kurki 2010: 383). Yet, only studies on domestic democratic rule have analyzed the link between power struggles and the language of democracy. The power conflicts involved when countries upload the democratic concept to the international level have not yet been examined.

68 In the words of Mearsheimer (1994: 7), IOs “are basically a reflection of the distribution of power” that characterized the world at the moment of their foundation. Within these organizations, established powers have secured formal privileges for themselves, which are meant to ensure that organizational outcomes never bypass their interests.
69 On this see also Ikenberry (2010: 511, 514), Johnston (2003: 9), and Young (2010: 4).
2. CHAPTER II: Theories and hypotheses

2.3.5. Hypotheses

In a nutshell, the logic of material interests suggests that states’ democratic discourse derives from their material interests defined in terms of power – formalized or informal – within the respective organization. Divergent uses of the democratic idea should thus reflect the different power positions states occupy and the power struggles that ensue. Based on this general expectation, I specify three sets of hypotheses. Apart from focusing on the different types of power that may characterize an IO, namely institutionalized as opposed to informal power, these hypotheses also pay attention to the two different forms that the strategic use of norms may take. On the one hand, using democracy in a strategic manner may involve a pick-and-choose strategy, whereby countries resort to democracy when its commonly understood meaning supports their interests. On the other hand, states may simply redefine the democratic idea in ways that fit their aims.

First, power disparities in IOs may be institutionalized. In these cases, I expect democracy claims to differ between countries that are empowered by the rules of the respective organization and states that are excluded from formal power privileges.

\( H_3: \) Democracy claims differ between institutionally empowered and institutionally disempowered states.

This overall expectation may be broken down into two more specific hypotheses.

\( H_{3A}: \) States that are institutionally empowered invest the notion of democracy with a different meaning than states that are institutionally disempowered.

\( H_{3B}: \) If the international community agrees on the meaning of democracy (that is, if a dominant interpretation exists), the likelihood of invoking the notion of democracy should differ between the institutionally powerful and the institutionally powerless.

There are limits to states’ attempts to redefine generally accepted norms for their own ends. Once a sufficiently large share of states has embraced a certain interpretation, the norm can no longer be twisted as states see fit. I expect that from this point onwards states will resist attempts to force their own preferred interpretation upon the norm. Rather than redefining it,
they will avoid a problematic norm altogether and support their claims with reference to alternative concepts.

The institutionally disempowered share one important concern that should imprint on their normative discourse: They are all highly critical of the power gap that separates them from those who hold formal privileges. Yet, the disempowered need not constitute a fully coherent group. Some of these countries may seek to reduce the power gap by entering the group of the powerful. Others from among the powerless are likely to oppose these efforts – either based on conviction or because of their own limited chances of ascension. Consequently, I expect democracy claims to differ between countries that strive for institutionalized power privileges and states that oppose their efforts.

\[ H_4: \text{Democracy claims differ between those who aspire to institutionalized power positions and their opponents.} \]

This overall expectation may be broken down into two more specific hypotheses.

\[ H_{4A}: \text{States that aspire to institutionalized power positions invest the notion of democracy with a different meaning than their opponents.} \]

\[ H_{4B}: \text{If the international community agrees on the meaning of democracy (that is, if a dominant interpretation exists), the likelihood of invoking the notion of democracy should differ between states that aspire to institutionalized power positions and their opponents.} \]

Yet, power disparities need not be formalized. They may result from differences in states’ material capacity, which manifest themselves in informal patterns of hierarchy. I thus expect democracy claims to differ between countries with great material power capabilities and countries with little of the same.

\[ H_5: \text{Democracy claims differ between the materially powerful and the materially weak.} \]

This overall expectation may be broken down into two more specific hypotheses.

\[ H_{5A}: \text{States that are materially powerful invest the notion of democracy with a different meaning than states that are materially weak.} \]
H_{5b}: If the international community agrees on the meaning of democracy (a dominant interpretation exists), the likelihood of invoking the notion of democracy should differ between the materially powerful and the materially weak.

The logic of material interests permits some additional expectations. First, it suggests a hierarchy among the different types of power inequality that may impact states’ democracy claims. More precisely, I expect that institutionalized inequalities will exercise a stronger effect on states’ democratic discourse than informal ones. Power privileges that are formalized generate a stronger, more visible, and more reliable bias in favor of the powerful and to the disadvantage of the powerless. Hence, these inequalities should take center stage in actors’ power struggles. Informal privileges, in turn, are not only less transparent and thus more difficult to fight; they also require a greater effort to be sustained. Accordingly, I expect that patterns of democratic discourse will differ across IOs. In organizations characterized by formal inequality, states’ democracy claims will mainly reflect the struggles between those who possess and those who lack institutional power. In these contexts, struggles about informal inequalities should be secondary and less likely to imprint on states’ democratic discourse. However, they should come to the fore in organizations that lack formal hierarchy.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter has advanced a theoretical framework for explaining states’ democratic discourse. It has conceptualized the dependent variable, states’ democracy claims, and outlined two logics that it claims may drive states’ willingness to invoke the notion of democracy as well as the meaning states attach to the democratic idea. Chapter 4 will put these theories to the test. While section 4.2 assesses which of the two logics may better account for the interpretations of global democratic rule states adopt, section 4.3 examines their explanatory power for countries’ readiness to invoke the language of democracy.

70 To some extent, weak states may even benefit from these efforts, for instance when strong states buy their informal power by means of financial incentives for weaker states.
3. CHAPTER III: Mapping states’ democratic discourse

As yet, the literature lacks any comprehensive overview of states’ democratic discourse vis-à-vis international organizations.\(^1\) While it has become commonplace to argue that IOs have become a target of democratic demands, these demands have never been mapped comprehensively. Certainly, several studies have provided partial insights into the democratic language of different actors (Dingwerth 2019b; Nullmeier et al. 2010; Stephen 2015). Yet, we miss a broader overview of which states do and which do not invoke the narrative of global democracy. Likewise, little is known about countries’ understandings of democratic rule beyond the state. What do those who invoke democracy actually mean by it? Global democracy, it is claimed, is a “highly contentious concept” (Thérien/Bélanger Dumontier 2009: 356). Its meaning is said to raise “considerable controversy” (Holden 2000: 1) among practitioners.\(^2\) Although few scholars\(^3\) dispute this assertion, it lacks any empirical underpinning; interpretations of global democracy have never been mapped, let alone compared.\(^4\)

This chapter aims to fill both voids. It introduces a novel dataset of states’ democratic discourse, which covers 159 states and their discourse on two major IO bodies over the course of a decade (2003 to 2013). In sum, I thus analyze how the democratic narrative is used by 1014 country years. The dataset constitutes the first large-N account of countries’ democracy claims, including both the frequency with which different states invoke the democratic idea when they evaluate IOs, and the interpretations of democracy that countries adopt. This thorough mapping of the differences and similarities in states’ democratic language, in turn, creates the basis for the next chapter, which seeks to explain the patterns detected.

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\(^1\) When it comes to state representatives’ discourse about domestic democracy, the study of Hecht (2016) is a welcome exception.

\(^2\) Other authors who refer to disputes over the meaning of democracy are Archibugi (1998: 201); Bienen (1998: 291); and Dahl (1999: 19-20).

\(^3\) One of the few scholars who disagree is David Beetham. According to Beetham (1994: 27), “the extent and significance of such disagreements has been greatly exaggerated.”

\(^4\) By contrast, research on domestic democratic understandings is on the rise. See section 2.2.4 for a list of studies.
But the current chapter does not stop at description. Apart from offering novel insights into countries’ references to and interpretations of democratic IO rule, it pursues a further objective: it seeks to establish whether given the disagreement over the meaning of global democracy it is justified to speak of contestation. Above all, this requires an empirical conceptualization of contestation – something that the current literature does not offer. After suggesting an empirical conceptualization of meaning contestation, the chapter proceeds to scrutinize the interpretive divides between states in order to ascertain whether they amount to outright contestation of the democratic idea.

The chapter generates several important insights. It shows that while states differ considerably in their willingness to invoke the notion of democracy, countries that embrace the democratic idea are very consistent in how they interpret it. Given the literature’s emphasis on the contested meaning of democracy, this second finding is particularly surprising: almost all states that invoke the notion of democracy link it to principles and ideas of representative democracy known from domestic systems of rule. Likewise, countries consistently prioritize states – rather than people – as the primary democratic subjects.

Yet, some interpretive differences do exist. First and foremost, they pertain to disagreement over the meaning of individual democratic principles. For instance, while states strongly agree on the democratic importance of equality, their understandings of how to achieve it and whose equality is primarily at stake do diverge considerably. I argue that despite these frictions, democracy is not a contested concept. Interpretive conflicts usually involve few actors, and one understanding normally prevails. While the literature speaks of contestation, the data suggest otherwise: the meaning of global democracy generates broad consensus.

This chapter is structured as follows: to begin with, I introduce the dataset and present the methods used to identify democracy claims and to examine the interpretations of democracy they rely on (3.1). Second, I map the broader patterns of states’ democratic discourse, starting with countries’ references to the notion of democracy (3.2), followed by states’ interpretations of democratic IO rule (3.3). I identify differences and similarities in countries’ understandings along the lines of two central aspects of the democratic concept: democratic principles on the one hand, and democratic subjects on the other. Lastly, I examine whether conflicting democratic interpretations amount to outright contestation (3.4). The chapter finishes with some concluding remarks (3.5).
3.1. Data and methods

I examine countries’ democracy claims, including states’ understandings of democratic global rule, on the basis of a novel dataset, which covers the discourse of 159 states on two major UN bodies, the SC and the GA, over the course of one decade (2003 to 2013). I use the yearly reform debates about both institutions and the speeches countries made in this context as the primary source of data. Altogether, this data covers the reform statements and thus the democratic discourse of 1014 country years. Country years are the unit of analysis of this project.

To my knowledge, this dataset constitutes the first systematic mapping of the democratic discourse of countries. Moreover, it is comprehensive in several aspects: First, it covers a significant share of the world’s states, including data on three fourths of the UN membership; second, it scrutinizes countries’ discourse over the period of a full decade – a decade of intensive debate about the democratic quality of international rule; third, by including two important IO bodies, it allows scholars to compare states’ democratic discourse across different international institutions; finally, the data not only covers countries’ references to the notion of democracy but also includes in-depth information on the meaning with which states employ the term.

In the following I will first justify the selection of IOs, then provide information on how data about states’ democratic discourse was collected (data collection), and finally introduce the methods used both to detect states’ democracy claims and to scrutinize their meaning (data analysis).

3.1.1. UN Security Council and UN General Assembly

The study focuses on two major bodies of the UN system, namely the SC and the GA. Within the structures of international rule, the UN occupies a pivotal position. Practitioners and scholars alike depict the organization as “the institutional core of global governance” (Bienen et al. 1998: 289) and view its charter as the “constitution of the international community” (Fassbender 1998). As such, the normative claims states direct towards the UN and its agencies need not only apply to these fora. Instead of being IO-specific, they are likely to reflect states’ ideas about legitimate global rule more generally. Picking the UN as the target of actors’ democratic discourse thus promises insights into states’ general expectations about demo-
By focusing on the SC and the GA, I include two IO bodies with fundamentally different institutional designs. Most importantly, it is the institutionalized power structures and inequalities that differ widely between the two bodies. In the case of the SC, its composition and decision-making structures are characterized by high levels of formal inequality among states. The Council is composed of only 15 (of currently 193 UN) members. Among these, five are permanent and granted the right to veto every decision. The ten remaining members are elected on a biannual basis (five every year), but do not possess a veto. In terms of access and the weighting of votes, the SC is characterized by great inequalities. By contrast, the GA is one of the most inclusive IOs within the international system. Virtually all nation-states are members of the UN and thus participants in the Assembly’s debates. Moreover, the body’s decision-making principle of ‘one state, one vote’ places all countries on an equal footing.

Thus, by including both organizations in this study, I can compare states’ use of the democratic narrative in two fundamentally different contexts. This has two advantages: First, it allows me to assess the generalizability of the patterns detected. Clearly, I do not seek to pinpoint IO-specific characteristics of countries’ democratic discourse, but seek to identify more general patterns of states’ democracy talk. Second, the inclusion of both IO bodies provides a further source of evidence to assess the explanatory power of my theories. For instance, the finding that states’ democratic discourse differs across the two IO bodies would be largely consistent with the LoMI, but would contradict the LoNC. While the LoNC sees the origins of states’ democratic discourse in the domestic context rather than in the features of global rule, the LoMI suggests that states’ discourse reflects the power structures and power struggles specific to different organizations.

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75 Some scholars describe the UN as the focal point of efforts to democratize global governance (Pianta 2005: 9). This claim is echoed by many practitioners, including former UN Secretary-Generals (see Boutros-Ghali in Thérien/Bélanger Dumontier 2009: 360).

76 See for instance the debates that took place during the Campaign(s) for a More Democratic United Nations (CAMDUN).
3.1.2. Data collection: states’ reform speeches and interviews

For this project, countries’ speeches on the reform of the SC and the GA constitute the primary source of data on states’ democratic discourse. It is in the course of IO reform debates that actors get a chance to outline the standards of rule that they want these organizations to fulfill.⁷⁷ Hence, the reform speeches reflect countries’ willingness to invoke the language of democracy and contain information on states’ interpretations of democratic IO rule. The UN reform debate, including the separate debates on the reform of the SC and the GA, took place inside the UN plenary, the General Assembly itself. Since 1993, states have discussed SC reform under the agenda item “Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters.” The GA reform debate, initiated only a few years later in 1998, has since been taking place under the heading “Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.” While both debates have been going on for almost two decades, this study focuses on the most current reform period from 2003 to 2013. In 2003, the former Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed the High Level Panel on Threats and Challenges to investigate the issue of UN reform. This, in turn, prompted a particularly vibrant debate on the reform of the UN and its agencies, which continues up to today. Over the course of the years from 2003 to 2013, altogether 159 states participated in the discussions. While not each of them made use of their right to give a speech in each year, speeches are available for altogether 1014 country years. Evidently, states were significantly more active in the debate on the SC than in the GA debate: From 2003 to 2013, almost twice as many states participated in the SC debate compared to the corresponding debate on GA reform (153 versus 84 countries), amounting to three times as many country years covered (770 in the SC reform debate as compared to 244 in the GA debate).

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⁷⁷ On this see, for instance, Biegón et al. (2010); Schmidtke/Nullmeier (2011); Steffek (2003).
3. CHAPTER III: Mapping states’ democratic discourse

Table II: Number of participants in the SC and GA reform debates – countries per year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>both</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I retrieved English-language versions of states’ speeches on the reform of both UN bodies from the United Nations Bibliographic Information System (UNBISNET). Its Index to Speeches offers textual documentation of all plenary meetings of the GA that have been held since its 38th session in 1983. The database is openly accessible, which makes it easy to retrieve all speeches countries made on a topic. This is not only instrumental to the research process; it is also vital to my arguments. In fact, if states’ democratic discourse was not public, neither the LoNC nor the LoMI could take effect. Consistency requirements, as they are implied in the LoNC, may only come to bear if countries’ statements may be scrutinized by fellow diplomats, global civil society or states’ own domestic public. By the same token, countries may only reap the material benefits of their normative discourse if they ensure that their message is widely perceived and may thus create the pressure they intend it to create.

One may object that a study interested in normative meaning and contested interpretations should use the original versions rather than English translations. After all, is this not mandatory for a study that attempts to identify nuances in states’ language use? I argue that it is not. While it is certainly preferable to use the original text, there are several reasons to consider the English translation a reliable mirror. First and foremost, countries are encouraged to check the translations they are provided with. Even

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78 In 2005, no general debate on the reform of the GA took place. In this year, a draft resolution was introduced. Hence, countries restricted their statements to a brief justification of their vote. Moreover, only very few countries took the floor, they only made speeches on behalf of their respective group, and their statements did not include elaborate visions about a reformed GA.

79 The content of this online catalogue, including UN parliamentary documents, was recently transferred to the United Nations Digital Library, which can be found at https://digitallibrary.un.org/ (last accessed on April 1, 2020).

80 In addition, states often archive their speeches on the websites of their own Permanent Mission to the UN.

81 UNBISNET also often provided translations in the five other official UN languages.
though there is no comprehensive data on how regularly this happens, states evidently make or demand revisions. Because countries are aware that the English version of their speech may well be the most consulted – both by fellow diplomats and by the global public, they have a serious interest in ensuring that this version adequately mirrors their views.

Countries’ reform speeches constitute the primary source of data for this project. Yet, I checked the information they provide against the data from another source, namely the 41 interviews I conducted with state diplomats (see section 5.1). Certainly, diplomatic speeches are subject to brevity requirements and often lack extensive elaborations of states’ ideas. Interviews may be of service here: they add nuances to countries’ statements and thus help to make sense of states’ wording and the thoughts that inform it. Equally important, interviews help assessing the significance of what was not mentioned in a speech. If states fail to embrace democratic principles that figure in other countries’ discourse, is this a deliberate choice or simply due to time constraints? All in all, interview data served as a useful complement to the primary data of this study.

3.1.3. Data evaluation: keyword and qualitative content analysis

The data retrieved from states’ speeches was processed in two steps. To detect countries’ democracy claims, I first conducted a keyword analysis. In a second step, I retrieved information on states’ democratic understandings bysubjecting these claims to qualitative content analysis.82

When they scrutinize the role of norms and concepts in international debates, scholars frequently apply their own definitions and understandings of these notions. However, this approach may lead to a problematic linking of the research subject’s and the scholar’s own understanding of these norms (Draude/Neuweiler 2010: 6f). To avoid such pitfalls and remain sensitive to actors’ own interpretations, this project started from the references countries make to the notion of democracy – their democracy claims. In a first step, I conducted a keyword search, scrutinizing states’ speeches for the keyword ‘democracy’ and equivalents like ‘democratic,’ ‘democratize,’ and ‘democratization’ (for the complete list see Table III). To

82 Hsieh and Shannon (2005) call this summative content analysis. This type of content analysis “starts with identifying […] certain words or content in text with the purpose of understanding the contextual use of the words […]” (Hsieh/Shannon 2005: 1283).
ensure that the detected statements really constitute democracy claims that a) are directed towards the IO of interest, namely the SC or the GA, and b) refer to democracy as a principle of global instead of domestic rule, I examined the detected excerpts and eliminated wrong matches.

Table III: Substitutes for the keyword ‘democracy’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Substitutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>democracy, democratic, democratization, democratizing, democratize, undemocratic, anti-democratic, antidemocratic, democratically, democratized, non-democratic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to map and compare what states understand of democratic IO rule, I subjected their democracy claims to qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is an empirical method for the systematic analysis of texts in a way that is reproducible by other scholars (Früh 2007: 27). The central instrument at its disposal is a category scheme, which allows the researcher to interpret selected texts in a rule-guided fashion by systematically scanning them for specific categories (Mayring 2000: 4). There are three ways of establishing the categories: first, inductively out of the text material itself (see Boyatzis 1998), second, deductively from the literature, or third – what Früh (2007: 73) claims to be the normal procedure83 – by combining both approaches. Here, I opted for an iterative process of exchange between data and theory as suggested by Früh, but placed greater emphasis on induction.

To begin with, I consulted the literature on global democracy and (domestic) democratic theory to determine which aspects of a states’ democratic understanding should be the central focus of analysis – that is, the main categories of the coding scheme. The literature on global democratic rule stresses two of them, namely democratic principles and subjects of democratic rule (see section 2.1 in Chapter 2). As highlighted earlier, the principles may themselves be subject to different interpretations. Hence, the process of coding states’ democracy claims was guided by three central questions:

1. What are the subjects of democratic rule that the state refers to?
2. What core principle(s) of democratic rule does the state refer to?
3. How does the state define the core principle(s)?

83 See also Titscher et al. (1998: 84).
All subcategories – namely the scores of these overarching categories – were derived inductively. They were established by consulting the text material and thus result from a close scrutiny of states’ democracy claims. In so doing, I hope to have minimized the danger of “imposing preconceived categories or theoretical perspectives” (Hsieh/Shannon 2005: 1279f), among which Western concepts and ideas would likely figure most prominently (Bilgin 2008: 11; Puchala 1997: 129). In other words, the strong inductive feature of the coding scheme was meant to render it sensitive to alternative democratic visions expressed by states – to visions unknown to a Western-biased democratic literature. While being open to the diverse conceptions of democratic rule that states may put forward, I also benefited from relying on a coding scheme, which – once established – helped me to interpret in a systematic and rule-guided fashion and thus increased the reliability of the results. For the coding scheme and further details on the coding process, including information on the coding unit, and how the project fares on traditional standards of good measurement, please consult the appendix (7.1 and 7.2). In the following, I will map states’ democratic discourse, starting with countries’ references to the notion of democracy, followed by states’ interpretations of this concept. In the remainder of this chapter, as well as in the next one, I focus exclusively on country years. Hence, the fact that I often invoke the terms states or countries is simply a matter of convenience but should not mask the fact that the unit of analysis are country years.

3.2. States’ references to democracy

The notion of democracy pervades the two IO reform debates: Countries commonly invoke it when demanding changes to the Council. And in their reform speeches about the GA, the word is also frequently mentioned. Yet, this does not imply that every single country invokes the term. The introductory chapter has provided some initial insights in this respect. The purpose of the following section is to broaden this picture: are differ-

84 While the starkest outgrowths of Eurocentric concept-building may thus be avoided, it is certainly unrealistic for a Western scholar to completely distance herself from the ideal of Western democracy (Draude 2008: 105). As highlighted by Kurki (2013: 108-110) and others, scholars’ own interpretations of the world clearly influence the meaning structures they are able to detect in the discourse of others.
ences in states’ use of democracy like the ones between consolidated democracies and strong autocracies also reflected in the larger population of states? That is to say, how commonly used is the language of global democracy by UN member states? I will answer this question in two steps. For each of the two reform debates, I will first provide an overview of how many country years invoke and how many avoid the notion of democracy. This will show whether the demand for democratic IO rule is widely shared or only made by a few countries. In a second step, I will break down the patterns detected even further. In other words, I will focus on those who invoke the language of democracy and examine differences in the frequency of their democracy claims. After all, countries may still vary in the extent of their enthusiasm for democratic rule beyond the state. Rather than perpetuating the literature’s assumption that democratic global rule finds considerable support, the section provides empirical evidence of the extent of this support and the extent to which it varies among states.

While the idea of democratic IO rule is voiced in the context of both the SC and the GA, the use of this language also has its limits. Put differently, country years that embrace the idea find themselves in a minority position in both reform debates (see Figure III). Yet, in the debate about the SC, their share is considerably larger. Overall, 41 percent of actors involved in the Council’s reform debate – that is a total of 314 country years – invoke the notion of democracy, whereas 456 country years never mention the term. By contrast, in the debate about the GA, only 14 percent of the actors involved in the debate – namely 34 country years – embrace the term. The remaining 210 country years do not use the democratic narrative.
Thus, the language of democratic global rule is widespread, but certainly not omnipresent. A clear majority of country years simply avoids the democratic narrative. But this is not to say that there are only few countries pushing the idea. The contrary is true: particularly in the Council debate, the language of democracy figures among several hundreds of country years.

But do those who invoke the idea espouse it with similar levels of enthusiasm? Put differently, do these states differ in the frequency of their democracy claims? As Table IV shows, this is the case. While the Council debate covers the whole spectrum from one to up to eight references per country year, this spectrum is somewhat smaller in the GA: the debate about the Assembly includes country years that invoke democracy only once as well as country years with up to three references to the notion.

Yet, the data also show that most of those who invoke the concept limit themselves to one single reference (see Figure IV and Figure V). Only few countries invoke the concept more frequently. Among those who evaluate the Council based on its democratic quality, a clear majority, namely 175 country years, mention democracy only once. Considerably fewer country
years, namely 78, invoke the concept twice. Only five country years are among the most eager proponents of democratic Council rule, namely among those actors that make six, seven or eight references to the concept. These country years are Argentina (2003) with eight claims, Argentina (2009) and the Philippines (2008) with seven claims, and Bolivia (2007) and Brazil (2008) with six claims each. Surprisingly, these very eager advocates for Council democracy include only democratic and hybrid regimes mainly from Latin America – but not a single autocracy.

Figure IV: SC reform debate: share of country years for each number of democracy claims (in %, with absolute numbers above each column)

Out of 34 country years that invoke democracy with reference to the GA, only five refer to the concept more than once. Both Nicaragua (2012) and Yemen (2003) make two democracy claims, while Cuba (2011), Cuba (2012), and Nicaragua (2009) invoke the concept three times each. In contrast to the Council debate, those who use the notion particularly frequently are either autocracies or hybrid regimes. Just like in the Council, many of them are countries from Latin America.
All in all, the data show that states are primarily divided into those that do and those that do not embrace the idea of democratic IO rule. Few country years invoke the notion more than once. Clearly, countries do not choose between placing stronger or weaker emphasis on democratic ideas but between invoking the narrative and avoiding it. As such, this section has further demonstrated what was already suggested in the introductory chapter: states clearly differ in their willingness to embrace the language of global democracy. It is the purpose of Chapter 4 to explain what drives these differences.

3.3. States’ understanding(s) of democracy

In this section, I aim to illuminate what those who embrace the notion of democracy actually mean by it. I map differences and similarities in countries’ democratic interpretations with a focus on three core dimensions: First, I present the actors that states regard as the central subjects of global democratic rule; second, I outline the basic principles of democratic governance states identify; and third, I map how these principles themselves are understood by different states. In so doing, I seek to identify links between these three core aspects of the concept of democracy and how they may reveal leanings towards one or another model of democratic rule beyond the state. Because the way states use the democratic narrative may vary with the IO body they address, I examine each IO reform debate separately, starting with the SC and proceeding with the GA.
3.3.1. Democracy discourse about the Security Council

Because states’ democratic discourse about the SC is embedded in the broader dynamics of Council reform, this sections starts with a few lines about the reform debate more generally before it delves into the characteristics of the democracy discourse that is part of it. The debate about and positions on the reform of the SC are well documented in a vast literature. In essence, reform is meant to update the Council: founded in 1945 and changed only once in 1965, it simply no longer reflects the power relationships among states today. This, many scholars claim, impairs both the Council’s legitimacy and its effectiveness. Despite agreement on the need for reform, concrete proposals remain irreconcilable.

The current composition of the Council reflects the power distribution of 1945: membership and voting rights privilege the victors of the Second World War (Hosli et al. 2011: 181). Since 1945, however, new powers have risen and the UN membership has greatly expanded (Hurd 2008b: 199; McDonald/Stewart 2010: 5). While the world has changed, the Council remained largely unaltered – with one single exception: in 1965 the number of non-permanent seats was increased from originally eleven to the 15 members of today. Scholars and practitioners largely agree: If the SC fails to achieve better representation of the broader UN membership and particularly of states whose contributions it relies on, the organization risks losing its relevance. In the end, it might no longer be able to meet the challenges of the day.

While no state disputes the urgency of reform, their proposals differ greatly. Most importantly, states disagree over categories of membership and the veto right. These divides give rise to three main negotiation groups: the Group of Four (G4), Uniting for Consensus (UfC), and the African Group. The G4 includes Brazil, India, Japan, and Germany, which jointly strive for permanent seats – ideally including the veto. The four states point to a discrepancy between their significant contributions to the maintenance of international peace and security and their lack of formal influence in the Council. The G4 demands enlargement in both permanent and non-permanent membership, claiming four permanent seats for

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85 See, for instance, Blum (2005), Malone (2004), Russett (1997), and von Einsiedel et al. (2016).

86 Germany and Japan make large contributions to the UN budget, whereas Brazil and India strongly contribute to UN peacekeeping missions (Mahmood 2013: 122).
themselves and two for Africa. Their efforts are firmly opposed by the UfC. The Group includes the regional competitors of the G4, especially Pakistan, South Korea, Italy, and Argentina, which seek to frustrate their opponents’ ascent to power. The UfC wants to restrict expansion of the Council to non-permanent seats. Finally, African countries have joined forces behind the Ezulwini Consensus, criticizing that as the primary targets of Council action they are insufficiently represented in both categories of membership. To end what they describe as seriously unjust, African states demand two permanent veto-wielding and five non-permanent seats for their continent (Mahmood 2013: 122-123).

Before this background, the examination of states’ democratic discourse about the SC reveals three central insights. First of all, state representatives’ use of democracy claims is utterly critical. Democracy is described as a feature that the Council lacks entirely. According to countries, the SC is “the least democratic […] body of the United Nations” (Argentina 2003). Hence, the democratic discourse on the Council centers on the democratic deficits of the organization and the urgent need for its democratization. As Ghana (2006) highlights, Council reform needs to ensure that the body “reflect[s] the democratic values of our times.” Mongolia (2003) and Libya (2004) put forward similar arguments:

We are now witnessing the great advance of democratization and globalization. A universal Organization such as the United Nations and a powerful body such as the Security Council, which is responsible for maintaining international peace and security, should certainly not lag behind in such historical changes (Mongolia 2003).

If transparency and democracy are the criteria for determining the legitimacy of national Governments, then that standard should also be applied to all the bodies of the United Nations, particularly the Security Council (Libya 2004).

Not a single country year invokes the concept of democracy to contest its relevance for global rule. Even if states entertained doubt that Council rule was meant to be democratic, they certainly did not express these thoughts.

Second, the clear majority of country years that make democracy claims also specify their democratic understanding in one way or another. More precisely, they either provide details on who they regard as the main subjects of Council democracy or they elaborate on the principles they link to the democratic idea (see Table V). That is to say, most states let their audience know what they mean when they refer to democracy in the SC.
Democratic discourse in the SC reform debate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country years</th>
<th>Participants in the SC debate</th>
<th>Participants with democracy claims</th>
<th>Participants who specify democratic principles</th>
<th>Participants who specify democratic subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>770</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>72.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, countries that elaborate their understanding of a democratic SC are surprisingly consistent. States almost unanimously base their democratic discourse on principles and ideas that are commonly associated with representative democracy in the domestic context of rule. Above all, they link the notion of democracy to the principles of representation, elections, and political equality – principles that are clearly central to the model of representative democratic rule. In contrast to the domestic democratic model, however, individuals play no role in this conception. Countries talk of democratic rule among states. While states are thus remarkably consistent in their choice of democratic subjects and the principles of democratic rule, frictions emerge when it comes to interpreting the latter. More specifically, countries do not always agree on the meaning of central democratic principles like representation or equality. In the following, I will look at each of the three components of states’ democratic understanding – subjects, principles, and interpretations of these principles – in turn.

Democratic subjects

Countries may specify the subjects of democratic rule in two different ways: to states, subjects of rule may be those who generate democratic inputs. In Lincoln’s famous distinction this corresponds to the idea of “rule by and of the people,” namely decision-making and governing processes that involve the people or at least reflect their preferences. Alternatively, states may specify subjects when referring to democratic outputs. In this case, they elaborate on whom democratic procedures are ultimately meant to benefit – that is, Lincoln’s idea of “rule for the people.” Certainly, both options are neither mutually exclusive, nor are they restricted to people as the only possible subjects.

On the question of democratic subjects, states’ discourse is unequivocally clear: From the perspective of country representatives, global democracy is a democracy among states. People – that is, individuals – barely play a role. If they do, it is via the countries that represent them. This is not to say
that states never refer to people as subjects of democratic rule by the SC. Yet, they do so extremely rarely. Human beings, humankind, humanity, the global public, or the world’s population only matter to five percent of the country years that specify democratic subjects. And even among those who mention individuals, the primary focus is still on states.

More than 95 percent of those who mention democratic subjects make it absolutely clear that they are talking of democratic rule by states (see Figure VI).

Figure VI: Subjects linked to ‘democracy’ in the SC reform debate – democratic input

For each of the three types of democratic subjects the figure indicates the share of country years that interpret democratic rule as rule by the respective type of actor.

For Albania (2004), for instance, a democratized SC needs to ensure broader participation by UN member states, while Italy (2004) perceives democracy to be irreconcilable with the extension of unequal privileges to new countries:

Albania supports a reform of the Security Council that will facilitate broad participation on the part of the States Members of the Organization. We believe that such reform will enshrine both a wider geographical dimension and a more democratic spirit (Albania 2004).

[New]ew privileges for some members to the detriment of others [...] would go against the tide in a world where priority is now given, and has to be given, to an ongoing process of democratization in the management of international relations through multilateral institutions (Italy 2004).
By contrast, only about three percent of country years refer to the democratic input of people and only one percent to that of peoples (see Figure VI).\textsuperscript{87} Peoples is an ambiguous category that may refer to populations but is also often used as a synonym for states.\textsuperscript{88} Quite clearly, however, none of the states that mention people(s) means to grant people(s) a direct role in the SC – a role that is independent of that of states. Countries simply draw attention to those actors, whom they themselves are meant to represent. As such, the role they envision for people(s) is an indirect one at best. This is evident from statements like that of the Dominican Republic (2004):

\begin{quote}
Asia, Africa and Latin America should quite appropriately have two permanent members, and, at the same time, we should increase the number of non-permanent members. Not only would this contribute to making the most active body of the Organization more democratic, it would also include wider segments of humanity in the making of decisions that, when all is said and done, affect all of us (Dominican Republic 2004).
\end{quote}

Few country years refer to democratic outputs when they specify the main subjects of rule. Yet, even here the share of actors who focus on states rather than people (or peoples) is significantly higher (see Figure VII).

\textit{Figure VII: Subjects linked to ‘democracy’ in the SC reform debate – democratic output\textsuperscript{**}}

\begin{center}
\textbf{"Rule for..."}
\end{center}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure7.png}
\caption{For each of the three types of democratic subjects the figure indicates the share of country years that interpret democratic rule as rule\textit{ for} the respective type of actor.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{**}For each of the three types of democratic subjects the figure indicates the share of country years that interpret democratic rule as rule\textit{ for} the respective type of actor.

\textsuperscript{87} Bolivia (2009), the Dominican Republic (2004), Haiti (2005), Indonesia (2006), Iran (2004), and Iraq (2006) refer to people, whereas Cape Verde (2008), Djibouti (2007), and Zambia (2011) refer to peoples.

\textsuperscript{88} On the notion of peoples also see Bernstein (2004) and Rawls (1999).
About 12 percent of country years contend that democracy in the SC is meant to benefit states. It is in this vein that Spain (2006) notes:

*Thus, we hope to succeed in transforming the Security Council to make it more effective, transparent and democratic in order to serve the objectives of the Charter and all Members of the Organization.*

By contrast, only one to three percent of country years stipulate that democratic Council rule is meant to be rule for the people(s).\(^{89}\) Among the few is Syria (2004):

*[W]e hope that the entire United Nations membership will be enthusiastic and responsible in undertaking reform of this Organization, which is the basis of international democratic action to realize the aspirations of our peoples to security and stability.*

However, even these statements offer no alternative to the dominant statist conception of global rule. States are still perceived as the primary targets of democratic Council rule, whereas people are only indirect beneficiaries.

All in all, countries’ discourse about democracy in the SC clearly reveals an intergovernmental understanding of democratic rule. There is strong agreement that democratization of the Council concerns the relationship of countries and is meant to primarily benefit states. Surprisingly few countries draw attention to the fact that states are not meant to act for themselves, but for their own people(s) – and thus for the people(s) of the world.

**Democratic principles**

“As from different conceptual commitments attached to democracy […],” contends Kurki (2013: 112), “arise different [… ] models of democracy with different understandings.” These conceptual commitments – the principles states link to the notion of democracy – are the focus of the following paragraphs.

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\(^{89}\) Argentina (2004), China (2008), Honduras (2005), Indonesia (2011), and the United Arab Emirates (2005) refer to people, whereas Syria (2004), Libya (2005), and Iran (2013) mention peoples.
We hope that the entire United Nations membership will be enthusiastic and responsible in undertaking reform of this Organization, which is the basis of international democratic action to realize the aspirations of our peoples to security and stability. However, even these statements offer no alternative to the dominant statist conception of global rule. States are still perceived as the primary targets of democratic Council rule, whereas people are only indirect beneficiaries.

All in all, countries’ discourse about democracy in the SC clearly reveals an intergovernmental understanding of democratic rule. There is strong agreement that democratization of the Council concerns the relationship of countries and is meant to primarily benefit states. Surprisingly few countries draw attention to the fact that states are not meant to act for themselves, but for their own people(s) – and thus for the people(s) of the world.

Democratic principles

“From different conceptual commitments attached to democracy,” contends Kurki (2013: 112), “arise different […] models of democracy with different understandings.” These conceptual commitments – the principles states link to the notion of democracy – are the focus of the following paragraphs.

Certainly, one need not equate conceptual linkages with complex models or conceptions of democracy. Still, a clear majority of the principles states espouse (see Figure VIII) are associated with the domestic model of representative democratic rule. Above all, this is true for the three principles that are most frequently linked to democracy in states’ speeches: representation, equality, and elections. Individually, and in combination, they constitute the core of the idea of representative democracy. More precisely, they are closely tied to the idea of representative rule based on elections, which grant everyone “equal chances to influence the shaping of government” (Saward 2010: 86; emphasis added). In essence, this corresponds to a minimalist procedural definition of democracy as espoused by Schumpeter (1943) and later by Dahl (1971) (see Hobson/Kurki 2012: 4-5), according to which the people governs itself by electing representatives. Put differently, the people elects “individuals who are to assemble in order to carry out its will” (Schumpeter 1943: 250; see also Mill 2001 [1861]: 57). As such, elections serve two purposes: they help to install representatives and they serve...
to implement the idea of equality via universal and equal suffrage. As Dahl (2006: 12) argues, this encompasses peoples’ entitlement both “to participate freely in fair and reasonably frequent elections” and “to run for and serve in elective offices” themselves. This, in turn, is meant to guarantee that the representatives can be held to account (see Held 2006: 91), ensuring that they are responsive to the needs and interests of those whom they represent (Pitkin 1967: 57).

Yet, I shall only claim that states’ discourse is leaning towards the conception of representative democratic rule. I do not argue that countries wholeheartedly espouse the model of representative democracy in its entirety. Despite the fact that states orient their discourse towards principles of representative democratic rule and mostly link these notions in ways consistent with the model, important differences remain. One of them has already been touched upon: states conceive of countries, not citizens as the proper subjects of democracy. But there are also important differences in the way a number of states interpret and connect some of the core democratic principles. I will highlight these in the appropriate parts of this chapter and summarize them in section 3.3.3.

According to states, it is first and foremost the Council’s unrepresentative structure that compromises its democratic quality. As Libya (2006) observes, the SC “remains an undemocratic body in terms of representation.” Because, as states claim, “democracy is based on the idea of and capacity for representation” (Argentina 2009), any attempt to democratize the Council needs to address its unrepresentative structure. It is in this vein that Egypt and others content:

We should aim for global coalitions to achieve the international goal of creating a more democratic Security Council, a Council that better represents the general membership of the Organization (Egypt 2007).

We must recognize, as was rightly said earlier, the changes that have occurred in the world. We are no longer in 1945; that is obvious. We must act so that the Council, through representation that is more democratic, can take those changes into account (Guinea-Bissau 2009).

Apart from being utterly unrepresentative, states complain, the Council also fails to institutionalize equality among nation-states. That is to say, democratizing the SC requires the implementation of (more) egalitarian structures, thus converting the Council “into a democratic body […] that re-

90 See also Archibugi (2008: 28).
flects the sovereign equality of States in the way it operates” (Venezuela 2011). This is what Fiji (2004) claims when it remarks that the Council “will only be truly democratic when equity and justice are enshrined as guiding principles.” The view is reflected in the statements of many countries, among them Bolivia (2007), which “take[s] the view that the fundamental principle of democracy is the equality of all the components of the Organization,” and Georgia (2013), which states:

We believe that the basic principle of international law – that is, sovereign equality between nations – should be more explicitly reflected at the core of the international security architecture. That will indeed be a gateway to a more democratic global governance.

Elections for Council membership, in turn, are presented as a democratic remedy, which – if granted a greater role – may help to democratize the Council. In this spirit, Italy (2010) recommends selecting Council members by applying “the noblest of democratic principles, that is, the right to vote and to elect representatives,” and Pakistan contends that “[t]he best way to determine a State’s qualifications for membership on the Security Council […] is through the democratic method of […] elections by its peers” (Pakistan 2006). Botswana (2006) is perhaps the most vocal in defending the democratic process of elections against possible opposition:

The status quo has no justification on the grounds of efficiency and effectiveness. That would be tantamount to justifying dictatorship or one-party-state rule on the grounds that a democratically elected parliament would be unwieldy or dysfunctional. Those are discredited ideas that have long been consigned to where they rightfully belong: the garbage bin of history.

While representation, elections, and equality are at the core of states’ democratic discourse, countries invoke a variety of other concepts (see Figure VIII). In contrast to the three most prominent principles, these concepts are only espoused by smaller subsets of the UN membership.91 Yet, taken together, they add to a broader and more complex understanding of representative global democracy. That is to say, these principles expand the minimalist conception of democracy as representation based on elections by introducing some additional elements of representative liberal government – including elements like the rule of law that are associated with liberal thought.

91 For information on which country years are included in these subsets, please consult the appendix (7.3).
Most importantly, states suggest that the Council needs to improve its accountability. It can no longer “conduct its decision-making process in contravention of democratic practices that are based on the principles of transparency and accountability” (Egypt 2006). The correctives states suggest are very much in line with liberal ideas, as they include a greater role for elections – what liberals term vertical accountability – and for review and control by other UN bodies – what liberals call horizontal accountability (O’Donell 1994: 61). With regard to the latter, India (2006) criticizes:

[T]he Security Council is something that an individual State cannot easily defy; that the Charter cannot effectively bind; that the General Assembly cannot easily constrain; and that the International Court of Justice cannot automatically review. The right of review, as we know […] is a fundamental democratic tenet.

Organizations that can be held to account, in turn, are likely to act more responsively to the needs of their constituencies. They ensure that “one person’s life, liberty, and happiness is not intrinsically superior or inferior to that of any other” and is thus given “equal consideration” (both in Dahl 1998: 65). States highlight the principle of responsiveness when they call for a more democratic Council, which is “more attentive to the aspirations of all Member States” (Congo 2012) and which “takes into account the interests of all of the States and geographical regions that make up the international community in the broader sense” (Equatorial Guinea 2011).

Holding others accountable requires that their actions are sufficiently transparent (de Sousa Santos 2005: lxii; Hobson/Kurki 2012: 9f). As such, democracy, accountability and transparency are inseparably linked. This is precisely what states like Lebanon (2007) argue when they emphasize that a democratized Council needs to “secure transparency, allowing States to access information and documents and know the content of the work of the Council’s committees,” which in turn may “enhance the principle of accountability.”

Furthermore, countries are alarmed by the Council’s tendency to violate international law, including by unduly extending its own field of competency. This concern resonates well with a conception of democracy in the liberal representative tradition (Hobson 2012: 443; O’Donell 1998: 121). According to this conception, governments need to respect the rule of law in that they “act according to clearly defined prerogatives” (Merkel 2004: 39). As states argue, the Council acts in disrespect of this principle, which gravely impinges on democratic global rule. While Myanmar (2006) is most worried “by the increased encroachment of the Security Council on the
functions and powers of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council,” North Korea’s (2009) concern is expressed in more general terms:

The current situation shows that the Security Council is now reduced to a tool of arbitrariness and high-handedness overriding international law. This clearly demonstrates why the international community urgently demands reform of the Security Council, which lacks democracy and does not reflect the general will of United Nations Member States (North Korea 2009).

Scholars often link the democratic importance of the rule of law to its role in guaranteeing the impartial treatment of all citizens (see Smith in Kurki 2013: 35). The Council is seen to disrespect both the law and the principle of impartiality. Hence, partial outcomes are a further reason for states to accuse the Council of being highly undemocratic:

In fact, some decisions are the result of partisan interests, and that affects the way in which they are implemented on the ground. In view of that situation, my delegation firmly believes that new steps should be taken to strengthen transparency, justice and democratic methods (Guinea 2004).

Clearly, few of these principles are exclusive to the model of representative liberal democracy. Ideas like transparency and impartiality, but also those of non-domination and responsiveness inform a variety of democratic models. Still, the model of representative democracy integrates by far more of the principles emphasized by states than any other model. Moreover, it puts the ideas that dominate states’ discourse center stage, namely representation and elections. And lastly, with some exceptions that shall be elaborated in section 3.3.3, the way the model of representative democracy links these and the remaining principles overlaps strongly with how states specify the interrelationship of these concepts.

Only two of the principles emphasized by states are rarely associated with representative democratic rule: these are participation and justice. Both constitute defining components of alternative conceptions of democracy, namely that of participatory and that of social democracy. Yet, a closer examination of the one principle that successfully unites a particularly large group of country years, namely participation, proves very revealing. As the data show, states that embrace the idea of participation also frequently invoke the principle of representation. They even link the two ideas, such as when Argentina (2010) stipulates that better representation and participation may mutually enhance each other:

The intermediate solution that we envision would [...] permit the many countries that have not yet had the chance to participate as Security Council
members to do so. Argentina believes that a solution of that kind would lead to a more representative Council, because it would correct the lack of representation of some regions and of developing nations.

Evidently, states that emphasize the principle of participation do not seek to replace representative rule with direct democracy. At most, they aim to introduce some elements of participatory democratic rule into the functioning of the SC, while leaving the Council’s overall representative structure intact.

In sum, principles that call forth strong associations with representative democracy appear to unite states in their democratic discourse. However, these principles may themselves be subject to different interpretations and thus require closer examination.

Interpretation of democratic principles

The previous sections focused on the core components of the concept of democracy – the central principles that states attach to the idea of democratic Council rule. In the following paragraphs I will examine these components in more detail. In doing so, I focus on differences and similarities in the way states define the principles introduced above. Each of these principles, I argue, raises itself a set of questions, which states may answer in different ways. I will look at these principles in the order of their importance to states’ democratic discourse, with the primary focus on the three principles that dominate states’ democracy talk, namely representation, elections, and equality.

92 Above all, these countries do not want to restrict participation to voting in elections. Instead, they emphasize better chances for non-member states to participate in the Council’s debates and have their voices heard on matters that affect or concern them.

93 The emphasis states place on equality and representation as essential components of democratic SC rule does coincide with the general framing of the reform debate that occurred under the headline “Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters.” Yet, there is no reason to assume that the way specific UN reform debates are titled determines the understanding of democracy states adopt in their speeches. The reform debate about the GA, which is the focus of the next section, is a case in point. The way states define democracy in the context of the GA is highly consistent with how states specify the concept in the context of the SC – with representation and equality among the three most prominent principles mentioned by states. Yet, the GA’s reform was debated under an entirely different headline, namely the “Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.”
3. CHAPTER III: Mapping states’ democratic discourse

REPRESENTATION:

If one principle comes close to constituting an “ineliminable” (Freeden 1994: 61-62) feature for states’ conception of a democratic SC – ineliminable in the sense that most “usages of the concept employ it” (Freeden 1994: 62) – it is the principle of representation. There are two ways in which states specify their understanding of it: countries name both the subjects of representation, and specify the institutional characteristics of representative seats. As will be shown, the last aspect is intensely disputed.
### Table VI: Democracy as representation – interpretations in the SC reform debate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lines of specification</th>
<th>States' responses</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WHO should be (better) represented?</td>
<td>- UN membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regions (geographic representation)...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>...Africa</td>
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<td></td>
<td>...Arab world</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small island developing states (SIDS)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tuvalu 2004</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Developing countries</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultures/religions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Iran 2004, Morocco 2006, Qatar 2006</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Small and medium sized states</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fiji 2004, Georgia 2013, San Marino 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>States that contribute a lot (merit)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748909347

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When they specify their understanding of democratic representation, states refer to the *constituencies* of representative global rule. They elaborate what larger groups of actors Council members should speak, act or stand for. By doing so, they clarify which groupings require (better) representation in the Council before this IO body deserves the label democratic. Many countries simply refer to better representation of the international community of states – that is, the UN membership – at large. Like Egypt (2007), they find that a “more democratic Security Council [is] a Council that better represents the general membership of the Organization.” Yet, a lot of countries focus on subsets of the UN membership. Among the most prominent criteria states propose for determining the constituencies of democratic representation are geography, level of development and merit. More precisely, states stress the need to “allow for better representation of all of the world’s regions” (Canada 2011), of those “that are significant contributors to world

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lines of specification</th>
<th>States’ responses</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>WHAT should representation look like (characteristic of the representative post)?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>↓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-- <strong>Without veto</strong></td>
<td>San Marino 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>↓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-- <strong>Longer non-permanent positions</strong></td>
<td>San Marino 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>↓</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


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Das Erstellen und Weitergeben von Kopien dieses PDFs ist nicht zulässig.
Democratization of international relations is a global trend, which should also be reflected in the Security Council. While developing countries account for more than two thirds of the entire United Nations membership, they are seriously underrepresented in the Security Council.

Quite frequently, states that share one of these criteria still express divergent views on what it takes to improve representation along these lines. Representation based on geographical origin is a case in point: which regional grouping needs greater presence in the Council to ensure better geographical representation? Is it African countries, the Arab world or small island states?

Yet, while these stances reflect clear differences in states’ priorities, they reveal little discord. Many states emphasize more than one of these criteria and thus do not seek to portray their suggestions as favoring one constituency over another. States are careful not to pit their interpretations against one another. For instance, even those that link democratic representation to the presence of developing and small states do not necessarily reject the idea of merit and its democratic importance.

On the second aspect of democratic representation, states’ views are less compatible. Their understandings of the democratic characteristics of representative seats reveal two main lines of contention: one of these disagreements relates to the duration of representation on the Council. The other concerns the veto endowment of representatives. On the first issue, three factions can be identified: countries that oppose the idea of permanency as utterly undemocratic, countries that also object to permanency but find no democratic fault with longer-term representation, and finally, countries that see permanent representative posts as a contribution to democratic rule. A large proportion of states criticize that representation for unlimited terms contradicts the very idea of democracy. Like Argentina (2009), this group believes that “[…] the democratization process will be viable only through an increase in the number of non-permanent Council members,” namely of members who are subject to a periodic electoral process. The country continues to elaborate:

[…] Democracy is based on the idea of and capacity for representation, and the category of permanent membership is not based on the concept of democratic representation but is the outcome of a particular moment in history. Only a process of regular elections […] will guarantee true representation for members.
Similarly, South Korea (2010) maintains:

> [T]he unswerving basic philosophy of my delegation is that a more democratic manner of representation will spur greater accountability and transparency. We firmly believe that this can be secured only through the periodic election of Security Council members.”

Other countries, despite agreeing with this democratic opposition to permanent representation, are willing to consider the option of longer-term, but non-permanent posts. Apparently, they do not deem differences in the length of representative terms to be at odds with the basic idea of democracy. This is true for San Marino (2010), which maintains:

> In that way we could give greater representation to […] countries that are significant contributors to world peace through financial aid, democratic leadership, growing economies and peacekeeping forces. Those countries rightfully deserve to represent us for longer periods in the Council.

Both understandings are incompatible with what a third group of states suggests, namely that more democratic representation necessitates the admission of new permanent representatives. Like Jamaica (2009), these countries claim that “expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories would be a far more democratic and inclusive means of addressing the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council […]” Brazil (2008) is particularly pronounced about this:

> Some believe, and others want us to believe, that true democracy would come to the Council through an increase in the number of non-permanent members only. But simply adding non-permanent members to the Council would not solve the problem of the loss of its representativeness and of the legitimacy of its decisions, which has been observed over the years. It would only accentuate the present imbalances. Therefore, the Council must necessarily count on the permanent contribution of countries whose presence in the international scene has become more decisive in the building and implementation of the required decisions.

A similar cleavage exists on the question of veto power for state representatives. While the group engaged in this debate is far smaller than the group debating the proper length of terms in office, it is just as divided. Some countries – those states that favor permanent representative posts – are very explicit that democratic representation requires the extension of existing privileges, namely the power of veto, to new members. Like Zimbabwe (2007), they advocate “permanent seats, with the same powers and prerogatives
as those of the current members” and submit “that these are reasonable demands based on the principle of democratic representativity.” This view is strongly challenged by San Marino (2005), which states that “in order to reinforce the democratic nature of the Council” it is necessary “to reassess the use of the veto power.” This reassessment, it elaborates, needs to result in a gradual restriction and eventual elimination of the veto privilege.

In sum, these statements leave no doubt that there are clear interpretive divides around the idea of representation, the key notion to states’ conception of democracy.

EQUALITY:

States specify their understanding of democratic equality in two ways. The first refers to the question of “whose relationship is characterized by inequality?” and the second to the question of “what are the causes of – and remedies to – inequality?” While some responses simply reveal different priorities and need not be seen as conflicting, others disclose irreconcilable views.
### Table VII: Democracy as equality – interpretations in the SC reform debate \(^{95}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lines of specification</th>
<th>States’ responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The relationship between WHICH ACTORS is characterized by inequality?</td>
<td>– Relationship among all states Malaysia 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Relationship among large and small nations Philippines 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Relationship among SC members and non-members Philippines 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– small and medium states among the non-permanent or non-members Colombia 2008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lines of specification</th>
<th>States’ responses</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WHAT are the causes of inequality?</td>
<td>Causes of inequality:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Unequal weight of votes of SC and GA members in the election of Judges of the International Court of Justice Philippines 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Unequal representation of regions Costa Rica 2004</td>
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<td></td>
<td>– Unequal chances to participate in SC decision-making/sessions…</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Permanent membership Argentina 2003, Ghana 2006, Pakistan 2004</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Veto power for only some states Zambia 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Remedies for inequality:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Equal weight of votes of SC and GA members in the election of Judges of the ICJ Philippines 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– (Indiscriminate) representation of regions Costa Rica 2004, Georgia 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>– (Indiscriminate) participation by…</td>
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States express different views on which relationships of inequality are of greatest damage to a democratic SC. Yet, some of these statements suggest that countries have different foci rather than incompatible opinions: While Malaysia (2010), for instance, simply demands more equality for all UN member states, the Philippines (2008) draws particular attention to the relationship between small and large nations. Yet, most countries that express concerns about inequality refer to the relationship between the P5 and other states – either in their capacity as non-permanent SC members, or as UN member states excluded from the Council. For instance, Pakistan (2004) notes:

> There is general consensus that the Security Council’s composition and its working methods are not democratic. Decisions are taken by a few. The five permanent members, some more than others, exercise inordinate influence over the Council’s decisions.

Similarly, Cuba (2003) contends:

> The Council is seriously inequitable. In no other organ is the principle of sovereign equality being violated in such a daily, institutional and flagrant way. The non-permanent members are excluded and ignored, despite the fact that they enjoy legitimacy granted by the ballot box, not by wars.

This discontent with an oligarchic structure that privileges five countries over all others is clearly irreconcilable with the dissatisfaction of another group of states, whose primary concern is with unequal status inside the category of permanent membership. That is to say, these states mostly care about increasing equality between the current P5 and potential new permanent Council members. Like Egypt (2006), they claim that SC “expansion should ensure equality of rights, privileges and responsibilities among existing and new permanent members,” which essentially amounts to expanding the privileged group that countries like Pakistan and Cuba perceive as oligarchic.
States’ stances on the second issue, the *causes of and remedies for inequality*, are no less diverse. Here as well, many stances simply suggest differences in emphasis and are easily reconcilable. The Philippines (2008), for instance, focuses on discrimination between SC members and the rest of the UN membership in the process of electing judges to the International Court of Justice – where the former have two votes each but the latter have only one – while India (2004) places more emphasis on unequal opportunities among non-member states of being invited to the Council’s sessions. But not all demands are harmonious. Above all, there is a clear line of disagreement between those who seek to increase equality – and thus democracy in the Council – by limiting or abolishing the right to veto and by preventing the extension of permanent membership on the one hand, and those who seek to achieve greater democratic equality by extending both permanency and the veto to new member states. Evidently, these stances are irreconcilable.

Most countries attribute the inegalitarian character of the Council to the existence of veto rights and permanent membership. References to the former – the veto – clearly predominate. Consequently, these states – among them Venezuela (2007) and Botswana (2003) – suggest either eliminating the veto, constraining its use, or at the least preventing its extension to new Council members:

*Venezuela believes that in the process of democratizing the United Nations it is vital to eliminate the right of the veto, because it is an anachronistic mechanism, contrary to the principle of the sovereign equality of States enshrined in the Charter* (Venezuela 2007).

*The veto should [...] be replaced with a democratic decision-making procedure based on the principle of the sovereign equality of States* (Botswana 2003).

Ideally, from their point of view, the veto would be replaced by the principle of one state, one vote – “the way democracy was meant to be” (Malaysia 2010). This, in turn, would give rise to “a Council that conducts its work [...] with votes and without vetoes” (Argentina 2010). However, by some states not only the veto but permanent membership itself is perceived as a threat to democratic equality. According to states like Colombia (2008), “[i]t is not consistent to preach democratization of the Council while extending privileges to a few States.” These countries seek to prevent the creation of new permanent seats, because, as Italy (2003) elaborates:
This would, therefore, go against the tide of history, in which priority is given, and has to be given, to an ongoing process of democratization in the handling and the management of international relations through multilateral institutions […]. Would this happen with the establishment of new permanent members […]? Certainly not.

However, this opinion is not unanimously shared. Two country years contend that equality cannot be improved unless the category of permanent seats is expanded and the veto extended to the new permanent members. Most emphatic in this regard is Zambia (2011). While it concedes that the veto right is utterly undemocratic, this critique seems to focus on the fact that countries that clearly deserve this right – Zambia refers to African states in particular – are currently excluded from it:

It is understandable that there should be concerns about extending an undemocratic instrument like the veto. However, it is not understandable why anyone, particularly those who have extolled the virtues of democracy, should still want to retain it for themselves, while denying it to the two African permanent members of the Security Council. We do not understand. We do not demand equal treatment in the United Nations as an appeal to the benevolence of others. We demand equal treatment because we are entitled to it as a continent and a people.

Egypt (2006), in turn, first expresses its desire to abolish the veto, before adding a reservation that is completely unacceptable to other states: pending abolition, the country demands the extension of the veto to new permanent members. This, it claims, is meant to ensure equal status between the P5 and the newcomers. As such, the understanding of equality expressed by both Egypt (2006) and Zambia (2011) is not reconcilable with that of most remaining country years. In fact, it turns the very same feature into a remedy for inequality that others regard as its cause.

ELECTIONS:

States elaborate their understanding of democratic elections primarily with regard to electoral modalities – the question of how elections are to be conducted. This debate reveals two dividing lines. The first separates those who understand elections as a periodic undertaking from those who perceive it as a one-time (or at most two-time) event. The second line divides those who include the possibility of re-electing SC members within their democratic understanding from those who oppose this option.
The clear majority of countries that identify democracy with elections explicitly refers to a periodic electoral process. Like South Korea (2007), these states maintain that “[t]here is no democracy where a single election entitles the winner to remain in office in perpetuity.” Yet, some countries content themselves with one or two elections, albeit “very demanding” (Brazil 2008) ones, after which the winner may remain in power permanently:

> In order to allow for new members to truly settle into their new roles and prove their capabilities without having to deal with the stress of a fast-approaching re-election or review, it is essential that they remain in their seats at least for 10 to 15 years [...]. If they meet that challenge successfully and earn the trust of the overall United Nations membership, they would have to go through another democratic election process to obtain a permanent seat (Slovakia 2009).

Permanency, however, is precisely what the proponents of periodic elections seek to prevent. According to countries like Mexico (2006), the idea

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### Table VIII: Democracy as elections – interpretations in the SC reform debate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lines of specification</th>
<th>States’ responses</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| HOW are elections to be conducted? | Periodically  
|  | One time election/two elections followed by permanency  
Brazil 2008, India 2007, Slovakia 2009, Slovakia 2010 |
|  | Possibility of immediate re-election  
|  | No immediate re-election  
Costa Rica 2004 |
of “election[s] through a periodic democratic process” is meant to compel states “to renew their mandate through the ballot box.” Many states agree: for them, “the temporary nature of […] mandates” (Argentina 2003) constitutes an important safeguard against the unaccountable and abusive use of power.

Only through elections can democracy and accountability be sustained; not just a single election that entitles the winners to remain in office in perpetuity but periodic elections, whereby Member States will have the opportunity to review the performance of Council members and respond accordingly (South Korea 2008).

The best way to determine a State’s qualifications for membership on the Security Council, whether more or less frequent, is through the democratic method of periodic elections by its peers, that is, by the General Assembly, on whose behalf the Security Council is supposed to act (Pakistan 2006).

Among countries that advocate regular elections, a second interpretive divide exists. It separates states like Mexico (2008), who are “in favour of introducing the principle of re-election, which would guarantee a more frequent presence of those States that are most ready to play an active role in the items on the Council’s agenda and, in parallel, would help to ensure accountability on the part of the non-permanent members” from one country that vehemently seeks to prevent this option: in opposition to Mexico, Costa Rica (2004) argues:

The prohibition of immediate re-election is a democratic guarantee that enables the smaller States, at least once in their history, to belong to the Security Council.

Yet, even those who consider the option of re-election do not want it to prompt “de facto permanent membership through repeated re-election” (Colombia 2007). Hence, this second line of disagreement proves to be much less serious than the first. In sum, while the idea of elections is central to how many states understand democracy, disagreement over how regularly elections should be held suggests that the meaning of this notion is far from settled.

OTHER PRINCIPLES:

Among the remaining democratic principles mentioned by states, the only one characterized by conflicting interpretations is accountability. The other principles are interpreted in highly consistent ways. While there may be
3.3. States’ understanding(s) of democracy

differences in emphasis – states may prioritize different aspects in their understanding of these terms – these different priorities do not reveal irreconcilable stances. The contrary is true: states usually converge around one dominant interpretation of the principle in question and any alternatives they mention are well combinable with it. However, this is not the case for the principle of accountability. States are divided both on the question of whom they can hold accountable and what instruments promise to be most successful in this regard. Again, their conflicting answers refer to different categories of membership. While some states suggest that only non-permanent members can be trusted to act accountably, as these “are the ones […] over which we may exercise greater control” (Argentina 2003), India (2007) disagrees and contends that this is no less true for states with permanent seats. Similarly, countries express fundamentally different views about adequate methods for ensuring the accountability of Council members and thus of the Council in general. What most countries claim, namely that “periodic elections […] offer the best way to ensure accountability” (South Korea 2009), is clearly at odds with the suggestion of Brazil (2008). It claims that “[d]emocratic reforms in the Council are only possible through the addition of permanent members committed to making it more transparent and accountable.” As such, the country maintains that permanent members – those that do not require a renewal of their mandate through elections – are the ones who may improve the Council’s accountability.

For a comprehensive overview of states’ interpretations of the four principles examined in this chapter as well as the remaining seven principles that were not further scrutinized here, please consult the appendix (7.3).

Summary

Overall, states’ understandings of democracy reveal two patterns. On the one hand, countries are remarkably united in their support for a statist conception of democratic global rule. Likewise, the great consistency with which states invoke principles associated with representative democratic rule suggests that countries that talk of a democratic SC are largely referring to the same thing. On the other hand, states’ understandings do not only diverge but seriously conflict when it comes to the meaning of central democratic principles. All four of the most important democratic ideas – namely representation, equality, elections, and accountability – are subject to disputes. These disputes, in turn, always revolve around the same core issues. First, this includes the question whether permanent membership of
the Council is compatible with the idea of democratic rule. While a clear majority of those who express their thoughts on the matter seriously contest the compatibility, others see no conflict whatsoever. In fact, they even emphasize that permanency may work in favor of the democratic ideas of equality and representation. The second divide exists with regard to the veto, which some argue is irreconcilable with central principles of democratic global rule like that of equal representation. Others, however, highlight the democratic gains of extending the veto.

The findings raise two important follow-up questions: First, do these conflicts deserve to be described as instances of contestation? Are the interpretive divides in the SC sufficient to label democracy a contested concept? And second, is the democratic discourse about the GA characterized by similar patterns; or do states’ understandings of democratic rule by the Assembly differ in important ways from their ideas of democratic Council rule? The last question will be the focus of the upcoming section (3.3.2), while the first is addressed in section 3.4.

3.3.2. Democracy discourse about the General Assembly

Whereas the reform of the SC aims at the organization’s outdated membership structures, which do not reflect the rise of new powers and the strong increase in UN membership since the Council’s creation, the reform of the GA is mainly about increasing effectiveness and efficiency and thus ensuring the organization’s continued relevance to the international community. Among others, efforts to “revitalize” the GA center on empowering the organization’s authority vis-à-vis the SC, strengthening its role in (s)election of the UN Secretary-General, and improving the Assembly’s working methods (Swart 2008). Efforts to reform the GA have not been more successful than attempts to reform the Council. Despite small improvements – including a greater role for the GA in the selection process that led to the appointment of António Guterres as Secretary-General in 2016 – “key issues remain unresolved or unimplemented” (Swart 2008: 21).

The democratic discourse about the GA that is embedded in these broader reform dynamics differs in two fundamental respects from the corresponding debate about the SC. First, whereas the SC is criticized for its democratic deficits, the GA is praised as a highly democratic organization. States that make democracy claims almost universally describe the institution as a democratic exemplar and “the most democratic forum of the United
Nations” (Iran 2004). Second, in the context of the GA, the share of country years who avoid the language of democracy, namely 86 percent, is considerably higher. Apparently, states see the fact that an IO conforms to democratic standards as less noteworthy than its failure to do so. Quite striking is also the fact that the democratic discourse about the GA is a thoroughly non-Western discourse: While the country years engaged in the discourse evenly cover all non-Western regions of the world, Western states do not contribute a single democracy claim. Even so, among the country years that invoke the democratic narrative, the share of specified understandings is fairly high.

Table IX: Democratic discourse in the GA reform debate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Participants in the GA debate</th>
<th>Participants with democracy claims</th>
<th>Participants who specify democratic principles</th>
<th>Participants who specify democratic subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country years</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countries</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yet, there are striking similarities to the democratic discourse on the SC. As in the Council, country years embrace the notion of democracy to refer to its importance. No country year invokes the democratic idea to underscore its poor fit in the global context. Moreover, countries’ democratic understanding of Assembly rule is very much consistent with that expressed about the Council: in the GA as well, countries highlight states as the primary subjects of democratic IO rule and apply a notion of democracy that centers on principles of representative democratic rule. In other words, states praise the Assembly for exhibiting all those democratic features, the lack of which they criticize in the Council. In contrast to the SC, states’ agreement on the meaning of democracy also extends to the interpretation of the democratic principles themselves. Of course, findings based on such a small number of cases need to be taken with a grain of salt. However, their great consistency with the patterns detected in the Council debate lends them high credibility. In the following, I will look at each of the three components of states’ democratic understanding – subjects, principles, and interpretations of these principles – in turn.
Democratic subjects

Countries adopt the same statist conception of global democracy when talking about the GA as they do with reference to the SC. From their perspective, the principal subjects of democratic Assembly rule are states and their governments. 19 out of 20 country years that identify democratic subjects explicitly link the democratic quality of the GA to the rights and obligations of states. That is to say, they embrace the idea of democratic rule by countries. For instance, Egypt (2007) describes the Assembly as “the most democratic organ of the Organization […] because it comprises all the Member States” of the UN, while the Cuban (2010) representative links the “democratic character” of the Assembly to its status “as the ultimate expression of the sovereign equality of States.” Individuals or people enter the democratic discourse of only two country years, namely Belize (2003) and Colombia (2006). In both their statements, however, individuals are not invoked as actors that should actively partake in the decision-making process. Their relevance is related to democratic outputs: People are simply described as the ultimate beneficiaries of democratized intergovernmental rule. In the end, democratic governance by states inside the GA aims at “fulfilling the hopes of millions of people who long for a better, more stable and equitable world” (Colombia 2006). The same connection between representative democracy and the aspirations of the world’s people is drawn by Belize (2003). After identifying the principle of “one vote per State” as “the epitome of representative democracy” on a global level, Belize (2003) proceeds to claim:

In that regard, the people of the world have entrusted their aspirations for universal justice and peace and the right to build better futures for their children to the United Nations, and more specifically to this Assembly. In no uncertain terms, the people of the world have given us a mandate. It behoves us to act now to ensure that the United Nations has the necessary effective mechanisms to fulfil those aspirations of our people.

Democratic principles

In essence, states’ democratic discourse is dominated by largely the same principles that also characterize their discourse on the SC (see Figure IX). Again, these are principles closely associated with the model of representative domestic democratic rule. In contrast to the SC, however, states see the GA as largely fulfilling these democratic standards.

**Figure IX: Spider plot: principles linked to ‘democracy’ in the GA reform debate****

For each of the 9 principles the spider plot indicates the share of country years (out of 22 that have specified principles of democratic GA rule) that link their democracy discourse to these principles. Links are not mutually exclusive; countries’ democracy discourse may well establish links to several of the principles above.

Above all, the Assembly is seen to fare well with regard to democratic representation and equality – two of the standards that are also the focus of attention in the democratic debate on the SC. Yet, the importance of these principles is reversed: for countries, the democratization of the Council was first and foremost a matter of increasing representativeness. In the case of the GA, it is primarily the organ’s respect for sovereign equality that induces states to grant the label ‘democratic.’ As the statements of Brazil
(2009) and Egypt (2011) testify, the Assembly is perceived as a highly egalitarian forum:

*The General Assembly is [...] operating under a democratic statute, wherein all Member States are treated as equals and interact with each other as such (Brazil 2009).*

*The General Assembly is, and will remain, the most [...] democratic principal organ of the United Nations, where the 193 countries are all permanent Members, on equal footing, with equal voices, without any veto (Egypt 2011).*

States perceive the GA as a levelled forum, where each country is represented and the principle of ‘one state, one vote’ ensures that all may participate as equals in debates and decision-making. In this regard, the principle of equality is intimately linked to another democratic feature of the GA: its representativeness. Due to its universal membership, countries perceive the Assembly as a highly representative forum. This is reflected in the statements of Nepal (2008) and others. Nepal (2008) describes the body as “the highest organ embracing the acclaimed values of universal democratic representation.” In fact, many countries seem to consider the Assembly an exemplar of representative democratic rule beyond the state.

Another principle that is central to states’ understanding of a democratic Council, namely elections, is largely absent from the corresponding debate about the GA: only Nigeria (2003) connects the idea of democracy to the holding of elections. It laments that the high financial investments that are required to run for the Office of the President of the GA prevent poorer countries from running for this position:

*In fact, it would be difficult for many Member States, particularly the least developed countries – many of which are from our continent – to offer the services of their nationals for this important office because of that constraint. Are we not by implication disenfranchising them? Are we also not preventing the General Assembly from being a bastion of democratic ideals [...]?*

Yet, the low prominence of references to elections is quite plausible. In the Assembly, representation is universal. Hence, there is no need to conduct elections in order to pick among multiple possible representatives. The inclusive composition of the GA also explains the prominence of another democratic principle, namely participation, which constitutes a noticeable difference between the SC and the GA debates. That is to say, the participatory nature of the Assembly is the second most frequently cited criterion
for its democratic quality. While countries praise the body in this regard, some also see room for improvement. It is in this vein that South Africa (2003) asks for even “greater democratic participation and decision-making” in the Assembly, and Pakistan (2003) stresses the need to pay greater respect to the fact that “[e]ach of the States Members of the United Nations has a sovereign and democratic right to bring before the Assembly its difficulties and its despair, its ideas and its initiatives.” Finally, Malaysia (2003) demands improvements for developing countries:

[…] Member States with limited human and financial resources […] should be able to participate meaningfully and democratically in deliberations and the adoption of decisions on a majority of the Assembly’s agenda items which are of direct and immediate concern and interest to them.

Yet, the difference between representation and participation is somewhat blurred in the context of the GA. After all, if every country is allowed to participate, there is no need for representation in the sense that one country speaks, acts, or stands for all those who are absent. As a result, representation and participation look the same. Moreover, despite states’ use of both terms, they often seem incapable of fully distinguishing the two ideas conceptually. A telling example is the statement by Belize (2003), which defines representative democratic rule in terms of equal chances to participate in decision-making:

For small developing countries like my own, the General Assembly represents a levelled field on which each Member State can participate on an equal footing in the decision-making process of the most universal policy-making body in the international arena. One vote per State – that is the epitome of representative democracy […].

Two other patterns distinguish states’ discourse about the Council from the corresponding one about the GA. Both, however, do not change states’ strong reliance on principles of representative democratic rule. First, some principles that are already known from the Council debate gain in relevance in the GA. Most importantly, this regards the idea of the rule of law. Second, new principles enter states’ discourse, which are absent in the discourse on the SC. Above all, this concerns the principle of majoritarian decision-making.

In the Council debate, states expressed their concern about the undemocratic tendencies of the SC to encroach upon the competences and prerogatives of the GA. In the democratic discourse on the GA, this concern receives even greater attention. For instance, Cuba (2011) laments “[…] ef-
forts of the Security Council to establish legal standards and definitions, ignoring the fact that, as stated in Article 13 of the Charter, the progressive development of international law and its codification is the exclusive responsibility of the General Assembly.” According to states, these tendencies are not only undemocratic in themselves – thus impinging on the democratic quality of the SC – they also prevent the Assembly from operating in a democratic way:

Those dangerous trends and the increasing broadening of the agenda of the Security Council beyond its competence must immediately cease because they are clear violations of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and restrict the debate, transparency and democratic way in which the problems of today’s world should be addressed (Cuba 2012).

The principle of majoritarian decision-making does not play a prominent role in the Council debate. In the GA debate, it clearly does. The idea that “decisions are taken by a majority of those voting” (Yemen 2003) is a logical consequence of representative as opposed, for instance, to more consensually oriented deliberative democracy (see Mill 2001 [1861]: 68). Apart from Yemen (2003), Madagascar (2009) also highlights the democratic significance of decision-taking by majorities:

[Under rule 83 of the rules of procedures, decisions on important questions, such as the determination of a State Member’s sovereignty, shall be made by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting. For the sake of good sense and respect for democracy, that question should not be left in the hands of a small number of States.]

Other principles that states connect to democracy – including deliberation and respect for the rules of procedure – are never espoused by more than one country year. As a result, they do not merit close attention here. In sum, states link the democratic quality of the GA first and foremost to its egalitarian, representative, and participatory character but see it endangered by a dysfunctional relationship between the UN organs at large – most importantly by the Council’s failure to stick to its mandate. Countries are very consistent in this regard. But does this agreement extend to states’ understanding of each of these principles?

Interpretation of democratic principles

In examining states’ interpretations of the democratic principles introduced above, I will proceed in the order of their importance for states’
democratic discourse. I focus primarily on the three principles that dominate states’ democracy talk, namely equality, participation, and representation.

EQUALITY:

According to states, the GA owes its democratic quality primarily to its egalitarian structure. In parallel to the Council debate, in the GA debate, states use two main questions to specify their understanding of equality: Whose relationship is characterized by in-/equality? And: what are the causes of and the remedies to in-/equality? The answers countries give to both questions are highly compatible. Even so, they reveal differences in emphasis (see Table X).

Table X: Democracy as equality – interpretations in the GA reform debate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lines of specification</th>
<th>States’ responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Most country years describe the Assembly as a setting that ensures relationships of equality among all states – a forum “operating under a democratic statute, wherein all Member States are treated as equals” (Brazil 2009). Only Nigeria (2003) pays special attention to the relationship between powerful and not so powerful UN members. In this regard, the country sees plenty of room for improvement.

As a primary cause of inequality between the powerful and the weak, Nigeria points to differences in states’ financial resource endowment. These differences, it argues, undermine countries’ equal chances of running for the highest office of the Assembly. Hence, Nigeria (2003) asks:

> Are we [...] not preventing the General Assembly from being a bastion of democratic ideals in which both the powerful and the not-so-powerful have equal rights and aspirations?

To remedy this situation, Nigeria proposes to strengthen the Office of the President. It suggests that increasing the Office’s staff would free countries from the costs of bringing their own personnel. This, in turn, would contribute to democratic equality in the GA.

All other countries that refer to the notion of equality describe the Assembly as an egalitarian forum. In essence, they all talk about equality in rights. Still, different states highlight different aspects of this idea: among other things, they mention equal rights to participate in Assembly debates – that is, each state’s right to “bring before the Assembly its difficulties and its despair, its ideas and its initiatives” (Pakistan 2003) – or, like Ecuador (2004) and Jamaica (2003), they refer to the fact that everyone’s vote has equal weight. Yet, there is nothing contradictory about these different foci. Quite the contrary, states interpret the democratic principle of equality in very consistent ways.

PARTICIPATION:

States that elaborate their understanding of democracy as participation specify whose participation they perceive to be at stake. In doing so, states are very consistent (see Table XI).
Table XI: Democracy as participation – interpretations in the GA reform debate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lines of specification</th>
<th>States’ responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Smaller delegations from the developing countries in particular</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While all country years underline that inside the GA “each Member State can participate on an equal footing” (Belize 2003), including both in the Assembly’s debates and in its decision-making process, Malaysia (2003) simply adds a call for change in the Assembly’s program of work in order to “allow for greater participation by all delegations, in particular the smaller delegations from the developing countries.” Thus, states interpret the principle of participation very consistently.

REPRESENTATION:

The same is true for the concept of representation (see Table XII). Country years that elaborate their understanding of representation by clarifying who they perceive to be well represented refer to the whole UN membership. Like Nepal (2008) they find mostly praise for the representative nature of the Assembly:

It is the highest organ embracing the acclaimed values of universal democratic representation and the sovereign equality of nations.

Table XII: Democracy as representation – interpretations in the GA reform debate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lines of specification</th>
<th>States’ responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WHO is represented?</td>
<td>– All member states</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

99 This principle is mentioned by the following country years: Belize (2003), Egypt (2007), Egypt (2008), Iran (2004), Malaysia (2003), Pakistan (2003), South Africa (2003).

100 This principle is mentioned by Belize (2003), Egypt (2011), Nepal (2008), Nicaragua (2009), Nicaragua (2012).
OTHER PRINCIPLES:

Finally, even when we look at the references states make to the democratic ideas of the rule of law and majoritarian decision-making, we find no conflicting understandings of these principles. The five country years\textsuperscript{101} that emphasize the rule of law identify current activities by the SC as the main threat to the ability of the Assembly to fulfil its mandate. As a result, they stipulate the need to empower the GA vis-à-vis the SC and to limit the Council’s encroachment upon matters that – according to the UN Charter – are “the exclusive responsibility of the General Assembly” (Cuba 2011). Most importantly, this concerns the development and codification of international law.

In sum, states do not only agree on the main democratic subjects and a common set of principles they perceive to be at the core of the Assembly’s democratic quality; apart from different nuances, there is also no deviation in states’ interpretations of these core principles. When countries praise the democratic quality of the Assembly, they seem to be praising the same set of features.

Summary

In sum, there are strong parallels between the GA discourse and the corresponding debate about the SC. In both setting, states adopt a statist conception of democratic global rule with a strong leaning towards the domestic model of representative democracy. Overall, the way countries’ rank democratic principles in the GA differs only slightly from the Council debate: in the GA, principles and ideas of particular relevance to fora with restricted membership lose (some) importance, whereas concepts related to the inclusive character of the Assembly or the Assembly’s positioning vis-à-vis other UN bodies increase in importance.

But in one respect the debate about the democratic quality of the Assembly differs greatly from the corresponding debate about the SC: while states disagree about the meaning of every core principle of democratic Council rule, in the GA these conflicts are entirely absent. Not a single concept prompts interpretive disputes.

\textsuperscript{101} These are Cuba (2011), Cuba (2012), Ecuador (2009), Egypt (2007), Egypt (2008).
3.3.3. Preliminary conclusions: representative democracy beyond the state

Both in the SC and in the GA, states’ democratic discourse is dominated by principles of representative rule. Primarily, countries associate democratic governance beyond the state with the principles of representation, equality and elections – all of them principles that constitute the core of the idea of representative democracy as known from domestic contexts of rule. Apart from these, states refer to a couple of other principles, which add to a more coherent conception of liberal representative government. But does that mean that countries transfer the domestic model of representative democracy to the global level? Here, I prefer to use more modest terms – I speak of states leaning towards this model of rule. For while this leaning is evident, important differences remain between the conception espoused by states and the model of domestic representative democracy. Certainly, they need to be made explicit.

In essence, I see three ways in which countries alter the original conception of representative rule in the domestic democratic context: first, states change the subjects of democratic rule; second, at times they use the concepts of representation and participation somewhat indiscriminately; and third, some of them unhook two concepts that are impossible to separate domestically: the ideas of representation and elections.

The first point needs no further elaboration, as it has been addressed earlier: countries unanimously adopt a statist conception of global democratic rule. In contrast to the domestic conception of representative democracy, people – that is, citizens – barely play a role. When countries talk of global democracy, it is democratic rule by and for states.

The second point has also been hinted at: whereas the literature clearly distinguishes the model of representative democracy from that of participatory (or direct) democracy, this separation is less straightforward in states’ discourse. This is most evident in the context of the GA. The whole idea of representative rule stems from the intuition that once populations achieve a certain size, it becomes infeasible for everyone to be directly involved in decision-making. This is exactly Mill’s point when he notes:

[…] it is evident that the only government which can fully satisfy all the exigencies of the social state is one in which the whole people participate […]. But since all cannot, in a community exceeding a single small town, participate personally in any but some very minor portions of the public business, it follows that the ideal type of a perfect government must be representative (Mill 2001 [1861]: 40).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748909347
The GA constitutes a universal body. It allows every single state to get involved in its deliberations and decision-making. Representation of states – that is the act of “presenting the views of those who cannot be present” (Cronin 1989: 26) – is no longer necessary. Those who lack actual access to the Assembly and would require to be represented, namely the citizens of the world, are barely ever mentioned in states’ discourse. Hence, if countries mention both representation and participation in the context of the GA, it remains unclear what difference they perceive to exist between the two principles.

To some degree, this is not only true for the GA, which is a rather inclusive body, but also for the SC, which has restricted membership. While countries refer to all kinds of constituencies that deserve better representation in the Council – among them developing countries, small states, and different regions – they barely ever specify how those who are present in the organization may speak and act for the concerns of those who are absent. This finding touches upon a dilemma that Cronin (1989: 26) condenses in a simple question: “to what extent can one represent the views or interests of others?” The sparse information states provide on this matter raises doubts about whether countries can and do speak or act for anyone other than themselves. While self-representation may still be considered a form of representation (see Saward 2010: 101), it is unclear how it differs from participation.

Lastly, some states explicitly unhook two things that are logically inseparable in the domestic conception of representative democracy: representation and regular elections. In the domestic context, representation is understood as electoral representation, whereby “the elected […] are the representatives” (Saward 2010: 83). While many states adopt this interpretation, there are dissenting views. Indeed, with their demands for permanent representation, some states assert that democratic representativeness does not require more than a single vote. In fact, these countries highlight the democratic deficits of elections – and promote permanency as an attractive remedy. As they claim, a greater role for electoral representation may not bring about what its advocates have in mind, namely increased accountability and responsiveness of the P5 and thus of the Council as such:

But, even if we take this principle of democracy, another member […] said that democracy did not mean leaving the winner in all perpetuity. However, he forgot to address himself to this question: does democracy mean leaving the untrammeled power of a few also for all perpetuity, or should something be done about it (India 2007)?
This view was also expressed in the interviews. According to one diplomat, it is extremely difficult for elected Council members to counter-balance the dominance of the P5 (DIPL20). Because non-permanent members usually need some time to familiarize themselves with their new positions, they are mostly ignored by those with permanent seats. Hence, with a view to one important group of actors, namely the P5, elections are unable to do what their advocates expect of them. Only new permanent representatives, those that are authorized by one election, may democratize the Council. That is to say, they may permanently hold the P5 to account and thus give voice to all those actors who are currently excluded from the Council.

The understanding of representation embraced by the advocates of permanency resonates quite well with some conceptions of representative rule that are found in the literature. The most extensive treatment of the concept of representation is certainly that of Hanna Pitkin (1967). Among other things, Pitkin distinguishes between an authorization and an accountability view of representation. For the former, Pitkin (1967: 56) claims, “a man represents because he has been elected at the outset of his term of office,” while for the latter he represents because – and only insofar as – “he will be subject to reelection or removal at the end of his term.” According to the first perspective, there is no need for a periodic electoral process.\footnote{As Pitkin claims, this “definition[s] of representation do[es] not require that authority be given only for a limited time or that elections be held regularly. […] there is no reason why men could not give unlimited authority at the outset for an indefinite period of time, thus making any government that is initially elected, representative forever […] (Pitkin 1967: 44).} Consistent with what Brazil and others claim, one “very demanding” (Brazil 2008) process of electoral authorization is seen to suffice. For the accountability perspective, however, one act of authorization alone is not enough: without elections at regular intervals – and thus repeated possibilities to remove actors from office – representatives cannot be held to account and thus have no incentive to act responsively to their constituents (Pitkin 1967: 56). This is precisely the argument of those who oppose permanent seats. They base their resistance to permanency on the inseparable link between representation, elections, and accountability.

The friction described is closely connected to another one introduced by Pitkin: that of representatives ‘standing for’ as opposed to ‘acting for’ others. The strong emphasis on accountability and responsiveness, both of which are said to result from regular elections, is likely to be inspired by a
view of representation as “an activity in behalf of, in the interest of, as an agent of, someone else” (Pitkin 1967: 113). This stance is reflected in the statements made by opponents of permanency, which claim that elections grant a chance to those “on whose behalf the Security Council is supposed to act” (Pakistan 2006) “to review the performance of Council members and respond accordingly” (South Korea 2008). The proponents of permanency, by contrast, make little reference to the performance of representatives in the interest of others. Rather, they seem to perceive representation as a matter of ‘standing for’ other states, of mirroring or reflecting the composition and thus the views, interests, and needs of the general membership. What matters for representation as ‘standing for’ is the composition of the representative organization: it is about “the presence in it of spokesmen for all groups in proportion to their number in the electorate” (Pitkin: 63).

Hence, proponents of permanency frequently hint at characteristics they possess that match characteristics possessed by a large but excluded constituency. Most prominently, they refer to their own status as developing countries or as states from a hitherto excluded region. Accountability, and thus regular elections, are of little relevance to this perspective. After all, how can you hold a country to account for its characteristics – e.g. it being a developing country (Pitkin 1967: 89-90)?

In sum, there are important differences between the concepts of representative democratic rule as applied inside and beyond the state. While these differences need to be made explicit, they may not conceal the strong overlap between the domestic model of representative democracy and countries’ understandings of democratized IOs.

3.4. Contestation: do states contest the meaning of global democracy?

This chapter offered novel insights into countries’ references to and interpretations of global democratic rule. It found considerable differences in countries’ willingness to invoke the notion of democracy. More specifically, many countries embrace the democratic narrative, but a substantial number of states also prove reluctant to do so. While these differences are yet to be explained, they are far from negligible. Similarly, the chapter found a set of interpretive differences between states. While there are few instances of this kind, some understandings of democratic rule that countries invoke are clearly irreconcilable. But are these differences relevant? Or

103 Also see Saward (2010: 99).
3.4. Contestation: do states contest the meaning of global democracy?

are they negligible? To put it another way: what does this finding imply about contestation of the democratic idea? Does it justify calling global democracy a contested concept?

3.4.1. Empirically conceptualizing meaning contestation

In recent years, IR scholars have frequently alluded to the contested meaning of norms. On a theoretical level, they have revived the idea that norms are intersubjectively constituted (Klotz 1995: 29f) and have challenged the dominant approach to norms, which has treated them as uncontested and static constructs.104 Empirically, these scholars have drawn attention to conflicting normative understandings among the actors who debate and implement norms.105 Yet, few of these studies have discussed when a norm’s meaning may count as seriously contested or what constitutes proper evidence of contestation.106 Both clarifications are urgently needed.

If norms and their meanings provoke disagreement “by default,” as Antje Wiener (2009: 179) has argued, scholars need guidelines to distinguish interpretive differences over the meaning of a norm that are ‘normal’ and may be negligible from serious disputes over a concept’s meaning. Clearly, the talk of contestation implies the existence of these two types of disagreement – and a primary interest in the more serious type. Yet, while alluding to this qualitative difference, few scholars have made it explicit.107 Doing so is not only relevant for conceptual reasons: After all, there is little merit in introducing a new concept if it describes nothing more than the usual – the “default.” The distinction also matters theoretically and empirically: scholars care about outright contestation rather than low-level disagreement due to “its potential causal relationship to (…) political conflict” (DiMaggio et al. 1996: 691). As Wiener contends, “if and when contested, norms are likely to spark conflict” (Wiener 2007b: 48). Hence, there is a need to conceptually and empirically disentangle contestation from ‘normal’ levels of disagreement.

104 See Wiener’s (2007b) critique in this regard.
106 As mentioned earlier, the work of Deitelhoff and Zimmermann (2013) is an exception.
107 For a similar critique see Deitelhoff and Zimmermann (2013).
In the following, I outline three criteria for identifying meaning contestation and specify the corresponding empirical indicators that allow scholars to distinguish the instances of interpretive dispute that constitute negligible disagreement from those that represent outright contestation. For the first criterion, I build on the work of Deitelhoff and Zimmermann (2013) and argue that only disagreement of a principled kind – that is, dispute over the core expectations raised by a norm rather than conflict over its correct application – is serious enough to be a potential case of contestation (Deitelhoff 2013: 31).

Deitelhoff and Zimmermann (2013) distinguish discourses that revolve around the basic expectations raised by a norm “independent of a given situation” (p. 5) – what the authors call “justificatory discourse” – from discourses that do not touch upon the validity of the norm but concern the norm’s correct implementation in a concrete case (“applicatory discourse”). To elaborate on this distinction, the authors refer to the Responsibility to Protect (R2P): They argue that the norm’s core is very abstract. It incorporates two basic responsibilities: that of states to protect their own peoples and that of “the international community to step in if states massively fail” (Deitelhoff/Zimmermann 2013: 8) as protectors. A principled sort of dispute would challenge these basic obligations and thus the norm’s validity as such. If actors are engaged in disputes over “application,” it means they accept these core obligations, yet question whether or how they should be met in specific situations. What does “stepping in” mean in such a situation? Is it a matter “only” of sanctions or also of military force (Deitelhoff/Zimmermann 2013: 8)? According to Deitelhoff (2013: 31-33), a norm cannot be described as destabilized just because actors disagree on how to apply it in a concrete case. In fact, such disagreement may even strengthen the norm because it helps clarify its content. Discourse of a principled kind, by contrast, challenges the core of the norm and puts the norm at risk.

Applied to states’ democracy discourse this means: to constitute disagreement of a principled kind, disputes would have to revolve around the basic characteristics of democratic IO rule in general – that is, core princi-

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108 As mentioned earlier, I here rely on the 2013 version of the study by Deitelhoff/Zimmermann (2013) rather than the more recent one (Deitelhoff/Zimmermann 2020). While the authors have further developed and refined their approach, to my perception, the gist of their main argument and their basic typology of two types of norm discourse has remained unaltered.

109 Also see Deitelhoff (2013).
3.4. Contestation: do states contest the meaning of global democracy?

People that apply to all IOs. Yet, the existence of this type of disagreement, I argue, is only a necessary but not a sufficient condition to describe a norm as contested. To deem a norm “contested,” scholars need to also look beyond the form of disputes at their spread and distribution. For this reason, I also consider the size of the group involved in principled interpretive conflicts (spread) and the extent to which different understandings expressed approximate a bimodal distribution (distribution). I argue that interpretive divides that are of a principled kind move up on the scale away from low-level disagreement towards contestation if a) greater shares of the overall population are involved in the conflict, and b) conflicting parties at opposing ends of the opinion spectrum involve the same amount of actors. Ideally, this scale would include a clear threshold—a cut-off point where the degree of disagreement is deemed high enough to deserve the label contestation. Yet, any such threshold would clearly be arbitrary and itself highly disputable. At the same time, the lack of a threshold does not free scholars from establishing empirical indicators that help to locate patterns of disagreement between the two poles of consensus and contestation.

I provide these indicators with reference to the literature on public opinion and the distribution of attitudes.110 I argue that disputes are hardly serious if they only involve small numbers of actors. Scholars need to ascertain that interpretive conflicts involve a relevant share of the overall population. In their work on norm influence, Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) speak of a “critical mass” of states that must have adopted a norm for this norm to gain traction (“norm cascade”).111

The distribution of conflicting views is equally relevant. Scholars interested in social attitudes have closely linked the idea of contestation to the “distributional properties of public opinion” (DiMaggio et al. 1996: 691; see also Down/Wilson 2008: 27). That is, they have examined the distribution of opinions in order to determine the amount of consensus and disagreement on an issue (DiMaggio et al. 1996; Down/Wilson 2008). Their concept of bimodality is particularly useful. Bimodality refers to the peakedness of a distribution (see Figure X). At one extreme, a distribution may be perfectly peaked when the opinions expressed are concentrated around one single interpretation and deviations are extremely rare. If opinions are more evenly spread across the opinion spectrum, the distribution


111 According to Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 901), this threshold is defined as “one-third of the total states in the system.”
flattens. This is the case when a couple of different interpretations are expressed and each receives a considerable amount of support. Finally, the distribution is perfectly bimodal if intermediate positions have been flattened out entirely and opinions “cluster into [two] separate camps” (DiMaggio et al. 1996: 694).

**Figure X: Peakedness of a distribution**

Patterns of interpretation of democratic IO rule may be located on this continuum. The more bimodal they are, the more serious the interpretive dispute. Bimodality exists if states create two equally strong camps that endorse interpretations of democracy that are irreconcilable. At the same time, the intermediate position – if it is logically viable – remains unoccupied: No state acts as a mediator by supporting the middle ground. Conversely, the more interpretations approximate a peaked distribution, with the opinions expressed being concentrated around one single interpretation, the less contentious the idea of democracy.

In sum, I argue that the term contested needs to be reserved for concepts that give rise to principled disputes about their meaning: The greater the share of the general population involved in principled conflicts, and the more opinions take a bimodal distribution, the more justified is the talk of a contested concept.

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112 In their seminal work on political conflict, Tilly and Tarrow (2007: 217) choose to term this phenomenon polarization, namely the "increasing ideological distance between political actors or coalitions."
3.4.2. Democracy, an uncontested concept

States express conflicting views on how to interpret some of the basic principles of democratic rule by the Council. The previous analysis detected conflicts about four of these principles, namely representation, equality, elections, and accountability. As regards the notion of representation, states are at variance over two issues: First, whether permanent or only non-permanent representation is compatible with the democratic idea; and second, whether democracy can be reconciled with veto rights for representatives or whether it instead requires their abolition. States’ conflicting interpretations of the notion of equality revolve around the very same issues. Countries disagree on whether democratic equality can be increased by abolishing or by extending the veto, and whether new permanent seats will contribute to a more egalitarian organizational structure. Disagreement over elections centers on the question of regularity: while some see a periodic electoral process as the only procedure that deserves to be called democratic, others regard permanency following one (or two) election(s) as equally democratic. Finally, states express competing views about the notion of accountability. Again, the question of permanency is at stake. Some countries doubt that permanent members can be held accountable and perceive elections as the only method to achieve this purpose. Others, in turn, think permanency may facilitate accountable IO rule.

In the previous section, I argued that in order to describe a concept as contested, three criteria need to be met: first, the concept needs to give rise to interpretive disagreement of a principled kind. These disagreements must address the core expectations raised by the norm regardless of the specific situations in which the norm is applied. Second, a substantial share of the overall population has to be involved in this type of conflict. And, third, conflicting views must be supported by equally strong camps.

According to the first criterion, democracy may be deemed contested. The disputes between states do in fact revolve around the basic characteristics of democratic IO rule – core principles that apply to all IOs. Admittedly, states’ conflicting views center on two institutional features of the SC, namely the veto and permanent membership. For that reason, many states discuss veto rights and permanency as matters of correctly translating general democratic principles into the context of one specific IO, the SC. Brazil (2008), for instance, establishes representation as a defining feature of IO democracy and claims that for the SC to live up to this principle, it has to increase the number of permanent seats: “Some believe, and others want us to believe, that true democracy would come to the Council through an
increase in the number of non-permanent members only. But simply adding non-
permanent members to the Council would not solve the problem of the loss of its
representativeness [...]” Yet, countries do try to incorporate questions of ve-
to rights and permanency into their definition of IO democracy (or of
democratic principles of IO rule) more generally. They do not restrict their
arguments to the SC alone. For instance, Ecuador (2004) argues that “no
right of veto should exist in an Organization that is based on pluralism and
democracy.” Similarly, South Korea (2007) defines permanent membership
within IOs as generally incompatible with the principle of elections, which
is at the core of democratic global rule: “There is no democracy where a single
election entitles the winner to remain in office in perpetuity.” The disputes be-
tween states thus include principled disagreement about the meaning of
IO democracy. As such, they do fulfill the first criterion – the necessary
condition – of meaning contestation.

How do the interpretive disputes fare on the two other criteria, namely
the spread and distribution of these conflicts? In Table XIII I provide an
overview of each of the four interpretive disputes detected in the previous
section. For each dispute, I specify the share of country years involved in it,
list all conflicting interpretations states adopt, and visualize their distribu-
tion. The table yields two findings:

First, the share of country years involved in each of the interpretive con-
flicts ranges from as low as two percent to 13 percent at its highest. Except
for one single conflict, the share is always well below the ten percent mar-
gin. The only conflict that involves more than a tenth of country years that
engage in democratic discourse about the SC revolves around the notion
of representation. It separates proponents from opponents of permanent
representation. Yet, even this conflict does not agitate more than 13 per-
cent of all country years. According to this indicator, states’ interpretive
conflicts all end up on the lower end of the contestation scale.
### 3.4. Contestation: do states contest the meaning of global democracy?

Table XIII: Interpretive conflicts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Share of actors involved$^{13}$</th>
<th>Interpretations</th>
<th>Peakedness of the distribution of interpretations$^{14}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REPRESENTATION: Permanency</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>- Only non-permanent positions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Longer-term non-permanent positions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Permanent and non-permanent positions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REPRESENTATION: Veto power</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>- With veto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Without veto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQUALITY: Remedies I (veto power)</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>- Restrict/abolish veto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Restrict/abolish veto; if impossible, extend it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Extend veto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Footnotes

113 I relate the number of country years involved in the conflict to the overall number of country years that made democracy claims in the debate about the SC, namely 317.

114 The figures show the absolute numbers of country years that adopt the respective interpretation.
3. CHAPTER III: Mapping states’ democratic discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQUALITY: Remedies II (permanency)</th>
<th>5%</th>
<th>– Not extend permanency</th>
<th>– Extend permanency</th>
<th>(not extend permanency</th>
<th>extend permanency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELECTIONS: Regularity</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>– Periodic</td>
<td>– One/two-times</td>
<td>(periodic</td>
<td>one/two-times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCOUNTABILITY: Possibility of holding permanent members accountable</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>– Impossible</td>
<td>– Possible</td>
<td>(impossible</td>
<td>possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCOUNTABILITY: Means to increase accountability</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>– Elections (non-permanency)</td>
<td>– Permanency</td>
<td>(elections (non-permanency)</td>
<td>permanency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Second, except for the conflict just mentioned, all interpretive divides assume a peaked distribution: one understanding clearly prevails over alternatives ones. Remarkably, the dominant interpretation is always the one that associates democratic rule with non-permanency and the lack of veto privileges. Conflicting interpretations, which see permanency or veto rights as compatible with the democratic idea, never manage to unite a significant amount of actors. There is only one exception: the conflict between opponents and proponents of permanent representation. In this case, interpretations – although far from being perfectly bimodal – cluster into two camps, with each camp endorsing a democratic interpretation that is irreconcilable with that of the other camp. More precisely, a smaller group (of 14 country years), claiming that “the category of permanent membership is not based on the concept of democratic representation” (Argentina 2009), is pitted against a larger group (of 26 country years), which contends that “expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories would be a far more democratic and inclusive means of addressing the question of equitable representation” (Brazil 2008). Notably, this is the only instance where supporters of permanency prevail over their opponents. The intermediate position, which links democracy with longer-term, yet non-permanent representative seats, is adopted by only one single country year.

In sum, the disputes examined fulfil only one of the three conditions of meaning contestation: They include disagreement of a principled kind, but none involves a significant amount of country years and conflicting opinions do not take the shape of a bimodal distribution. As such, these frictions constitute limited disagreements rather than serious conflicts. Put differently, the meaning of global democracy is not contested. Instead, it generates broad consensus.

3.5. Conclusion

IOs are the target of democratic demands – and this ever more frequently. That is at least what the relevant literature suggests. At the same time, scholars describe democracy as a contested concept, the meaning of which is strongly disputed among actors who make these demands. Yet, neither the prevalence nor the meaning of the democratic discourse that targets IOs has ever been comprehensively mapped. This chapter contributed to filling this gap. On the basis of a novel dataset, it offered the first large-N account of states’ democratic discourse on two important IO bodies, namely the SC and the GA. In doing so, it paid particular attention to the differ-
ences and similarities in countries’ democratic language, including both
the frequency with which different states invoke the democratic idea and
countries’ interpretations of IO democracy.

The chapter generated two important insights: on the one hand, it
showed that states are by no means united in their democratic discourse.
While many countries invoke democracy in their evaluations of the Coun-
cil and the GA, quite a few states avoid the democratic narrative entirely.
As such, states’ discourse is characterized by obvious differences in their
willingness to invoke the language of democracy. Countries’ interpreta-
tions of IO democracy, on the other hand, were shown to be remarkably
consistent – both across the two IO bodies and across states. Not a single
country that invokes the term openly challenges its applicability to the
global realm. Put differently, no state argues that the Council or the GA is
not meant to conform to democratic ideals. Moreover, states agree both on
the primary subjects and on a set of core principles of democratic rule be-
yond the state. In unison, they promote a conception of democratic global
rule that revolves around the principles of representation, elections, and
equality. The chapter thoroughly discussed this conception and the ways
in which it resembles but also differs from the model of representative
democracy in the domestic context of rule.

Yet, some important differences remain in the way countries understand
global democratic rule. Clearly, states’ agreement ends when it comes to
interpreting core democratic principles. While interpretive conflicts do not
amount to outright contestation – they include disagreement of a princi-
pled kind but never involve too many actors, and always feature one domi-
nant interpretation – these disputes concern every single one of the core
principles of democratic rule emphasized by states.

In sum, two aspects of states’ democratic discourse require closer exami-
nation: first, the clear differences in countries’ willingness to invoke the
democratic narrative; and second, a series of interpretive divides among
states. The next chapter seeks to explain what drives both patterns.
4. CHAPTER IV: Explaining states’ democratic discourse

The previous chapter identified two important differences in countries’ democratic discourse, namely differences in states’ willingness to invoke the notion of democracy and their divergent interpretations of this central concept. The purpose of this chapter is explanatory. It seeks to explain the patterns detected and thus identify what drives the differences in states’ democratic language. In doing so, I rely on the two theoretical accounts outlined in Chapter 2. I ask whether the variations in states’ discourse are better explained by differences in states’ domestic democratic backgrounds, or whether they are the result of different power positions and material interests among countries.

At this point, based on the findings of the previous chapter, it is possible to provide some initial reflections on this study’s earlier expectations about the drivers of states’ democratic discourse. So far, the data has offered ambiguous evidence with regard to the LoNC. As Chapter 3 showed, the dominant interpretation of democratic rule adopted by countries is both consistent and at odds with the domestic institutions of democratic states: On the one hand, democracies implement the principles of representative democratic rule invoked on a global level within their own domestic institutions. On the other hand, the statist conception of global democracy espoused by the international community diverges from what democratic countries conceive as the proper subjects of domestic democratic rule: namely people. Consequently, the initial finding that democracies do not act as zealous proponents of democratic global rule need not contradict the LoNC. Democratic countries may in fact perceive a conflict between how the international community defines global democracy and their own domestic practices of rule.

But another option is equally plausible: the LoNC simply does not drive states’ democratic discourse. What drives this discourse is the LoMI. That is to say, the counterintuitive regime type pattern – the fact that democracies prove quite reluctant while autocracies show great eagerness to invoke the democratic narrative – may prove to be spurious once we control for variables associated with the LoMI. In fact, this pattern may not be driven by states’ domestic democratic record; instead, it may be driven by the different power positions and power struggles states are involved in. Given the findings of the previous chapter, countries’ democracy claims may well
serve to justify their power interests – just like the LoMI suggests. Needless to say, the dominant democratic interpretation adopted is better suited to criticizing rather than defending unequal power relations. As such, it better serves the purposes of the powerless and the aims of those who seek to obstruct further empowerment of the few.

Likewise, states’ interpretive disagreements may follow both the LoNC and the LoMI. On the one hand, these conflicts may emerge because democracies resist the attempts of autocracies to undercut the traditional interpretation of representative democratic rule – an interpretation that centers on periodic elections and is thus very much consistent with the domestic practices of democratic states. This finding would clearly support the LoNC. On the other hand, most of these divides center on two core features of institutional power in the Council, namely permanent membership and veto rights, and whether extending them is compatible or irreconcilable with the idea of democracy. As such, these interpretive conflicts are likely to be related to power struggles, especially to the confrontation between states that seek institutional empowerment and countries that oppose these efforts. This finding, in turn, would strongly support the LoMI.

In the following, I will first operationalize the five independent variables that were introduced in Chapter 2, each of which is associated with either the LoNC or the LoMI. Thereafter, I examine which of the hypotheses formulated in the theory chapter best accounts for the patterns that characterize states’ democratic discourse. I first focus on conflicting democratic interpretations among states and explore which variables generate the greatest overlap with the coalitions of countries found on either side of these interpretive divides (4.2). The second part of the chapter focuses on differences in states’ references to the notion of democracy (4.3). More precisely, I use statistical analysis to test the explanatory power of all five variables. This is meant to ascertain which of them – and hence, which of the two logics – may best explain who invokes and who avoids the language of democracy. The chapter concludes with an overview of the findings (4.4).

The empirical results lend strong support to the LoMI. Differing interpretations are best explained by the power ascension variable. More specifically, interpretive differences largely coincide with states’ statuses as either aspirants to institutional power status or as their opponents. While the aspirants to power invoke an understanding of democracy that is compatible with the extension of formal power privileges, their opponents openly challenge this interpretation. They claim that privileges like permanency and veto rights are clearly at odds with core democratic ideas like equality.
4.1. Operationalizing the independent variables

The LoNC suggests that discrepancies in states’ global democratic discourse will reflect differences in their domestic democratic background. I identified two domestic differences that promise to be particularly influential: these were, first, differences in the democratic quality of countries’ domestic institutions, and second, differences in the dominant interpretations of domestic democratic rule adopted by their national societies.
THE DEMOCRATIC QUALITY OF DOMESTIC INSTITUTIONS: To judge the democratic quality of states’ domestic institutions I rely on the Freedom House (FH) index. FH ranks states according to their scores on political rights and civil liberties as indicators of the “general state of freedom in a country” (Freedom House 2010). The sub-categories of the index encompass all of the principles that figure prominently in states’ democratic discourse on the SC and the GA, namely the functioning of the electoral process, the nature of political representation and participation, the accountability and transparency of rule, and the legal equality of the democratic subjects. A further advantage of FH as compared to other regime type indices is its broad coverage of small states. This group of countries constitutes a large constituency of IOs and includes many active proponents of IO reform. The combined FH scores that countries receive generate ratings from 1 (solid democracies) to 7 (highly autocratic regimes) (Freedom House 2010).

DOMESTIC DEMOCRATIC UNDERSTANDING: Interpretations of the democratic idea seem to vary considerably across the globe. Some of the first studies on this subject have focused on regional differences in particular. Regional cultures, they argue, may account for important variations in conceptualizations of domestic democracy – differences between “Western” and “non-Western” conceptions in particular (Sadiki 2004: 62; also see Bell 2006; Morozov 2013). Of course, peoples’ democratic understandings need not exclusively correspond with geographical regions. Yet, to date it is the most convincing proxy provided by the literature. To distinguish different regions, I rely on a slightly adapted version of Hadenius and Teorell’s classification of world regions as provided by the Quality of Government Dataset 2013 (Teorell et al. 2013). I subsume East Asia, South-East Asia, South Asia, and the Pacific under a category “Asia” and include the Caribbean in the group of Latin American countries. This is largely consistent with the UN’s own classification of regional groupings.

The logic of material interests suggests that divergent uses of the democratic idea should reflect the different power positions and power struggles

115 Polity IV is much narrower in this sense as its sub-categories focus primarily on the institutionalization of elections.
116 Also see section 2.2.4.
states are involved in. I identified three differences as particularly influential: institutional power disparities, material power disparities, and differences among the institutionally powerless themselves, namely those between states that strive for institutionalized privileges (power aspirants) and countries that oppose these aims.

INSTITUTIONAL POWER: In the SC, institutional empowerment is closely linked to the question of membership and the privileges that accompany it. The Council is composed of 15 members, only five of which are permanent (P5) and vested with the right to veto every decision. Because the P5 possess a monopoly on the Council’s decision-making (Hurd 2002: 41), I define them as institutionally empowered. All others, including the non-permanent members, I define as institutionally powerless.117 In contrast to the SC, the GA lacks formalized inequalities: its membership is inclusive and decision-making follows the principle of “one state, one vote.”

MATERIAL POWER: The most widely used indicator of a country’s material power is the size of its GDP (Wohlforth 1999). I use data on GDP in current US dollars provided by the World Bank (World Development Indicators).118 Superior economic resources provide states with a whole set of advantages (see 2.3.3). While economic power is thus “a power resource in its own right [...] it can [also] be converted into other power resources, notably military might” (Young 2010: 6). The latter is particularly relevant in the SC as it increases the likelihood of being included in the Council’s informal procedures of consultation.

POWER ASPIRATION (those who aspire to institutional power status and their opponents): In the SC, the main aspirants to institutionalized power positions have joined forces in the Group of Four (G4), where they support each other’s pursuit of permanent Council membership. I do not include African states among the category of power

117 Certainly, non-permanent membership also constitutes a form of institutional empowerment. If this wasn’t the case, states would be much less eager to campaign for such seats. However, due to its temporally limited character and the fact that this membership category lacks one of the most powerful instruments of institutionalized domination, namely the right to veto, I do not define non-permanent Council members as formally powerful.

118 I use the 2015 dataset.
aspirants. In contrast to Brazil, India, Japan, and Germany, African states do not link their claims to formal power to material clout. Moreover, Africa has not specified which countries will and which will not receive permanent seats and veto rights once these are granted. The true African power aspirants are thus unknown. In addition, if only some states may plausibly hope to be empowered, this is unlikely to shape the democratic discourse of the whole region. The efforts of the G4 are firmly opposed by another group, first named the Coffee Club and later renamed Uniting for Consensus (UfC). This group seeks to frustrate the empowerment of the four, which some of the UfC see as their regional competitors.

4.2. Explaining states’ interpretive differences

When states speak about the democratic GA and a democratized SC, they are largely invoking the same principles of democratic rule. In the case of the GA, their agreement also includes the interpretation of these democratic standards. When it comes to the SC, however, countries’ understandings differ in principled ways. As the last chapter highlighted, it is the principles states espouse most frequently – namely representation, equality, elections, and accountability – that are subject to disputes. While none of these disputes amount to outright contestation (see 3.4.2), they clearly need to be accounted for. The aim of this section is to account for the sources of divergent democratic understandings.

4.2.1. Method

In the following, I will systematically analyze each interpretive conflict in line with the independent variables introduced above. More precisely, I will examine the size of the overlap between the groups of states found on either side of the interpretive divide and the values of the independent variables. This involves questions such as: is one interpretive coalition mainly composed of democracies, while its opponents – the group that favors an alternative understanding – are predominantly autocracies? Or does the interpretive conflict mirror differences in states’ institutionalized power position rather than a variance in countries’ domestic democratic institutions?
The previous chapter showed that none of the seven interpretive conflicts has managed to involve a particularly large number of country years (see 3.4.2). On average, these disputes involve just about five percent of the country years that engage in democratic discourse about the SC. Needless to say, these small numbers do not lend themselves to statistical analysis. This is unfortunate, since statistics would be particularly helpful in cases like these, where interpretive coalitions are linked to several independent variables. It would allow me to assess the independent effect of each variable while simultaneously holding all others constant. Yet, there are other means to increase the plausibility of given conjectures. One is paying particular attention to factors that matter across several of the disputes. If interpretive conflicts can be reduced to the same two issues, namely permanency and veto rights, the reasons for states to join one or the other interpretive coalition should be fairly constant. Moreover, I also draw on the insights from the interview process to assess which of several possible factors is likely to be the most convincing.

4.2.2. Findings

The previous chapter generated several important insights into the nature of states’ interpretive disputes. One insight is particularly relevant here: all conflicts can be reduced to two contentious issues, namely that about enlarging permanent membership and that about extending veto rights. When states debate how to understand core democratic principles, their conflicts always boil down to conflicting views on whether extending permanency and veto privileges is compatible with the idea of democratic rule. While the close link between the conflicts about permanency and veto rights on the one hand and the language of democracy on the other is remarkable, these conflicts themselves are anything but new. In fact, they go to the core of why Council reform has not moved forward over the past decades. Furthermore, these frictions are closely associated with a battle between three negotiating groups: the G4, the African Group, and the UfC. Since their formation, the G4 and the African Group have demanded permanent seats and veto rights for their members. Their efforts have since been opposed by another group of states, known as the UfC, which firmly rejects the addition of new permanent members with veto privileges. This, in turn, suggests that interpretive differences among states may be best predicted by the power aspiration variable.
And in fact, the empirical results support this conjecture: the questions of (1) why states disagree on the meaning of global democracy and (2) which interpretations they adopt are best accounted for by their status as either *aspirants* to institutional power status or *opponents* of these efforts. Differences in institutional power clearly do not drive states to adopt one or the other understanding of key democratic principles. As the data show, not a single P5 member is involved in any of these conflicts. All of the disputes are fought out among states without institutional power status, suggesting that the disempowered themselves do not constitute a coherent group.

The variable that overlaps most comprehensively with the interpretive coalitions states join is the *power aspiration* variable; it is also the only variable that consistently matters across most of states’ conflicts. That is to say, one interpretive coalition is usually dominated by members of the UfC, while the other one – the one that espouses an alternative democratic interpretation – lacks any UfC involvement but instead includes members of the G4 (and its supporters) or – and this will be elaborated further down – involves countries from the African continent. In some instances, however, the interpretive conflicts also coincide with differences in states’ domestic democratic institutions or material power status. In these cases, it emerges that the states that decouple the idea of democracy from permanent membership and veto rights possess greater economic clout and more democratic domestic institutions than their opponents, who describe permanency and veto privileges as compatible with democracy. Yet, insights gathered from the interview process suggest that the occasional overlap between interpretive coalitions and independent variables like domestic democratic institutions and material power status need not be over-interpreted. Rather than being meaningful factors on their own, the relevance of these variables may be attributed to the fact that the opponents of power aspirants, namely members of the UfC grouping, include many democratic states that possess strong economies.

In the following, I will look at each interpretive conflict to examine the size of the overlap between the discursive coalitions formed and the five factors that may drive states’ democratic discourse. In doing so, I will also elaborate why states’ affiliation with North or Sub-Saharan Africa works in favor of the *power aspiration* variable rather than the variable of *domestic democratic understandings*. 
Interpretive conflicts about the principle of representation

States’ interpretations of democratic representation vary in two ways: first, countries express different views on whether permanent representation is compatible with the idea of democracy (Table XIV); and second, they differ in their views on the veto right and whether democracy requires its abolition or can be reconciled with this privilege (Table XV).

Differences in institutional power may not explain either of these divides. Both disputes take place without the involvement of any permanent Council member. Yet, in the debate about permanent representation, the two interpretive coalitions reveal some differences in material power and in the democratic quality of their members’ domestic institutions. But most importantly, interpretive coalitions strongly overlap with states’ status as power aspirants or opponents of the power ambitions of others.

Evidently, countries that perceive the idea of permanent representation as utterly undemocratic have stronger economies than their opponents. On average, their GDP in current US dollars assumes a value of 1,200,000, while that of their opponents only amounts to 150,000. In addition, these countries’ domestic institutions are considerably more democratic than those of the states that advocate permanency in the name of democratic rule. With an average FH score of 1.3, those who object to non-permanency fall into the category of “free” countries, while those who advocate permanent seats score 4.2 on average and may thus only count as “partly free.” Yet, these aggregate differences should not blind us to the fact that both more powerful and weaker states participate on either side of the interpretive divide. Similarly, democracies are found both among the opponents and the advocates for permanent membership.

As a result, the most convincing explanation for why countries adopt one or the other understanding of democratic representative rule appears to be whether these states strive for institutional power or whether they oppose these ambitions. Remarkably, every single state that challenges the democratic quality of permanent representation is a member of the UfC. By contrast, the group of states defending the democratic merits of permanent membership does not include a single UfC country. Yet, the group of defenders includes two states from the G4, namely Brazil and India, and quite a few countries that support the G4’s aspirations.119

119 While there is no comprehensive list of countries that back the G4, it is widely assumed that the G4 have a substantial basis among the L69, a group of developing countries from many different regions of the world, and among Caribbean
To be sure, the divide between power aspirants and their opponents may also account for some of the differences in states’ domestic democratic institutions and material power status. While the UfC also includes a few hybrid regimes and one autocracy (Pakistan), it is composed of a disproportionately large number of strong democracies. By the same token, the group encompasses many countries that are economically wealthy.

Table XIV: Interpretive conflicts: representation – permanency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country years involved in the conflict</th>
<th>Institutional power (P5/non-P5)</th>
<th>Material power (GDP(^{120}))</th>
<th>Power aspiration (UfC/G4)</th>
<th>Domestic democratic institutions (FH)</th>
<th>Domestic democratic understanding (world region)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina 2003</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>1295972</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina 2009</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>3783064</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina 2010</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>4628438</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada 2005</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>11641442</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>North America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada 2008</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>15426186</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>North America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada 2009</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>13708398</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>North America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada 2010</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>16140138</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>North America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada 2011</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>17887964</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>North America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy 2003</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>15703305</td>
<td>UfC</td>
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<td>West. Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy 2010</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>21267476</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea 2010</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>10944994</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea 2011</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>12024637</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain 2004</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>10695555</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>West. Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain 2006</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>12645515</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>West. Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Marino 2010</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>NA(^{121})</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>West. Europe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

states from CARICOM. Many of these countries, including a few that have openly backed the G4’s draft resolution of 2005, are found among those who argue in favor of a democratic understanding that integrates permanent representation.

120 For better legibility, I divided GDP values (in current US dollars) by 100,000.
121 The last GDP value available for San Marino dates back to 2006. In this year, the country’s GDP in current US dollars was at 14,690.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country years involved in the conflict</th>
<th>Institutional power (P5/non-P5)</th>
<th>Material power (GDP(^{122}))</th>
<th>Power aspiration (UfC/G4)</th>
<th>Domestic democratic institutions (FH)</th>
<th>Domestic democratic understanding (world region)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain 2008</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>257109</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Middle East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil 2008</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>16946158</td>
<td>G4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria 2004</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>259198</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>East. Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador 2013</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>944727</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eq. Guinea 2011</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>157113</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji 2004</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>27275</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia 2013</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>161401</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>East. Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India 2004</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>7215856</td>
<td>G4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica 2009</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>121250</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan 2006</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>150569</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>4.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Libya 2006</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>549619</td>
<td>rest</td>
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<td>Mongolia 2003</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>15953</td>
<td>rest</td>
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<td>East. Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nicaragua 2006</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>67863</td>
<td>rest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nicaragua 2011</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>97556</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>4.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria 2011</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>4117438</td>
<td>rest</td>
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<td>Sub-Saharan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraguay 2004</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>80339</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>non-P5</td>
<td>87347</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar 2006</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>608821</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>5.5</td>
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<td>Saudi Arabia 2007</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>4159645</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Middle East</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tunisia 2003</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>274531</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>North Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tunisia 2004</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>311831</td>
<td>rest</td>
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<td>North Africa</td>
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<td>Tuvalu 2004</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>rest</td>
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<td>U. A. Emirates 2005</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>1806170</td>
<td>rest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe 2007</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>52920</td>
<td>rest</td>
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<td>Sub-Saharan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe 2010</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>94568</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe 2011</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>109562</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The debate between those who link democracy to representation that includes veto rights and those who strongly seek to decouple the ideas of representation and veto rights is clearly more difficult to interpret (Table XV). First of all, there are only five country years involved in this conflict. The opponents of new veto privileges are particularly weakly represented: only San Marino (2005) speaks for them. Consistent with the pattern detected before, this state is a democratic member of the UfC. Yet, while the opponents of veto rights do not include UfC countries, members of the G4 are also not represented. The countries that link democratic representation to the extension of veto rights are all consolidated autocracies from North and Sub-Saharan Africa. In pitting the UfC against African states, this conflict points to both the variable of power aspirations and that of domestic democratic understandings.

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122 For better legibility, I divided GDP values (in current US dollars) by 100,000.
Nonetheless, I argue that this interpretive divide does not differ much from the one described above: it is best understood as a struggle between those who seek institutional power status and those who wish to block others’ ascent to power. As stated earlier, the G4 is not the only group that strives for institutionalized power privileges. In fact, the African group, which includes all African states from North and Sub-Saharan Africa, also demands permanent seats and veto rights for its group. Yet, this group is not the UfC’s primary opponent. This role is reserved for the G4, which is composed of the regional competitors of many UfC countries. Despite this fact, the UfC’s opposition to permanency and the veto is also at odds with and thus obstructs the ambitions of African countries. While the conflict between the UfC and the African states has not been fought out as openly as the conflict with the G4, it is of the same kind: it is a conflict between those who strive for institutional power status and those who lack the chance to ascend and therefore seek to prevent that other states may rise to power.

In the case of Africa, I claim, regional origin is better understood as a proxy for power aspirations rather than domestic democratic understandings. That is to say: both North and Sub-Saharan Africa have united behind an interpretation of democratic representation that approves of permanency and veto rights. Yet, this need not suggest that these countries share understandings of domestic democratic rule that are particularly compatible with the idea of privileged representation. There is an alternative interpretation that is more reasonable: both regions aspire to institutional power status. The concept of democratic representation advanced by these states clearly helps to legitimize these aims. However, this reasoning may not be extended to other regions. Apart from Africa, no region is (publicly) united in its stance towards Council reform.

Table XV: Interpretive conflicts: representation – veto power

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country years involved in the conflict</th>
<th>Institutional power (P5/non-P5)</th>
<th>Material power (GDP123)</th>
<th>Power aspiration (UfC/G4)</th>
<th>Domestic democratic institutions (FH)</th>
<th>Domestic democratic understanding (world region)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

123 See footnote 120.
4.2. Explaining states’ interpretive differences

Interpretive conflicts about the principle of equality

When states specify their understanding of equality, two divides are apparent: one separates those who see a contradiction between equality and permanent membership from those who perceive both principles to be reconcilable (Table XVI); the other one separates states that link democratic equality to the abolition of veto rights from those who deny that veto privileges may compromise egalitarian rule beyond the state (Table XVII).

Table XVI: Interpretive conflicts: equality – remedies II (permanency)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country years involved in the conflict</th>
<th>Institutional power (P5/non-P5)</th>
<th>Material power (GDP 124)</th>
<th>Power aspiration (UfC/G4)</th>
<th>Domestic democratic institutions (FH)</th>
<th>Domestic democratic understanding (world region)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT EXTEND PERMANENCY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina 2009</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>3785064</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina 2010</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>4628438</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina 2011</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
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<td>UfC</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia 2007</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>131202</td>
<td>rest</td>
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<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia 2007</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>2074165</td>
<td>UfC</td>
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<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia 2008</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>2439824</td>
<td>UfC</td>
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<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia 2009</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>2338217</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan 2006</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>1372641</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>5.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan 2013</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>2322868</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy 2003</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>15703305</td>
<td>UfC</td>
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<td>West. Europe</td>
</tr>
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<td>Italy 2004</td>
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<td>12645515</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>West. Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXTEND PERMANENCY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt 2006</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>1074840</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>North Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia 2011</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>237317</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

124 See footnote 120.
Neither divide is a matter of states’ institutional power status. Similarly, the quality of domestic democracy may not account for these frictions: neither side of the debate is dominated by either consolidated democracies or strong autocracies. Lastly, while those who oppose veto rights and permanent membership as undemocratic features average higher levels of economic power than those who defend both aspects as democratically viable, this difference does not amount to a clear opposition of the strong against the weak. Both coalitions include states with more power and countries with less economic power.

The divide about equality and permanent membership, however, closely resembles the one about representation and permanency: it involves a conflict between UfC countries and African states and thus points to the importance of both the variable of power aspiration and that of domestic democratic understanding. With one exception, those who assert that the extension of permanent membership compromises democratic equality are UfC countries. Their opponents, namely those who see equality and permanency as reconcilable, are African states. Again, I argue that African unity is inspired by power considerations rather than efforts to achieve consistency across the domestic-international divide. The understanding of democracy implied by Egypt (2006) and Zambia (2011) clearly coincides with their regions’ aspirations to achieve institutional privileges. By contrast, the interpretation advanced by the UfC helps to delegitimize the ambitions of Africa. Moreover, in contrast to the interpretive conflict about veto-vested representation, here it is easier to rule out that the divide between UfC countries and African states is spurious and that all that matters is whose domestic institutions are more and whose are less democratic.

There are some similarities in the divide about equality and veto rights. As stated above, neither their institutional and material power, nor the quality of their domestic democratic institutions induces states to adopt one or the other interpretation. However, in contrast to the conflict about democratic equality and permanent membership, this divide also does not neatly pit the UfC against either the G4 or African states. While again, it is African countries that advance an interpretation compatible with privileges – they claim that democratic equality may necessitate the extension

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125 On average, those who prefer to abolish the veto right have a GDP value (in current US dollars) of about 7,100,000. With 660,000, the GDP value of their opponents is clearly smaller. On the question of permanency the gap is somewhat smaller, with those who oppose permanency revealing an average GDP value of about 1,900,000 and those who favor it revealing a value of 650,000.
of veto rights – their opponents are not only UfC countries, but also include a more diverse subset of states. These states assert that increasing the Council’s democratic equality requires the abolition of the veto or at least severe restrictions on its use. As such, it is the only interpretive coalition that targets institutional power privileges that are already in place rather than the ones that might still come. While the extension of veto privileges mainly worries the UfC, the democratic critique of existing veto rights appears to unite a much broader constituency.

Interpretive conflicts about the principle of elections

States that emphasize the democratic importance of an electoral process differ over how regularly elections are supposed to take place (Table XVIII). Yet, this cannot be accounted for either by institutional or material power status, by states’ domestic democratic understandings or institutions. Whether countries interpret elections as a periodic process or understand them as a one-time event depends on their status as aspirants to institution-

Table XVII: Interpretive conflicts: equality – remedies I (veto power)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country years involved in the conflict</th>
<th>Institutional power (P5/non-P5)</th>
<th>Material power (GDP)</th>
<th>Power aspiration (UfC/G4)</th>
<th>Domestic democratic institutions (FH)</th>
<th>Domestic democratic understanding (world region)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina 2004</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>1832957</td>
<td>UfC</td>
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</tr>
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<td>185051</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Middle East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botswana 2003</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>75115</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia 2006</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>1625901</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia 2006</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>1626917</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia 2010</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>2475335</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines 2008</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>1741952</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia 2004</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>573294</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>East. Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela 2006</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>1834775</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela 2007</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>2303642</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt 2006</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>1074840</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>North Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia 2011</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>237317</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpretive conflicts about the principle of elections

States that emphasize the democratic importance of an electoral process differ over how regularly elections are supposed to take place (Table XVIII). Yet, this cannot be accounted for either by institutional or material power status, by states’ domestic democratic understandings or institutions. Whether countries interpret elections as a periodic process or understand them as a one-time event depends on their status as aspirants to institution-

126 See footnote 120.
al power status or opponents of the power ambitions shown by a few states. All countries involved in the debate are institutionally disempowered, and both coalitions include states with rather high GDP values as well as states with less economic clout. Likewise, both coalitions are dominated by democratic states whose regional origins overlap to a considerable extent. What divides states, however, strongly overlaps with their affiliation with either the UfC or the G4. All of the states who defend periodic elections as the only option compatible with democracy are members of the UfC. Their opponents, who emphasize the democratic quality of just one election, are two G4 countries, namely Brazil (2008) and India (2007), which are supported by Slovakia (2009 and 2010).

Table XVIII: Interpretive conflicts: elections – regularity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country years involved in the conflict</th>
<th>Institutional power (P5/non-P5)</th>
<th>Material power (GDP(^{128}))</th>
<th>Power aspiration (UfC/G4)</th>
<th>Domestic democratic institutions (FH)</th>
<th>Domestic democratic understanding (world region)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERIODIC ELECTIONS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina 2003</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>1295972</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina 2009</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>3785064</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy 2004</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>17591259</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>West. Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico 2006</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>9668705</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan 2005</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>1095021</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan 2006</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>1372641</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea 2007</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>11226792</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea 2008</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>10022191</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea 2009</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>9019350</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea 2010</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>10944994</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea 2011</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>12024637</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea 2012</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>12228072</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea 2013</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>13056050</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain 2004</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>10695555</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>West. Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain 2006</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>12645515</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>West. Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain 2008</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>16349890</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>West. Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain 2009</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>14990747</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>West. Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ONLY ONE/TWO ELECTION(S)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

127 Both sides include Latin American states and countries of Asian origin. While those in favor of periodic elections are also supported by Eastern European countries, their opponents additionally include states from the regions of Western Europe and North America as well as from the Middle East and North Africa.

128 See footnote 120.
Interpretive conflicts about the principle of accountability

The same pattern characterizes the disputes surrounding the notion of democratic accountability. The group that expresses doubt about the possibility of holding unelected members to account (Table XIX) and the group whose members establish an inseparable link between accountability and non-permanent elected seats (Table XX) are exclusively composed of UfC countries. Each of the two interpretations of democratic rule is opposed by a G4 country. While India (2007) objects to the former claim – it asserts that permanent members may also be held to account – Brazil (2008) counters the latter argument: in order to be democratically accountable, Brazil claims, the Council requires new permanent seats. Again, none of the other factors – institutional or material power, domestic democratic understandings or institutions – sufficiently overlaps with these interpretive coalitions. None of them constitutes a plausible driver of the democratic interpretations states adopt.

Table XIX: Interpretive conflicts: accountability – possibility of holding permanent members accountable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country years involved in the conflict</th>
<th>Institutional power (P5/non-P5)</th>
<th>Material power (GDP[^129])</th>
<th>Power aspiration (UfC/G4)</th>
<th>Domestic democratic institutions (FH)</th>
<th>Domestic democratic understanding (world region)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina 2003</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>1295972</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina 2009</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>3785064</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy 2003</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>15703305</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>West. Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy 2004</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>17991259</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>West. Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea 2007</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>11226792</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea 2008</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>10022191</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain 2008</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>16349890</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>West. Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India 2007</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>12386992</td>
<td>G4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[^129]: See footnote 120.
Table XX: Interpretive conflicts: accountability – means to increase accountability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country years involved in the conflict</th>
<th>Institutional power (P5/non-P5)</th>
<th>Material power (GDP¹³⁰)</th>
<th>Power aspiration (UfC/G4)</th>
<th>Domestic democratic institutions (FH)</th>
<th>Domestic democratic understanding (world region)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELECTIONS (NON-PERMANENCY)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina 2003</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>1295972</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy 2003</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>15703305</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>West. Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy 2004</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>17991259</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>West. Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico 2006</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>9668705</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico 2008</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>11012753</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan 2005</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>1095021</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea 2007</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>11226792</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea 2008</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>10022191</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea 2009</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>9019350</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain 2006</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>12645515</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>West. Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain 2008</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>16349890</td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>West. Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERMANENCY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil 2008</td>
<td>non-P5</td>
<td>16946158</td>
<td>G4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This section aimed to account for the differences in states’ democratic understandings. What drives countries to adopt one interpretation of key democratic principles rather than another one? And what does this imply about the overarching logic that underpins states’ interpretive patterns? Do these patterns support the LoNC, which suggests that the global democratic understandings states adopt reflect countries’ differing domestic democratic backgrounds? Or do the patterns speak in favor of the LoMI and thus arise from differences in states’ power positions and the diverging material interests pursued by these countries?

The empirical findings are quite clear: there is a considerable overlap between interpretive divides among states and the variable of power aspiration. As such, these findings lend strong support to the LoMI. Depending on whether states are aspirants to institutional power status or opponent of these actors, their understandings of core democratic principles differ fundamentally. While the power aspirants adopt interpretations that are consistent with institutional privileges – namely with permanent membership and veto rights – the opponents disagree vehemently: they claim that democracy is utterly incompatible with permanency and the privilege of the veto. Yet, contrary to expectations, this conflict cannot always be re-

¹³⁰ See footnote 120.
duced to a confrontation between the UfC and the G4. While in each interpretive divide UfC countries dominate one side of the argument, the counter-argument is not just made by the G4 (and their supporters) but also by African states.

The G4 are not the only power aspirants. Africa is also pursuing institutional empowerment. While the African Group has not specified which states it seeks to empower and does not base its demands in superior material capabilities, Africa is clearly acting as an aspirant to formal power status. Hence, in the case of Africa, regional origin does not imply differences in domestic democratic understandings that are externalized to the global level. Instead, being a state from North and Sub-Saharan Africa is best understood as a proxy for being a power aspirant.

Apparently, in adopting one or another interpretation of democratic rule, states are not driven by the LoNC. The discourse adopted by countries does not reflect efforts to align their global democratic interpretations with their domestic democratic backgrounds. In some instances, states that seek to categorize permanency and veto rights as undemocratic feature higher levels of domestic democracy than those who describe these privileges as compatible with democracy. Yet, this difference appears to be due to the fact that the group that seeks to block other states’ ascension to power, namely the UfC, includes many strong democracies. Moreover, those who defend the democratic quality of power privileges are not only autocracies. In fact, two of its most active members, Brazil and India, are strong democracies. Evidently, democratic states are not the most fervent defenders of electoral democracy. The quality of one’s domestic democratic institutions does not explain whether states stick to or distort the original idea of elections as a periodic process.

4.3. Explaining why some states use and others avoid the democratic narrative

While the previous section accounted for differences in the interpretations of democratic IO rule states adopt, the following section seeks to explain why some country years embrace the democratic narrative, while others never invoke this language.

For states’ discourse about the SC, I use regression analysis to test hypotheses on the effect of five different variables, each associated with either the LoNC or the LoMI. A significant influence of the institutional power, material power, or power aspiration variable on states’ willingness to invoke democracy would speak in favor of the LoMI. By contrast, a signifi-
cant effect of states’ domestic democratic understandings and of the democratic quality of their domestic institutions would point to the LoNC. Unfortunately, the same method cannot be applied to the GA. Because states’ democratic discourse about the Assembly is rather weak, the amount of data available does not lend itself to regression analysis. Yet, the low number of democracy claims proves that states’ democratic discourse addresses the deficits in IO democracy rather than pinpoints instances where democracy works. Hence, the patterns that induce states to invoke democracy in the context of the SC deserve to be the main focus of this project. Still, in order to identify more general rather than IO-specific patterns in states’ democracy talk, I also need insights into what drives states’ democracy claims about the GA. As a substitute for regression analysis, I thus map the frequencies with which different groups of country years – for instance, the institutionally powerful as opposed to the formally disempowered – embrace the term democracy and examine whether they differ. While this does not permit me to test the independent effect of each variable, it nonetheless offers valuable insights into what prompts states to praise the democratic quality of the Assembly. In addition, it helps to assess how these patterns relate to those that characterize the Council.

4.3.1. Method: logistic regression and the analysis of frequency patterns

For the SC, I use logistic regression to determine which of the factors operationalized in section 4.1 affect the odds of issuing democracy claims. Logistic regression is particularly useful when a binary dependent variable is predicted using a set of continuous or categorical independent variables (Kabacoff 2011: 317). As described earlier, a country year can either make democracy claims in its yearly reform speech or it can avoid the language of democracy altogether. I thus model the presence of democracy claims by domestic democratic understandings, the democratic quality of domestic institutions, institutional and material power, and power aspiration, with country as a random effect that accounts for the repeated measurements of country across the years surveyed. In addition, I control for variance in the length of the speech made by each country year as well as the year of debate itself. After all, states’ democratic discourse may be affected by the way a reform session is framed. The base category for the regional dummies (the domestic democratic understandings variable) is Western Europe and North America, for the G4 and the UfC (the power aspiration variable) it is the rest of the UN membership, and for the year dummies it is
2003, the first year of debate analyzed in this study. The analysis is conducted in the R statistical programming language, using the glmer function with a binomial family with a logit link.

The significant independent impact of a predictor is interpreted using odds ratios – that is, the size of the increase (or decrease) in the odds of issuing a democracy claim that results from a one unit increase in the value of the predictor (for continuous variables), or compared against the reference category (for factor variables). An odds ratio of one means the probabilities of success and failure – that is, of a country year invoking democracy versus avoiding the concept – are the same. An odds ratio smaller than one suggests a lower probability, while an odds ratio larger than one suggests a higher probability of success than failure. All tables and figures included in this manuscript are based on an odds scale.

To begin with, I fit a full model that contains all independent and control variables. I use backwards selection to fit additional reduced models by gradually excluding insignificant variables (eliminating the variable with the highest p-value first) and use the likelihood ratio test (LRT) to examine whether these models fit the data as well as the original (full) model. The result of this is two more models with as good a fit as the original. Comparing coefficients across these models serves as a useful means to assess the robustness of the results. All three models are included in Table XXI. In addition, I include figures for each significant variable, which show the marginal effects of these variables on the odds of issuing a democracy claim, while all other factors are held at the observed average or the reference category.

For the GA, statistical analysis is not feasible. I thus rely on mapping the frequencies with which different groups of country years – namely those associated with different values of the independent variable under scrutiny – invoke the democratic narrative. For instance, by doing so I can compare whether states that possess economic clout are on average much more reluctant to praise the GA as a democratic prototype than countries that lack material power. These patterns can then be contrasted with the ones that prevail in the Council debate. Clearly, frequency analysis does

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131 The dataset is available upon request.
132 Due to the limited number of positive outcomes on the dependent variable, logistic regression encounters the problem of “complete separation.” This problem occurs if one or several predictors adopt only one of the two possible values of the outcome variable. As a result, they perfectly predict the value of the outcome.
not provide insights into the effect that each variable possesses when simultaneously controlling for the remaining ones. Yet, it still offers valuable insights. Most importantly, being able to compare states’ patterns of discourse across both IO bodies provides a further source of evidence for assessing the explanatory power of my theories.

4.3.2. Findings: Security Council

What drives states’ use of democracy claims in the SC? The results of logit regression indicate that both a state’s power position and its domestic democratic background offer insights into its willingness to invoke the democratic narrative. Whether a state will embrace the idea of democracy is well predicted by its institutional power status, its role in the struggle for institutionalized power positions, but also by its domestic democratic institutions and understanding (see Table XXI).

Both power aspiration and institutional power prove to be good predictors of whether a state will embrace the language of democracy. Material power, in turn, does not affect the overall likelihood of invoking democracy. While opposing the empowerment efforts of other states (opponent to power aspirants) has a significant effect in all three models, a state’s status as institutionally powerful (institutional power) or as an aspirant to such power positions (power aspirant) turns out to be influential only after excluding the material power variable from the model. Given that all permanent SC members and all four contenders for permanent Council seats are among the largest economies in the world, this change is convincing.

But it is not only the power variables associated with the LoMI that affect countries’ use of democracy claims. Both the democratic quality of a state’s own institutions and the understanding of domestic democracy that its society embraces influence whether a country will invoke the democratic narrative. Remarkably, differences in the democracy talk of democratic and autocratic states do not prove negligible after controlling for power variables. While this finding points to a relevant role of states’ domestic democratic contexts, it is difficult to interpret this in light of the LoNC.

Finally, the control variables show mixed results: While the year of debate proves irrelevant to countries’ democratic discourse, the length of countries’ speeches does affect the likelihood of democracy claims occurring.

Overall, separately and jointly excluding material power and the year of debate – the two variables without significant coefficients – from the full
model results in an equally good fit (LRT p-value=0.462 for the reduced model, LRT p-value=0.774 for model 1).

The subsequent sections will first consider the variables associated with each of the two logics, starting with the LoMI and followed by the LoNC, before inspecting the control variables. The sections include graphs (see Figure XI to Figure XIV) to visualize the marginal effect of each significant independent variable on the odds of issuing a democracy claim, holding all other factors at the observed average or the reference category.133

133 Since the model produces estimates for log(odds), the error bars for odds in Figure XI to Figure XIV are asymmetric.
### Table XXI: Regression outputs+

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Full model</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Reduced model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutional power (P5)</td>
<td>0.089+</td>
<td>0.071 *</td>
<td>0.066 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[1.286] (0.020)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material power (GDP)</td>
<td>0.994</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[0.020]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power aspirant (G4)</td>
<td>0.180+</td>
<td>0.160 *</td>
<td>0.164 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[0.955] (0.859)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opponent to power</td>
<td>5.021 *</td>
<td>4.914 *</td>
<td>4.515 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[0.473] (0.465)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic institutions (FH)</td>
<td>1.387 *</td>
<td>1.389 *</td>
<td>1.387 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[0.104] (0.104)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>6.437 *</td>
<td>6.654 *</td>
<td>5.814 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[0.508] (0.503)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>2.395</td>
<td>2.461</td>
<td>2.140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[0.587] (0.585)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East/North Africa</td>
<td>1.255</td>
<td>1.282</td>
<td>1.119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[0.707] (0.707)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>2.009</td>
<td>2.050</td>
<td>1.911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[0.556] (0.556)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Speech length</td>
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<td>3.248 *</td>
<td>3.061 *</td>
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<tr>
<td>[0.262] (0.262)</td>
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<td>2013</td>
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<td>Intercept</td>
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<tr>
<td>[0.627] (0.627)</td>
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N speeches: 748
N countries: 150

The table includes odds ratios for a unit change in each stated variable, with standard errors in parentheses. The base category for the regional dummies is Western Europe/ North America; for the groups UfC and G4 it is the rest of UN member states; for the year dummies it is 2003. 

* $p < 0.1$;  * $p < .05$
Logic of material interests

Hypothesis $H_{3B}$ suggested that if the international community shared a dominant interpretation of democratic global rule, the likelihood of invoking the notion of democracy should differ between the institutionally powerful and the institutionally powerless. This is clearly the case. The regression results lend strong support to this hypothesis. In all models that exclude the *material power* variable, *institutional power* is a significant predictor of states’ likelihood to embrace the language of democracy. In the full model, which controls for *material power*, the coefficient is only significant at the 0.1 level. Most likely, this is due to the economic clout of the formally powerful, namely the five permanent SC members.

INSTITUTIONAL POWER:

Clearly, a democratization of the SC in line with democratic principles such as accountability, transparency, and – above all – equality conflicts with the power interests of the P5. If the Council democratizes, these countries “will find themselves ‘more equal’ to all other member-states” (Grigorescu 2010: 45). And in fact, the odds of making democracy claims are more than 15 times higher among institutionally powerless countries than among the five states with permanent Council seats (see also *Figure XI*).$^{134}$ As such, of all factors analyzed, formal power disparities have the largest marginal effect on states’ democratic discourse.

$^{134}$ This number is based on the reduced model.
SC reform debate: marginal effect of institutional power for permanent SC members (P5) and the rest of UN member states (not P5) (with 95% confidence interval)

Evidently, disempowered countries find the concept of democracy useful as an underpinning for their criticism of the elevated status of the P5. The concepts’ emphasis on the principle of equality, on holding the powerful accountable by means of regular elections, and on thus ensuring better representation of a broader range of interests conflicts in every possible way with the status of the P5. Hence, with one exception, all permanent Council members completely avoid the talk of democratic global rule and thus of the need for a democratized Council. Despite their democratic identity and their efforts to promote democratic domestic governance around the world, the three Western democracies with permanent Council seats do not make a single democracy claim. If they had done so, they would have legitimized a conception of international rule that seriously challenges their current power privileges.

Among the P5, only China makes democracy claims. First and foremost, the country uses the notion to advocate an increase in “the representation of developing countries, in particular those of Africa” (China 2009). In contrast to the rest of the P5, China perceives itself as a representative of the developing world (Fassbender 2004: 346; Voeten 2001: 846). In this role, it can hardly avoid supporting the case of the disempowered – if only by adopting their discourse. Yet, China’s democracy claims remain deliberately vague so as to ensure that they constitute no threat to its privileged
position. Although many other countries link the principle of representation to the issues of veto power and permanent membership, China avoids doing so.

MATERIAL POWER:

Power disparities need not be formalized. Material power may well open informal avenues of influence like the privilege to be consulted in informal meetings (Hurd 1997: 136f). Principles like transparency, which states link to the concept of democracy, constitute a useful framework for weak states to criticize these inequalities. After all, if democracy was implemented in line with standards like transparency, powerful states would no longer have access to many informal means to manipulate IOs in their favor (Stone 2011: 15).

Nonetheless, countries that have no economic clout to bring to the bargaining table and who thus cannot use informal channels of influence to compensate for their institutional disempowerment do not issue more democracy claims than materially powerful states. The coefficient of material power not only approximates the value of one; it is also not significant.\footnote{Economic clout, this suggests, does not affect the overall likelihood that states will invoke the language of democracy. Evidently, in organizations characterized by institutionalized power disparities, struggles about informal inequality move into the background. For the weak, power disparities that are formalized take center stage. Similarly, those in possession of superior economic resources seem less eager to defend their informal privileges than to strive for formalized ones. As the G4 campaign for permanent seats in the SC testifies, the materially powerful are not content with their informal privileges in the Council. They seek institutional empowerment. Given the meaning that states invest into the democratic idea, the evidence against hypothesis H$_{5B}$ is reasonable: most of the principles countries invoke in their democratic discourse are connected to formal features of the IO in question – above all, these are formal representation, the inequalities institutionalized in the Council and the process of elections.}

\footnote{Note that an odds ratio of one means that the probabilities of success and failure – that is, a country year invoking democracy versus avoiding the concept – are the same. Thus, an increase (or decrease) in a state’s GDP value does not affect the odds of the state issuing a democracy claim.}

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formal aspects – of the kind usually addressed in relation to the Council’s working methods – feature far less prominently. As such, the concept of democracy underpins the struggle between those who possess and those who lack institutional power rather than the fight between the materially strong and the weak.

POWER ASPIRATION AND OPPOSITION TO IT:

The power aspiration variable, in turn, is a good predictor of states’ references to democracy. The regression results show that power aspirants exhibit little inclination to couch their empowerment demands in the language of democracy. Although when one controls for material power, their democratic discourse does not differ significantly from that of the general membership – note that all G4 countries have a high GDP – this clearly changes when excluding this variable from the model. In all but the full model, G4 countries prove six times more reluctant to speak out in favor of a democratized Council than other institutionally disempowered member states. This finding neatly complements the data on the interpretations of democratic IO rule that these countries adopt. As shown earlier, both Brazil and India – the two G4 countries that invoke the democratic narrative – attempt to redefine democracy in their favor. Both of them try to advance a conception of democracy that is compatible with the formal power privileges they aspire to. Yet, the data also showed that their attempts do not prove successful. In all but one interpretive divide, the G4 are outnumbered by their opponents, which seriously call into question the democratic quality of the arguments made by Brazil and India. To cut a long story short, as their chances to change the dominant interpretation of global democracy seem limited, the G4 prefer to use the concept as little as possible (see also Figure XII). This is consistent with the argument made by Schimmelfennig (2001: 72-73), who claims that it is extremely difficult to counter ideas and aims that appear legitimate.
Their opponents, however, do not only win the fight over the adequate interpretation of democratic Council rule; they also eagerly invoke democratic principles in their attempts to prevent the G4 from acquiring permanent seats. Clearly, being an opponent to power aspirants significantly affects whether states are willing to use the democratic narrative. UfC countries are about five times more eager than all other disempowered UN member states to embrace the democratic idea. Moreover, opposition to power aspirants is the only power variable that is significant across all models. As such, the data speak in favor of hypothesis H$_{4B}$, according to which the likelihood of invoking the notion of democracy differs between states that aspire to formal power status and states that attempt to prevent this.

Evidently, the language of democracy is not only used to criticize existing power inequalities; democracy is also invoked to prevent them from getting worse. Among the most eager proponents of global democracy are states that seek to confine the small circle of countries with permanent seats and veto rights. Yet, the fact that UfC countries do not frustrate just any state’s ascension to power – above all, they target their own regional competitors – raises serious doubts about the sincerity of their democratic concerns. UfC countries may well have become proponents of a democratic Council because of the lack of chances to acquire undemocratic privileges for themselves.
Overall, divergent uses of the democratic idea reflect the different power positions and power struggles states are involved in. This, in turn, lends strong support to the LoMI. In combination with the insights into states’ interpretations of democratic IO rule, the statistical results allow me to draw some preliminary conclusions about democracy as a justificatory norm: first of all, the norm of democracy is “complementary” (Hurd 2005: 496) to the strategic interests of two main groups of actors: the institutionally disempowered in general; and among them particularly those who seek to prevent their competitors’ ascent to power. The basic interest of the disempowered is to dismantle the power gap that separates them from the powerful. The concept of democracy, they appear to think, lends their criticism much greater force. Among the disempowered, however, there is another group of actors. United in the UfC, they see the merit of the democratic idea in its ability to discredit the strategy and behavior of their opponents (Schimmelfennig 2003: 219) – namely those states with better chances of ascending to power than UfC countries have. Democracy thus serves as a justification for demanding the empowerment of the unprivileged. In essence, however, empowerment boils down to disempowering the institutionally powerful and to preventing the extension of institutionalized privileges to those with material clout.

Clearly, the concept of democracy does not lend itself to justifying existing privileges or to supporting countries that aim to gain such privileges. While the disempowered do not manage to fully “silence” (see Schimmelfennig 2001) both groups – the institutionally powerful on the one side, and the power aspirants on the other – they do succeed in muting them to a considerable extent. Both groups of actors show reluctance to invoke the democratic narrative. While the P5 do not even attempt to justify their privileges in democratic terms, the G4 do make some efforts. Yet, the UfC seems to be the winner of this fight: democracy, they successfully establish, is about empowerment of the many, not of the few.

Logic of normative consistency

DEMOCRATIC QUALITY OF DOMESTIC INSTITUTIONS:

Differences in the language of democracy between democratic and autocratic states are not spurious. They do not disappear once we control for the power positions and power struggles countries are involved in. The
contrary is true: the democratic quality of states’ domestic institutions has a decisive impact on countries’ global democratic discourse. This is suggested by a regression coefficient that is significant across all models. Moreover, the direction of this effect supports the preliminary insights from the introductory chapter: despite the strong match between the democratic principles espoused by the international community and democracies’ own patterns of rule, democratic countries are clearly not the strongest proponents of IO democracy. In fact, compared to authoritarian regimes, they are significantly more reluctant to speak out in favor of a democratized Council (see Figure XIII). The odds of issuing a democracy claim increase 1.4 times for every one point decrease in the democratic quality of a state’s domestic institutions as scored by Freedom House. Put differently, the more democratic a country, the less it is inclined to embrace the language of democracy. By contrast, while autocracies fail to respect most of the principles associated with a democratized SC in their domestic contexts, these regimes eagerly embrace the idea of democratic rule beyond the state.

Figure XIII: SC reform debate: marginal effect of the democratic quality of states’ domestic institutions at different FH scores (with 95% confidence interval)

How can these findings be interpreted in light of the LoNC? Put briefly, this logic suggests that states strive for normative consistency across the domestic-international divide and thus align their international democratic
discourse with their domestic democratic practices. Yet, being consistent may also involve avoiding the talk of global democracy. Possibly, democratic countries perceive a mismatch between democracy as understood beyond the state and democracy as practiced inside their own territories. One aspect of the concept of global democracy that creates considerable discrepancies has been highlighted earlier: as defined by the international community, the concept centers on states rather than citizens as the main subjects of rule. Democratic countries may well support global rule that is more representative, egalitarian, and accountable. After all, these standards are in fact consistent with their own domestic practices. Yet, the absence of any linkage between these principles and the traditional subjects of rule in the domestic context, namely people, may keep these states from speaking of democracy. Democratic states may simply have internalized a view that democracy means rule by and for the people – and nothing else. But their reluctance to invoke the statist narrative may also be induced by concerns about their credibility: after all, if democratic governments joined the state-centered discourse of global democratic rule, their own citizens could accuse them of inconsistency – and rightly so. Concerns about the proper subjects of IO democracy are a plausible reason for democracies to avoid the democratic language. Using data from the interviews conducted with UN diplomats, the next chapter will more closely inspect the reasoning that guides democratic states and their use of the democratic narrative.

UNDERSTANDINGS OF DOMESTIC DEMOCRACY:

Finally, I test hypothesis H$_{2B}$ on the role of divergent democratic understandings. I claim that states with understandings of domestic democratic rule that are compatible with the dominant interpretation of global democracy adopted by the international community are more likely to make democracy claims. Yet, since there is not an abundance of scholarship on societal understandings of domestic democracy, it is difficult to evaluate whose interpretations are more, and whose are less consistent with the concept of democratic Council rule. Preliminary evidence suggests that this fit is relatively good for Western states. Still, this information is lacking for other world regions. Hence, it is impossible to hypothesize which among the six regions analyzed should be the most eager and which the most hesitant users of the democratic narrative. For this reason, I have approached the empirical findings in a rather exploratory fashion. Rather

136 See, for instance, the European Social Survey (2014).
than specifying hypotheses *a priori*, I restrict myself to an *a posteriori* analysis of the results. More precisely, I use preliminary insights from the literature to assess the plausibility of the empirical findings.

Because existing studies highlight the differences between democratic understandings found among Western societies and those of other world regions, I compare the frequency of democracy claims found among different world regions to those found within the West.\(^{137}\) Statistically speaking, I use the West as the base category for the regional dummies (see Table XXI). And in fact, Western countries’ appeals to the democratic narrative differ significantly from those of another region of the world, namely Latin America. Apparently, being from Latin America – rather than the West – significantly increases the likelihood of invoking democracy. More precisely, the odds of issuing a democracy claim are about six times higher among Latin American and Caribbean states than among Western countries (see also Figure XIV).\(^{138}\)

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137 See section 2.2.4.

138 This finding should not be misinterpreted. It does not suggest that being from Latin America is a driver of states’ democratic discourse. Rather, it means that there are significant differences in the willingness to invoke democracy between Western countries and Latin American states. Yet, for this study, this finding is nonetheless important. It suggests that in contrast to that of the West the domestic democratic understanding that pervades Latin American countries is particularly compatible with the idea of IO democracy.
Clearly, this finding requires an explanation. What about the understandings of democracy that pervade Latin American societies is particularly compatible with the conception of democracy adopted on a global level? As several studies suggest, Latin American states share a definition of domestic democracy that highlights the “emancipatory potential” (Maia/Santoro 2013: 106) of the democratic idea. More precisely, these states create a strong link between democracy and the aim of eradicating the remnants of “colonial injustice” and of “economic and cultural dependence” (Pavlova 2013: 91f). This understanding is easily reconcilable with a conception of global democracy as empowerment and as a fight against international structures of exclusion and subordination. In fact, some states even specify their understanding of democratic Council rule with reference to the principle of non-domination (see Figure VIII). Moreover, this emancipatory strand of domestic democracy does itself contain a strong international dimension: democratization, understood as countries’ emancipation from external constraints and dependence, is a comprehensive endeavor that cannot neglect the international sources of injustice and oppression. That is to say, it also needs to consider the constraints embedded in and perpetuated by IOs like the SC.

Finally, the control variables show mixed results: while the year of debate proves irrelevant to countries’ democratic discourse, the length of a
speech significantly increases the likelihood of democracy claims to occur in it. With every 1000 words added to a speech, the odds of a democracy claim occurring increase threefold.

4.3.3. Findings: General Assembly

While the bulk of states’ democratic references concentrate on the SC, countries also use the language of democracy to describe the GA. Yet, as the previous chapter revealed (see 3.2), these references are extremely rare. Only 33 out of 244 country years invoke the idea of democracy in the context of the GA. This is telling: The language of global democracy is primarily used to criticize and remedy the democratic deficits of IOs. An organization like the Assembly, which scores well on democratic standards, is unlikely to be targeted by democracy claims. Yet, if the discourse of global democracy follows regular patterns, as the last section (4.3.2) suggested, these patterns should recur in other organizations. While the low number of democracy claims addressed towards the GA somewhat limit its utility as an additional test case, the Assembly debate may nonetheless serve to assess the plausibility of the findings presented earlier in this study. Put differently, a closer look at this debate may provide additional evidence about states’ democratic discourse and whether it indeed reflects both countries’ power interests and their domestic experience with democratic rule.

As has been noted before, the GA differs in important respects from the SC. So does the democratic debate that addresses it. Most importantly, the Assembly lacks institutionalized inequalities. While differences in states’ resource endowment – that is, differences in material power – still influence the body’s functioning, institutionalized hierarchy is irrelevant to it. This difference should impact the patterns of democratic discourse that are found within the organization. Moreover, the democratic discourse about the GA is largely one of praise: rather than criticizing the body for its democratic deficits, as states do in the case of the Council, countries commend the Assembly’s democratic quality. Again, this difference is likely to affect the patterns of democracy claims addressed towards the IO. In a first step, I will thus specify some expectations: what do the insights generated by the previous section and the specificities of the Assembly and its reform debate imply for states’ democratic discourse about the GA? That is to say, what would their democratic discourse about the Assembly have to look like in order to strengthen the LoMI? What kind of discursive patterns would constitute evidence in favor of the LoNC? The subsequent para-
graphs will consider each of the two logics in turn. I will first specify ex-
pectations and then contrast them with the patterns of discourse detected
for the variables associated with each logic. In essence, the results show:
the patterns of democratic discourse that occur in the Council also sub-
stantially shape the debate about the GA. This, in turn, lends strong sup-
port to the idea that both the LoMI and the LoNC offer important insights
into whether and why states invoke the democratic narrative.

Logic of material interests

According to the LoMI, the global democratic discourse of countries origi-
nates in their material interests, which are defined in terms of power. Thus,
states’ use of the language of democracy will reflect the power strug-
gles countries are involved in. Clearly, power structures and the inequali-
ties they produce vary considerably across different IOs. Most importantly,
they differ in their degree of formalization: some inequalities are inscribed
in the formal rules of the organization, while others arise from the informal
advantages that material clout may bring. As I elaborated earlier, I ex-
pect that where institutionalized inequalities exist they will dominate
states’ power struggles. Compared to informal disparities, power privileges
that are formalized generate a stronger, more visible, and more reliable
bias in favor of the powerful and to the disadvantage of the weak. Hence,
they should take center stage in actors’ struggles and the democratic dis-
course that ensues. The SC and the democratic debate it involves is a case
in point: even though informal inequalities are hardly absent in this body,
it is the institutionalized disparities that define states’ interests and imprint
on their democratic discourse. Disparities based on material power, by
contrast, have no bearing on whether states choose to use or avoid the lan-
guage of democracy.

In contrast to the SC, the GA is based on the legal equality of states. It
places all countries on an equal footing. As institutionalized inequalities
cease to matter, informal inequalities will likely come to the fore and in-
cite struggles between states. As such, the fight of the strong against the
weak that is fought out in the name of democracy is likely to continue in
the GA. But in contrast to the SC, weakness and strength are no longer
(only) a matter of formal prerogatives; they are (also) a matter of economic
clout. This is not to say that institutionalized inequalities are irrelevant to
states’ democratic discourse about the GA. While they should no longer
matter directly – because the Assembly lacks a formal hierarchy – they may
still matter in an indirect way. After all, every act of commending the Assembly for its democratic quality constitutes an indirect critique of the SC and its hierarchical structure. In this sense, the struggle between those who possess and those who lack formal power status is likely to be continued in the GA. Even so, it should no longer be the only struggle between states.

INSTITUTIONAL POWER:

Of all factors analyzed, institutional power status exercises the strongest impact on whether or not a state invokes the language of democracy in the Council. According to the Council debate, democracy is a norm of the powerless: it pits those who lack formal power against the permanent Council members. While the weak use it to criticize unequal power privileges among UN member states, the powerful avoid this concept, which poses a threat to their prerogatives.

In the GA, the notion of democracy is used for praise rather than criticism. Put differently, states establish the GA as the democratic antithesis to the Council: they commend the Assembly as an egalitarian forum that renounces the institutionalized hierarchy laid down in the Council. If consistent with the Council debate, this commendation should come from those who are disempowered in the SC and seek to extend the equality they enjoy in the Assembly to other fora. If the P5 have little reason to invoke the concept in the Council debate, where it is used to criticize their privileges, they should be equally reluctant to embrace it in the GA: there, it serves to praise the absence of special prerogatives from which they benefit elsewhere. And in fact, this is exactly what the data show (see Figure XV): the intensity of a state’s democratic discourse about the GA varies strongly with its institutional power status. As in the SC, it is the powerless that invoke the concept, while the powerful avoid it. In the Council debate, at least China occasionally used the democratic narrative. In the GA debate, the P5 are completely silent on the issue. By embracing the language of democracy they would not only delegitimize their own privileged status; they would also submit to a goal that violates their interests: the goal of empowering the Assembly over the SC.
Figure XV: GA reform debate: share of country years that invoke democracy among the P5 and the rest of UN member states (in %, with absolute numbers behind each column)

POWER ASPIRATION AND OPPOSITION TO IT:

According to the findings of the previous section, the language of democracy is not only invoked to criticize power inequalities that are already in place but also put to use to prevent them from getting worse. Whether a state espouses the democratic idea is affected by the position it occupies in the struggle for formalized privileges. As has been shown, power aspirants are significantly more reluctant to speak out in favor of a democratized Council than other disempowered member states. This is highly plausible, given that the understanding of democracy adopted by the international community is strongly at odds with the privileges pursued by the G4. The opponents of these countries, by contrast, are most eager to invoke the democratic narrative. For countries from the UfC, the idea of democracy is very useful: it serves to delegitimize the G4’s attempts to acquire veto-vested permanent seats.

But how should these patterns translate into the democratic debate about the GA? Two options are conceivable. On the one hand, what applies to the struggle about existing power privileges should also apply to the fight about the strengthening of such privileges: just like the P5, the G4 should be unlikely to praise the Assembly for democratic features that they seek to undermine in the Council. Indeed, it would be highly contradictory to laud one UN body for its democratic quality while striving to extend undemocratic structures in another.
On the other hand, the situation of the G4 differs decisively from that of the permanent Council members: while the latter sit comfortably in their chairs of power, the former have to fight for a place in the Council. While the P5 have little to fear from the UN membership, the G4 critically rely on others’ support. And while the P5 need not make promises to disempowered UN member states, the G4 have to provide them with some sort of reassurance. That is to say, power aspirants need to give credible assurances that their ascent to power will not harm others. By praising the democratic character of the GA, the G4 may do just that: they may (rhetorically) commit to a strong Assembly that is able to assert its influence over other, less egalitarian UN bodies. This, in turn, might help to appease others: they may hope to be compensated for their lack of power within the Council by greater influence over this institution. In fact, the conception of a democratized SC adopted by the G4 (see 4.2.2) already implies a more prominent role for the GA. More precisely, Brazil and India claim that their inclusion in the permanent category of membership may serve to democratize the Council. It may do so by (indirectly) giving a voice to all those countries that constitute a majority in the GA but fail to be adequately represented in the Council: developing countries. In this sense, a more democratic Council – that is, a Council that includes the G4 – pays tribute to the democratic quality of the GA because it empowers the voice of this body inside the Council.

Bearing this in mind, we should not expect the power aspirants to show the same reluctance to invoke democracy in the GA as they do in the SC. And in fact, this is clearly not the case (see Figure XVI).
Indeed, it would be highly contradictory to laud one UN body for its democratic quality while striving to extend undemocratic structures in another. On the other hand, the situation of the G4 differs decisively from that of the permanent Council members: while the latter sit comfortably in their chairs of power, the former have to fight for a place in the Council. While the P5 have little to fear from the UN membership, the G4 critically rely on others’ support. And while the P5 need not make promises to disempowered UN member states, the G4 have to provide them with some sort of reassurance. That is to say, power aspirants need to give credible assurances that their ascent to power will not harm others. By praising the democratic character of the GA, the G4 may do just that: they may (rhetorically) commit to a strong Assembly that is able to assert its influence over other, less egalitarian UN bodies. This, in turn, might help to appease others: they may hope to be compensated for their lack of power within the Council by greater influence over this institution. In fact, the conception of a democratized SC adopted by the G4 (see 4.2.2) already implies a more prominent role for the GA. More precisely, Brazil and India claim that their inclusion in the permanent category of membership may serve to democratize the Council. It may do so by (indirectly) giving a voice to all those countries that constitute a majority in the GA but fail to be adequately represented in the Council: developing countries. In this sense, a more democratic Council – that is, a Council that includes the G4 – pays tribute to the democratic quality of the GA because it empowers the voice of this body inside the Council.

Bearing this in mind, we should not expect the power aspirants to show the same reluctance to invoke democracy in the GA as they do in the SC. And in fact, this is clearly not the case (see Figure XVI).

**Figure XVI:** GA reform debate: share of country years that invoke democracy among the G4, the UfC, and the rest of UN member states (in %, with absolute numbers behind each column)

While the SC debate features clear differences in the democracy claims of the power aspirants, their opponents, and the rest of UN member states, these differences are levelled out in the GA debate. Members of the G4, the UfC, and other countries are equally inclined to invoke the democratic narrative. Among each group, the share of country years that embrace the term is between 11 and 15 percent. Judged by the share of country years that invoke the language of democracy, it is the G4 that prove most eager to engage in democratic discourse. Yet, given the small differences between the three groups and a low overall engagement with the democratic narrative – among the G4 and the UfC it is only four country years each – this ranking should not be over-interpreted.

Again, it is only Brazil and India that invoke the term democracy, while Japan and Germany avoid it altogether.

What Figure XVI reveals, however, is that power aspirants cannot completely avoid the language of democracy. If they seek to achieve their objectives, they need to bring others on board. The G4 attempt to do so by suggesting ways to democratize the Council – even if their democratic discourse remains rather weak compared to other states – and by being comparatively eager to praise the democratic quality of the GA.

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139 The bulk of democracy claims is invoked by states that neither belong to the G4 nor the UfC.
4.3. Explaining why some states use and others avoid the democratic narrative

MATERIAL POWER:

A country’s material clout neither increases nor reduces the likelihood that it will criticize the democratic deficits of the Council. Whether or not a state can resort to superior economic resources and the informal channels of influence these may open does not reflect in its democratic discourse. Weak countries make no more demands for the Council’s democratization than economically strong states. What unites states in their democratic criticism about the SC is their institutional, not their material weakness. Apparently, countries do not have the impression that the benefits conferred by superior economic clout may compensate for the disadvantages of institutional disempowerment. For this reason, Canada invokes the language of democracy with no less vigor than the state of Tuvalu, and the G4 aspire to formal power status rather than content themselves with informal privileges. Yet, this should change once countries center their discourse on organizations that do not formalize a hierarchy among states – IOs like the GA. As shown earlier, institutional disempowerment has a uniting force that carries over from the SC into the GA. States endorse the GA because it rejects the formal inequalities from which they suffer in the Council. Yet, the unity spawned by common institutional weakness should no longer be able to override differences that derive from unequal economic clout. For some states, formal equality in the GA is clearly a greater asset than for others: the less economic power states can bring to the table, the more they rely on formal guarantees that their voices will be considered. Hence, for the economically weak, lauding the Assembly’s democratic quality is not only an indirect means of criticizing the Council, which excludes them from formal influence; it also bears the hope of empowering an organization on which they rely more than the strong. How eagerly states embrace the democratic idea should thus not only depend on their formal power status in the Council; it should also be a matter of economic clout. And in fact, it is (see Figure XVII).
On average, countries that invoke the concept of democracy have a GDP of 320 billion US dollars. This is about 600 billion less than what is earned by countries that avoid the language of democracy. The latter have an average GDP of 910 billion US dollars. This difference is not only substantial; it is also statistically significant. The weak are much more eager to laud the democratic quality of the Assembly. As the diplomat from a small state put it, his country is simply more reliant on democratic organizations like the GA:

"[W]e truly believe in this concept of democracy [...] it is the one thing that we can hinge on, especially as small nations. Without democracy there would be dominance by the so-called great powers, there would be inequality. Of course there is a certain degree of inequality which is natural but without democracy we as small nations would not survive."

This clearly shows: in the absence of formalized hierarchies, material disparities come to the fore. They incite power struggles between states that are well reflected in their democratic discourse.

140 The average GDP across all country years is 833 billion US dollars.
141 I conducted a t-test to test the statistical significance of the difference between the two means. The p-value was significant at the 0.5 level (p-value = 0.0057).
142 The quote comes from the interview I conducted with the UN diplomat from a small nation (DIPL05). For more information on the interview process, please consult the next chapter.
Logic of normative consistency

According to the LoNC, the patterns of democratic discourse espoused by a country have their origins in the domestic context of rule. Rather than reflecting power inequalities and power struggles at the international level, these patterns are shaped by states’ domestic institutions and democratic understandings. Put differently, countries strive for consistency across the domestic-international divide: they seek to align their global democratic discourse with the democratic understandings embraced by their societies and the democratic practices inscribed in their own institutions.

As the meaning of democratic global rule is largely fixed among the international community (see Chapter 3) consistency may not be increased by re-defining the democratic idea. The choice is much more restricted: it is one between engaging the democratic narrative and avoiding it. If driven by the LoNC, states will make this choice based on the size of the fit between the global concept and their own domestic democratic institutions and understandings. Yet, the size of this fit – and thus states’ choice to invoke or not invoke the term – should not vary across IOs. After all, the concept of global democracy embraced by the international community is not IO-specific. States praise the Assembly for exhibiting the very democratic features whose lack they criticize in the Council. As a result, countries that are reluctant to invoke the concept with reference to the SC should also avoid it in the GA: if the concept is not considered an appropriate vehicle for criticism of rule by IOs, it may also not be used to praise them. By contrast, states that eagerly embrace the concept in the Council should also do so in the Assembly: because they seek to implement the same features of rule that they cherish domestically, states will criticize IOs that lack these features and try to empower the ones that exhibit them.

In sum, while the LoMi suggests that states’ democratic discourse may vary across different organizations, the LoNC suggests that discursive patterns should be largely consistent across IOs. Hence, the patterns of discourse that characterize the Council should also shape the corresponding debate about the GA.

THE DEMOCRATIC QUALITY OF DOMESTIC INSTITUTIONS:

Whether countries will criticize the democratic deficits of the Council depends on the democratic quality of their domestic institutions: democracies are far less likely to invoke the democratic narrative than authoritarian
regimes. If their behavior relies on an effort to be consistent across the domestic-international divide, it suggests the following: democracies perceive a mismatch between the concept of global democracy espoused by the international community and their own domestic democratic practices. For this reason, they avoid the notion rather than invoke it. Autocracies, in turn, eagerly embrace the democratic idea. From their point of view, doing so does not seem to conflict with how they govern themselves.

If, as the LoNC suggests, states’ global democratic discourse originates domestically, it should be largely consistent across different IOs. And in fact, *Figure XVIII* reveals clear similarities between the debate about the Council and the corresponding one about the GA: compared to states that invoke the language of democracy, states that avoid the global democratic narrative are more democratic domestically.

*Figure XVIII: GA reform debate: average Freedom House (FH) scores of country years that do/do not invoke democracy*

Yet, this difference is hardly impressive. Country years that praise the democratic quality of the Assembly exhibit an average FH score of 4, while the ones that avoid doing so possess a score of 3.6. This difference is not only small; it is also not statistically significant.\(^\text{142}\) This raises important questions: what happens when the focus of debate shifts from the SC to the GA? Put differently, do democracies become more inclined to invoke

\[\text{142 The p-value was not significant at the 0.5 level (p-value = 0.1892).}\]
the idea of democratic global rule, or do autocracies become more reluctant to do so?

As Figure XIX shows, the debate about the SC reveals a clear linear relationship between the democratic quality of a state’s domestic institutions and its willingness to invoke the global democratic narrative: the less democratic a country, the more it is inclined to speak of democratic rule beyond the state.

Figure XIX: SC debate: share of country years that invoke democracy among democracies (free), autocracies (not free), and hybrid regimes (partly free) (in %, with absolute numbers behind each column)

This linear trend is absent in the democratic debate about the GA (see Figure XX). Yet, this does not seem to result from a change in the behavior of democracies. In fact, just like in the SC, democratic states are the most reluctant to invoke the language of democracy. Only nine percent of democratic country years make reference to this notion. These states do not include a single consolidated democracy, namely one of the 35 democratic country years scored 1.0 by FH. Autocracies, however, are far less eager to invoke democracy in the GA than in the SC. In the Council debate, they clearly outperform hybrid regimes (those that are “partly free”) in terms of an active democratic discourse (see Figure XIX). In the Assembly, by contrast, they fall far behind those countries. Only 12 percent of autocratic country years – just three percent more than among democracies – commend the GA as being highly democratic, whereas among hybrids, this share is almost twice as large.
Two conclusions can be drawn from these patterns: first, the democratic puzzle still remains. Independent of the IO under scrutiny, democracies are the most reluctant to judge global rule by its democratic quality. Any other finding would have been hard to reconcile with the LoNC: if democracies perceive an inconsistency between the concept of democratic global rule and their own domestic democratic practices, their reluctance to invoke the global concept should extend to any IO. Similarly, this reluctance should be independent of whether the concept is used for criticism or for praise. While the behavior of democratic states is thus consistent across IOs, it is still difficult to interpret with reference to the LoNC. Making sense of it is the purpose of the next chapter.

Second, it is not only the behavior of democratic states that needs further examination; that of autocracies also raises some questions. In their eagerness to embrace the language of democracy, less democratic regimes – including both hybrids and strong autocracies – outperform democracies in both IOs. Yet, in moving from the SC to the GA the difference between democracies and autocracies decreases substantially. Why are autocracies more hesitant to invoke the democratic idea for the purpose of praising rather than criticizing IOs? This question will be addressed in the next chapter.
UNDERSTANDINGS OF DOMESTIC DEMOCRACY:

In talking of global democracy, states need not only be consistent with their domestic democratic institutions; they also need to ensure the broadest possible fit between the concept of democratic global rule and the domestic democratic understandings that pervade their societies. As the Council debate suggests, this fit seems particularly good for Latin American countries. Put differently, these states most eagerly embrace the language of democracy when criticizing the Council. If this eagerness is inspired by a perceived consistency of democratic understanding across the domestic-international divide, this region should also be an active supporter of a democratic Assembly. The shift from a debate that is highly critical, as in the case of the SC, to one that is full of praise, as in the context of the GA, should not affect this logic.

And in fact, the different regions are highly consistent in their democratic discourse across the SC and GA (see Figure XXI). Latin America is not only an eager advocate for a democratized Council; it is also the region that finds most praise for the democratic quality of the GA. Likewise, Western Europe and North America as well as Eastern Europe, two regions that barely invoke the concept in the Council debate, completely avoid it in the context of the GA.

Figure XXI: GA reform debate: share of country years that invoke democracy among the five world regions (in %, with absolute numbers behind each column)

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4.3. Explaining why some states use and others avoid the democratic narrative
4.3.4. Preliminary conclusions

By and large, the patterns of democratic discourse that emerge in the Assembly debate match the ones that characterize states’ discourse about the Council. Certainly, one has to bear in mind the limits of this analysis, which are associated with the low number of democracy claims made in the Assembly debate and with an approach that exclusively relies on mapping frequencies. That said, the patterns detected serve to strengthen the explanatory power of the two theoretical approaches. Put differently, they suggest that both the LoMI and the LoNC offer important insights into whether and why states will invoke the democratic narrative.

Whether a state is willing to embrace the language of democracy is clearly affected by how it is positioned within the respective IO. While institutionalized inequalities seem to dominate states’ power struggles and the democratic discourse that ensues, material power disparities also play a role: In the Assembly debate, where formal hierarchy does not matter, divisions emerge that strongly coincide with states’ economic clout. Moreover, the data reveals that power struggles are not confined to individual organizations. They also shape attempts to change the power balance between different IOs. Clearly, in establishing the Assembly as the democratic antithesis to the Council, states also attempt to empower the former – and thus themselves as its members – over the latter. If successful, the power states win over the Council may at least partially compensate for their formal disempowerment within the Council. As the example of the G4 shows, power aspirants pay particular attention to this dimension of the power struggle. Clearly, they need the support of others to achieve their primary aim: institutional empowerment in the Council. One promising way to gain this support is by linking the power struggles that ensue in both IO bodies. More precisely, when the G4 laud the democratic character of the GA, they seem to adopt the following reasoning: for others, extended privileges in the Council may be easier to bear with an empowered GA – that is to say, with an Assembly that may check the authority of the Council and all of its powerful members.

But states’ global democratic discourse is not only affected by power considerations. It is also shaped by the domestic institutions and democratic understandings states have adopted. Consistent with the LoNC, countries that avoid the concept of democracy in the SC are also quite reluctant to invoke it in the GA. Similarly, countries that are strong critics of the Council’s democratic deficits are also more eager to commend the democratic quality of the Assembly. Both in the Council and the GA, democra-
cies are more hesitant to espouse the democratic narrative than less democratic regimes. While the difference between both regime types is much greater in the Council, it is also apparent in the Assembly debate. Likewise, Latin American countries not only outperform Western states in their democratic criticism of the Council; these states are also more likely to praise the Assembly and its democratic qualities.

In sum, the patterns of democratic discourse that occur in the Council also substantially shape the debate about the GA. Given the differences in the power structure of the SC and the GA – with the GA lacking the kind of institutionalized hierarchy that characterizes the Council – and in the overall tone of the debate – with the Council being addressed very critically and the Assembly mainly being praised – the existing deviations are highly plausible. Yet, one difference between the two types of democratic debate requires further scrutiny: autocracies, which are the most eager critics of the Council’s democratic deficits, are much more hesitant to commend democracy in the GA. Moreover, the fact that democracies are reluctant advocates for democratic rule beyond the state independent of the IO they are addressing serves to strengthen the democratic puzzle: it confirms the need to more closely examine the reasoning of democratic and autocratic states and how the LoNC may account for it.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter sought to explain differences in states’ references to and interpretations of the concept of global democracy. It thus aimed to identify the sources of states’ engagement with the democratic narrative. Yet, its findings do not only speak to the central question of this book, namely the question about the drivers of countries’ democratic discourse. The results also yield important insights into the norm of democratic rule beyond the state: how strongly does it resonate within the international community? And what does this tell us about the discursive power of this norm?

As regards the drivers of states’ democratic discourse, the empirical results are two-fold: on the one hand, they lend strong support to the LoMI. Interpretive divides between countries as well as differences in states’ willingness to invoke the democratic idea reflect power inequalities and the power struggles states are involved in. More specifically, disputes over the correct interpretation of democratic rule are essentially fought out between those who aspire to institutionalized power positions and their immediate opponents. In addition to institutional power status, being a pow-
er aspirant (or an opponent of the aspirants) is also a powerful predictor of whether a state will invoke or avoid the notion of democracy: while countries in formal power positions and states that aspire to such status are particularly reluctant to invoke democratic ideas, the institutionally disempowered and, among them, particularly those who seek to frustrate others’ ascension to power make remarkably frequent use of the democratic narrative. While formal inequalities dominate states’ power struggles and the democratic discourse that ensues, economic clout also matters: in IOs without institutionalized hierarchies, material power does affect whether or not a state invokes democracy. In sum, democracy is used as a justificatory norm: states embrace the concept to legitimate their power aims.

On the other hand, the democratic quality of states’ domestic institutions and their understandings of domestic democratic rule also significantly affect how countries use the global democratic discourse. While these factors are irrelevant to the interpretive disagreements between states – in fact, democracies also challenge traditional understandings of representative democratic rule, which center on people rather than states – they do affect whether or not states will invoke democratic ideas. Across both IOs analyzed, Latin American states turn out to be particularly eager advocates for global democracy. While regional affiliation constitutes a very rough proxy for shared understandings of domestic democratic rule, there are several studies suggesting that this finding is plausible: for Latin American states, democratic rule in the domestic context is tightly linked to the concept of emancipation (Maia/Santoro 2013: 106). This, in turn, neatly fits a conception of global democracy that is anchored in the concept of empowerment and the idea of eliminating international structures of exclusion and subordination.

But states’ global democratic discourse is not only affected by the democratic understandings states have adopted at home. It is also shaped by the democratic quality of states’ domestic institutions. Yet, the direction of this effect raises further questions: as the findings reveal, democratic countries are significantly more reluctant to espouse the language of democracy than their less democratic colleagues. While this pattern is much more pronounced in the debate about the SC than in the corresponding debate about the GA, the overall tendency is consistent. Still, it is difficult to interpret in light of the LoNC: apparently, democracies do perceive a conflict between their own domestic practices of rule and the interpretation of global democracy adopted by other states. While I outlined possible explanations, their plausibility will be assessed in the next chapter, which relies on the insights from interviews I conducted with state representatives.
In addition, the findings of this chapter help evaluate the strength of democracy as a justificatory norm. In this respect, they complement the insights provided in the previous chapter. As Chapter 3 showed, no state openly challenges the democratic idea, claiming that democracy does not make for a suitable standard to judge international rule. Moreover, it revealed that states that espouse democracy invoke it with largely the same meaning. This chapter reinforces this impression: it shows that countries that advance alternative democratic understandings are highly aware of their minority position. More precisely, the G4 states, which seek to reconcile the concept of democracy with the idea of exclusive privileges, are rather hesitant to invoke the democratic narrative. Apparently, they are conscious of the strong agreement that exists on the meaning of democracy and thus judge their chances of changing this interpretation as rather futile. Needless to say, if the only states that may seriously challenge it prefer to disengage from the discourse, this is proof of a powerful concept.

Yet, some of the results produced in this chapter also modify this picture of democracy as a powerful norm. Clearly, the reluctance to use democratic ideas that is shown by democratic states requires further examination. In fact, it would raise serious questions about the strength of the democratic norm if democracies in particular were to doubt the desirability of democratic international rule. This matter is the focus of the next chapter.
CHAPTER V: The reasoning of democratic states and the norm of global democracy

A state’s domestic democratic background decisively shapes its willingness to engage in global democratic discourse. As the previous chapter showed, whether a country will invoke the idea of global democracy depends on the democratic quality of its domestic institutions: the more democratic these institutions are, the more reluctant the country will be to argue in favor of democratic global rule.

This finding is difficult to interpret with reference to the LoNC: on the one hand, countries’ norm entrepreneurship appears to be highly inconsistent: although they implement many similar principles at a domestic level, democracies do not advocate a related concept for the global level. Autocratic states, by contrast, which disrespect these principles at home, eagerly invoke the idea of democratic IO rule. On the other hand, these patterns of norm entrepreneurship may be seen as consistent with countries’ domestic democratic practices. Democracies that strive for consistency across the domestic-international divide have good reasons not to invoke the democratic narrative. After all, the concept promoted on a global level differs decisively from democratic rule inside nation-states – at least in one fundamental respect: it focuses on states rather than people as the primary subjects of rule. For autocracies, by contrast, this emphasis on collectives rather than individuals need not be at odds with their domestic practices. In fact, they may claim it neatly coincides with a domestic understanding of popular sovereignty as authoritarian rule in the nation’s best interest, which sets aside the individual in favor of the community. Depending on the perspective adopted, the data either support or contradict the LoNC.

Given these opposite ways to interpret the data, we require a better understanding of the reasoning that underpins the discourse of democratic (and autocratic) states and how it relates to the LoNC. In order to gain these insights, I rely on elite interviews conducted with states’ representatives to the United Nations. By openly engaging those responsible for devising countries’ speeches, I am able to inquire about states’ incentives to invoke or avoid the language of democracy and to examine how these motives relate to the domestic democratic practices of these countries.

In addition, this chapter fulfils a second objective. Like the chapters before, it also seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the norm of
global democratic rule, how it works, and how powerful it is. Understanding why democracies are so reluctant to embrace the democratic narrative certainly contributes to this purpose. Yet, for a more comprehensive picture, we do not only need to understand the reasoning of democratic states, but also that of other state groupings with a particularly weak democratic discourse: most importantly, these are the institutionally powerful, the P5, and countries that aspire to formal power status, the G4. That is to say, I seek to gain insights into whether these countries openly advocate alternative conceptions of global rule and how fervently they do so. Clearly, the strength of a norm also depends on the strength of its competitors. For this second step of analysis, I also rely on elite interviews, which I supplement with insights from a quantitative content analysis of states’ speeches.

The chapter generates two important findings: First, the global discourse of democratic countries is clearly inspired by how these countries govern themselves. While they avoid labelling their norm entrepreneurship as an effort to bring about democratization, democracies do push for the reform of IOs in line with democratic principles like representation, equality and elections. As such, the international norm advocacy of democratic states is clearly inspired by their domestic democratic practices. So is their reluctance to subsume these efforts under a so-called ‘agenda of democratization’: as the interviews show, democracies struggle to find an adequate global translation of their domestic democratic understandings – a translation that preserves the concept’s original meaning and thus ensures consistency between its domestic and its international use. Unable to come up with such an adaptation, these states prefer to reserve the concept of democracy for the domestic context of rule. This, in turn, is strong proof of a concern for normative consistency. In fact, problems of translation may only arise where actors care to be consistent.

144 I do not further examine another group of states with a weak democratic discourse, namely states with material power. As the previous chapter has shown, interests and struggles associated with formal power inequalities always trump those that are anchored in material disparities. That is to say, the democratic reasoning of the economically powerful is bound to be dominated by their formal lack of power rather than their economic clout. If these countries were able to choose between a democratization of IOs that would allow them to overcome the disadvantages of formal disempowerment on the one hand, and implementing alternative standards of rule that advantage those with economic clout on the other, their choice would be clear: these states would certainly pick the first option.
Second, while no state openly rejects the idea of democratic global rule, both the P5 and the G4 express considerable skepticism about this idea. Moreover, both groups introduce alternative visions of global rule, which center on the principles of effectiveness, efficiency and responsibility. Yet, the ideas they advocate coexist all too well with that of democratic rule beyond the state. Hence, neither the P5 nor the G4 successfully establish a strong competitor to the norm of global democracy.

The chapter is structured as follows: To begin with, I introduce the method of semi-structured elite interviews and explain how these interviews were conducted (5.1). In a second step, I use the interview results to make sense of the democratic puzzle. That is to say, I explain what motivates consolidated democratic states to avoid the language of global democracy (5.2). I proceed by examining whether those who prove reluctant to invoke the democratic narrative, namely democracies, states with formal power status (P5), and countries that seek institutional empowerment (G4), specify any alternatives to the norm of democratic global rule (5.3). Finally, I draw conclusions both about the democratic puzzle and the strength of the democratic norm (5.4).

5.1. Method: elite interviews

Interviews are not only a useful means to fill gaps within or complement existing data; they are particularly relevant when scholars care about actors’ motivations and about the meanings and interpretations that guide them (see Lilleker 2003: 207; Dexter 1970: 18-19). This dissertation project seeks to benefit from both advantages. It uses interviews to gain insights into those aspects of states’ democratic thinking and understanding that were unclear in the primary data, namely states’ speeches. In doing so, it also seeks to uncover countries’ motivations for invoking or avoiding the language of democracy.

Overall, I conducted 41 interviews with diplomats from 41 countries’ Permanent Missions to the United Nations. These semi-structured elite interviews took place in New York City between November 2014 and July 2015. In the following, I first describe the distinctive features and advantages of this specific type of interview. In a second step, I present and justify the selection of interview partners. After providing a brief overview of the interview process itself (how interview partners were contacted and interviews conducted), I briefly introduce the questionnaire.
5.1.1. Semi-structured elite interviews

Elite interviews are a special type of interview, which engage “the influential, the prominent, and the well informed” (Dexter 1970: 6). Some scholars neatly distinguish elite from expert interviews. They claim that scholars’ interest in the former, experts, is grounded in their interpretive authority, their contextual knowledge, and their detailed understanding of structures and procedures inaccessible to the scholar. Scholars interested in elites, by contrast, aim to understand the patterns of thought of actors who have the power to shape (political) outcomes (Littig 2008). Yet, this distinction is not especially helpful for the project at hand, which is interested in diplomats for both of the reasons mentioned above: it perceives diplomats as experts in the discursive practices of their own profession, while it is also convinced that insights into their “perceptions, beliefs and ideologies” (Richard 1996: 199) help understand how diplomats, as elites, attempt to shape these practices. In sum, both types of insight may help to better comprehend what motivates state representatives to invoke or avoid the notion of democracy. I hence align myself with scholars who claim that interviews with elites may constitute a type of expert interview.145

Elite interviews usually rely on a semi-structured interview style.146 In contrast to structured interviews, which rely on a fixed number of closed-ended questions that are usually asked in a specific order and may only provide answers within confines that were preconceived by the scholar, semi-structured interviews use open-ended questions and leave the interviewee broader leeway in her response (Dexter 1970: 5; Peabody et al. 1990: 452). This, in turn, increases validity as it allows for answers that might not have been anticipated by the scholar. However, in contrast to unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews still use an interview guide, which lists a set of relevant questions and topics, all of which have to be covered at some point (Bernard 2011: 158). While this ensures that scholars can compare interviews and thus identify generalizable aspects among them (Meuser/Nagel 1991: 451-452), the guide leaves “plenty of freedom of movement in the formulation of questions, follow-up strategies and sequencing” (Hopf 2004: 204). This is particularly advantageous when deal-

145 See, for instance, Littig (2008) or Burnham et al. (2004).
146 See, for instance, Bernard 2011: 158; Berry 2002: 681; Harvey 2011: 434; Leech 2002: 665. Some scholars even define the elite interview as “an interview with any interviewee […] who […] is given special, non-standardized treatment” (Dexter 1970: 5).
ing with elites or experts. Both “do not like being put in the straightjacket of close-ended questions” (Aberbach/Rockman 2002: 674). Yet, they also have little time, which complicates attempts to gain more specific insights through an entirely unstructured procedure (Harvey 2011: 434).

In sum, semi-structured interviews are particularly suitable when scholars seek to inquire about the interviewee’s own understanding of what is relevant and what is not, her insights into the motives behind certain types of behavior – whether those of herself or those of others – or the meanings that structure her approach to the world (Dexter 1970: 5; Hopf 2004: 203; Morris 2009: 211). This is precisely what this project is interested in.

5.1.2. Selection of countries to be interviewed

The population from which to choose interview partners encompasses all countries that have been involved in the reform debates about the SC and the GA. Most importantly, I aimed to better understand the democratic discourse of democracies and authoritarian regimes. I selected countries and thus interview partners\(^{147}\) based on the typical and deviant case methods.\(^{148}\) In essence, these methods require interviewing both countries that conform to the statistically significant pattern detected – that is, countries that constitute typical cases – and countries that deviate from this pattern – that is, deviant cases. Based on these methods, I chose four types of interview partners: the typical cases included consolidated democratic states with a weak or no democratic discourse, and highly autocratic countries that frequently invoke democracy. The deviant cases included democratic states that eagerly espouse democracy, and autocratic states that make few or no democracy claims.\(^{149}\) For an overview of the number of countries I covered within each of these four categories see Table XXII.

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\(^{147}\) As stated earlier, I relied on one interview partner per country.

\(^{148}\) See Seawright and Gerring (2008) for more details on case selection techniques. According to the authors, a typical case is one “that exemplifies a stable, cross-case relationship” (Seawright/Gerring 2008: 299) and may thus provide more profound insights into the mechanisms underlying it. A deviant case, by contrast, is one that “demonstrates a surprising value” (Seawright/Gerring 2008: 302) because it runs counter to the general cross-case relationship. It may help to better understand the limits of the theoretical model.

\(^{149}\) I averaged the number of states’ democracy claims over the time period covered.
Table XXII: Choice of interview partners: typical and deviant cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Typical cases</th>
<th>Deviant cases</th>
<th>Number of cases covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democratic quality of domestic institutions</td>
<td>Democracies that do not or rarely invoke democracy</td>
<td>Democracies that frequently invoke democracy</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autocracies that frequently invoke democracy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Autocracies that do not or rarely invoke democracy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As stated earlier, I also sought to better understand the reasoning of permanent Council members and countries from the G4. Since both of them constitute small groups, I aimed for full coverage. Lastly, to complement these insights with a more comprehensive picture of the democratic discourse of UN member states, I included additional states. The aim was to have my interview sample reflect the diversity of the whole UN membership in terms of all independent variables. How interview partners are distributed across all categories of independent variables can be read from Table XXIII. While I achieved to cover all dimensions, well-developed Western democracies clearly outnumbered all other types of states. Yet, since these were the particularly puzzling cases, their predominance among interview partners was intentional.

Table XXIII: Distribution of interview partners across categories of independent variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Scores</th>
<th># of countries interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutional power (P5, not P5)</td>
<td>P5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not P5</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

150 Seawright and Gerring (2008) refer to this as case selection based on diverse cases. As the authors suggest, scholars should strive to achieve “maximum variance along relevant dimensions” (Seawright/Gerring 2008: 300) to ensure that the selected cases are as representative of the universe of cases as possible.

151 In some instances, this required turning metric variables into categorical ones.
5. CHAPTER V: The reasoning of democratic states and the norm of global democracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Scores</th>
<th># of countries interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Material power(^{152}) (GDP at market prices in current US dollars)</td>
<td>Lower 25%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mid-range 26%-75%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upper 25%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power aspiration (G4, UfC)</td>
<td>G4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UfC</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic quality of domestic institutions(^{153}) (Freedom House scores)</td>
<td>Free (1.0-2.5)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partly free (3.0-5.0)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not free (5.5-7.0)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic democratic understandings (world regions)</td>
<td>Eastern Europe</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle East/North Africa</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>West</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the cases of the G4 and the P5, I aimed for full coverage. For the rest of countries – namely those chosen on the basis of typical, deviant, and diverse case selection – I used random sampling. That is to say, if a country that was randomly chosen from among a group – for instance the group of autocracies with frequent democracy claims, or the group of Latin American states – did not respond to my interview request, I repeated the procedure of random sampling to pick another country from the same group.

Naturally, one need not hastily generalize from the interviews conducted with group representatives to the entire grouping. Nonetheless, the case selection methods suggested by Seawright and Gerring (2008) certainly help to place my inference on more solid grounding (Seawright/Gerring 2008: 295).

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152 This variable relies on countries’ GDP at market prices (in current US dollars) for the year 2014 as provided by the World Bank. While interviews were conducted from 2014 to 2015, data is only available for up to 2014. For countries with missing data for the year 2014 I used the scores of the last year available. If this was earlier than 2010, I excluded the country. I then classified the 196 states for which data was available into three different categories, namely the 25 percent of countries with the highest GDP values, the 25 percent of countries with the lowest values, and the 50 percent of countries in the mid-range. The resulting classification of the 41 countries interviewed can be read from Table XXIII.

153 I relied on the Freedom House data for 2014. With the exception of two cases, the status of freedom in 2014 also matched the average over the whole period analyzed (2003 to 2013).
5.1.3. The interview process

Based on the list of countries I identified, I sent out written interview requests (via E-Mail). Generally, I was interested in talking to one of the diplomats from a state’s Permanent Mission to the United Nations who had been involved in devising her country’s reform speeches – that is, the speeches analyzed in the first step of the project. As Richard (1996: 200) rightly contends, those who were “responsible for putting together a relevant document” can best assist in its interpretation. As such, my request was either directed towards the Permanent Representative him- or herself, asking to be redirected to the mission’s expert on UN reform; or I sent the request directly to the expert if the latter could be identified beforehand. In the case of a missing response, the invitation was followed by a written reminder about three days later and a telephone call to the mission after another three days.

It is often claimed that the primary challenge of elite interviews is access – the problem of “getting in the door” (Goldstein 2002). Yet, in my case the return rate (about 50 percent) was quite satisfactory. Nonetheless, it is worth considering the non-responses and addressing the questions of who was unwilling to be interviewed, for what reasons, and whether this might have biased the results. As Morris (2009: 214) points out, the refusal to be interviewed may itself be meaningful. A close analysis of how nonresponsive actors “differ in traits or attitudes from those who are successfully contacted and interviewed” (Goldstein 2002: 670) may thus provide valuable insights. In addition to the impression I got from telephone conversations.

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154 The speechwriters were usually the mission’s experts on SC and GA reform. Since the reform debate on the SC revealed by far the more vibrant democratic discourse, I made the SC reform experts my primary target population. Yet, most of the time, these diplomats covered UN reform in general, meaning they were able to provide insights into their country’s perspective on both the democratization of the SC and the GA.

155 In cases where the diplomat who had made last year’s speech was still active in the mission, she could be easily identified and directly addressed in the cover letter.

156 One reason could be the type of elite I targeted. The job of diplomats is to make their countries’ views known and to generate support for these views. Since this requires active engagement with the public, this type of elite may be easier to approach than others.

157 No country declined to be interviewed. Yet, many countries did not respond to my interview invitation.

158 See Goldstein (2002) on nonresponse and biased interview results.
conversations with various missions, this information suggests that nonresponse was mostly a matter of a mission’s resource-endowment. Small missions with fewer (and less qualified\textsuperscript{159}) personnel had obvious difficulties directing my interview request to their experts. As such, the considerably higher response rate from Western democracies seems to result from their higher levels of development rather than the regime type or world regional origin of these countries. This assumption is consistent with the low response rate from countries with very low levels of development. While representatives of these states were clearly included in the interview sample and their responses did not deviate in any unexpected way from those given by other interviewees, I acknowledge this imbalance. Most importantly, however, I found no difference in responsiveness between countries that employ and countries that do not employ the language of democracy.

I had to strike a balance between providing interview partners with enough information about my project so that they would be willing to engage in a conversation and not revealing too many details that could bias the results (Lilleker 2003: 210; Littig 2008). I thus followed Dexter who suggests to “not be any more precise than you absolutely have to be about what you are looking for” (Dexter 1970: 49). While my cover letter informed missions that my research was on the reform and democratization of IOs, I deliberately used both terms (reform and democratization) interchangeably so as not to yet draw too much attention to the notion of democracy. By doing so, I meant to avoid sensitizing diplomats to their own use of the language of democracy before the interview started and thus providing them with too much time to develop elaborate narratives for why they used the concept or not.

Face-to-face interviews, lasting between 30 and 120 minutes, were conducted in New York City in three phases between November 2014 and July 2015. As such, the whole interview period fell within the same session of the GA (the 69th regular session). This ensured a high degree of comparability of the interviews, as interviewee responses could not be biased by the specificities of different reform sessions.

Most of the time, interviewees allowed me to record the interview. In the remaining cases, I simply took notes that I supplemented and systematized right after each interview.\textsuperscript{160} Many interview partners allowed me to quote their name or the name of their mission, several expected me to get

\textsuperscript{159} I here refer to English language problems.

\textsuperscript{160} Lilleker (2003) and others point to a trade-off between recording interviews, which could inhibit the interviewee, and only taking notes, which may induce
back to them before attributing, and one interview was conducted entirely off the record. I chose to anonymize all interviews that were on the record.\footnote{One reason was that interviewees who had requested to be consulted before attribution were unlikely to declassify the quotes I chose – given that the ones most interesting for my purposes were often the most controversial ones.} Each interview received a sequential number and was transcribed and coded with the help of the software \textit{MAXQDA}.

5.1.4. The questionnaire

The questionnaire, the complete version of which is available in the appendix (7.4), consisted of three blocks of questions: After briefly introducing myself and my research project, I started the interview with what Spradley (1979) terms a “grand tour question.” This type of question, which asks interviewees to provide an account of something they are particularly familiar with, serves to ease the transition into the actual interview. It does so by easing interviewees into a conversational mode and slowly introducing them to the topic. I asked my interview partners to give an account of the process of speechwriting and of how she and her colleagues would decide on the wording. As regards the wording, I emphasized my particular interest in the more abstract concepts that would appear in these texts and referred to examples like legitimacy, democracy, or credibility. This provided me with first insights into the reasoning that would ultimately result in a diplomat’s choice to use or not use certain types of normative language.

The second part of the interview was meant to inquire what motivated diplomats to invoke or avoid the democratic narrative in their speeches. In addition, it served to examine possible alternative conceptions of global rule that a state may entertain. I started out with some exploratory questions. More precisely, depending on how prominently the notion of democracy figured in a country’s speeches, I asked for the reasons for including or excluding the notion, about how deliberate this decision had been, and whether or not – independent of the language chosen in the speech – this country was advocating for a democratization of the SC. If
the diplomat answered that they were not seeking democratization, I asked for the reasons and for alternative objectives of the reform process. I also inquired about the diplomat’s perception of other states’ references to democracy and possible reasons for their use or avoidance of the term. When asking these questions, I deliberately did not define democracy so that my interview partners were allowed to “interpret [it] in their own terms, and out of their own experience” (Dexter 1970: 55).

Third, I complemented this set of exploratory questions with questions that specifically targeted the puzzling behavior of democracies and autocracies. This is to say, I scrutinized whether and how the aim to achieve domestic-international consistency, which the LoNC suggests, inspired states’ decisions to invoke democracy. For this purpose, I asked interviewees whether their countries saw any kind of link between democracy inside of nation-states and democracy within IOs, why this was (not) the case, and what kind of link they had in mind.

I ended the interview by asking diplomats for their feedback on our conversation. Most importantly, I inquired whether there was anything they felt was relevant to the topic that I had not asked about. As Harvey (2011: 438f) points out, this might bring up issues or questions relevant to a comprehensive understanding of my research topic that I might have otherwise overlooked.

5.2. Making sense of a puzzling finding: the discourse of democratic states and the LoNC

To ask about what keeps democratic states from invoking democracy, I relied on interviews with two types of constituencies. These include the representatives of 15 consolidated democratic nations that never or barely ever mention the term democracy, as well as the representatives of four highly autocratic regimes, all of which eagerly espouse the democratic narrative. First and foremost, my conclusions are based on diplomats’ responses to the following questions: how deliberate was their decision to include or exclude the notion of democracy from their countries’ speeches? What were their reasons for doing so? And, independent of the language

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162 Altogether, I spoke to diplomats from 19 consolidated democracies. This number is reduced to 15 once I exclude democracies that are either part of the P5 or the G4 and whose reluctance to invoke democracy may well be inspired by a power rationale rather than their own domestic democratic practices.
chosen in the speeches, was democratizing the SC an important goal of their country?

The results are unambiguous – and quite surprising. In fact, not a single democracy that avoided the term was fully conscious of its democratic discourse. In fact, many interviewees were quite surprised when I confronted them with the fact that the notion of democracy was absent in their speeches. Responses like “I don’t recall exactly [whether we use it or not]” (DIPL31), “It has not occurred to me” (DIPL28), or “I didn’t really think about it” (DIPL38) reflect this lack of awareness. As a result, the lack of engagement with the democratic idea shown by democratic countries hardly appears to be intentional. According to the interviewees, not one of them had deliberately avoided the notion: “We make no concerted effort to avoid a word” (DIPL37) was one diplomat’s response and another one similarly argued: “We have never sat down and thought ‘should we write democracy or not… mmh… better not, it doesn’t fit.’ That did not happen” (DIPL29). In fact, despite not using the notion, almost all diplomats from democratic states claimed that their country desired a more democratic Council:

- *It goes without saying… it’s obvious… democracy is the name of the game* (DIPL22).
- *There’s no doubt that we support the democratization of the organization* (DIPL31).
- *For us, the end result of SC reform would hopefully be a more democratic SC* (DIPL28).

While interviewees were uncertain whether or not their countries invoked the term democracy, they were remarkably sure that “the idea behind it” (DIPL31) did pervade their discourse. The word democracy might lack from their speeches, they argued, but “the idea is in there” (DIPL34). To substantiate this claim, interviewees referred to a set of principles, which they claimed would characterize their thinking and writing on Council reform and – as many argued – would substitute for the word democracy.163 These principles

163 Only two diplomats, namely DIPL02 and DIPL29, claimed that democratization was not necessarily what their countries were after. However, the principles for reform they put forward – among others representation, equality, and accountability – were the same ones invoked by their colleagues. In contrast to their colleagues, however, these diplomats did not perceive their proposals as contributions to more democratic rule beyond the state: “we would not frame it as being about democracy” (DIPL02), one of them claimed.
are already familiar to the reader: in fact, these are the very same ideas emphasized by those countries that actually invoke democratic language:

You’re right, we probably don’t use the word democracy very often but we do talk about accountability and transparency. Accountability and democracy, they are not quite synonyms but there’s an overlap there (DIPL25).

The general term democracy when it comes to the UN practice is broken into different words… accountability, inclusiveness, transparency… these words are used for that (DIPL11).

Yes, we would like the Council to be democratic […] but transparent, accountable, inclusive, for me it goes together, it’s along the same line, it’s the same concept (DIPL38).

According to the interviews, democracies are no less eager to promote democratic principles of global rule than autocratic states. They simply differ in the label they attach to their norm entrepreneurship. That is to say, in contrast to other countries, democracies do not frame their reform demands as efforts at democratization. But is this finding confirmed by a closer scrutiny of states’ speeches? Do democracies avoid the notion of democracy, but eagerly advocate global rule that is representative, egalitarian, and based on elections? In order to find out, I conducted a quantitative content analysis of states’ speeches. More precisely, I compared the speeches of democratic states (namely all those ranked ‘free’ by Freedom House) to those of autocracies (all those ranked ‘not free’) according to the principles countries invoke independently of the concept of democracy.164 I restricted the analysis to seven principles, namely the ones that are used to define democratic Council rule by more than ten percent of those country years that have specified their democratic understanding with reference to democratic principles (see Figure VIII in Chapter 3). These principles include representation, equality, elections, accountability, responsiveness, participation, and transparency.

To detect principles in states’ speeches, I conducted a keyword search using the WordSmith software program. The software allows for an automated screening of large amounts of text for various substitutes for each of the principles of interest. Among linguists, these substitutes are called ‘lemmas’ (Stubbs 1995: 2). For instance, the lemma “equality” includes word forms

164 That is to say, I consider all references states make to any of the principles of interest, independent of whether or not countries connect these principles to the idea of democracy.
such as equitable, equality, or equal.165 For the complete lemma list of all the principles included in the analysis, please see Table XXIV.166 The analysis provides information about how often each principle appears in the speeches of democratic as compared to autocratic states. Because both groupings are not equally strong – the group of democracies encompasses 401 country years, whereas the group of autocracies counts 178 country years – I divided the number of references to each principle by the number of country years included in the respective group. The resulting numbers reveal the average amount of times a principle is mentioned by either a democratic or an autocratic country year. These numbers range from as high as five to as low as 0.03 references.

Table XXIV: Substitutes for various democratic principles (lemmas)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lemma</th>
<th>Substitutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Representation</td>
<td>representative, representation, representativity, representativeness, represent, reflect, unrepresentative, representational, represents, representing, represented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>equality, equitable, equitably, equity, equal, equitability, equally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elections</td>
<td>election, elections, vote, elected, re-election, re-elect, electing, elect, elective, electoral, electorate, electorates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>accountable, accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>responsive, responsiveness, unresponsive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>participation, participatory, participate, participative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>transparent, transparency, transparently</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the interview findings hold, democracies should advocate the very same ideas as espoused by autocratic states. And indeed, Figure XXII shows that this is the case. All seven principles are not only espoused by autocracies but also by democratic countries. Moreover, the frequency of references to these principles is largely the same among both regime types. While autocracies are somewhat more eager to invoke the principles of representation, equality, participation, and transparency, democracies place a stronger emphasis on elections, accountability, and responsiveness.

165 Certainly, the substitutes for a specific principle may also include incorrect matches. Without going into a more thorough text analysis, it is difficult to exclude instances where a principle is mentioned but is used for other purposes than to describe rule by the IO of interest. Yet, this problem affects both the speeches of democratic and autocratic countries alike and should thus not bias the results.

166 The list is the result of a first automated screening of the texts, after which I merged synonyms of each of the principles of interest.
5. CHAPTER V: The reasoning of democratic states and the norm of global democracy

Figure XXII: SC reform debate: number of references to democratic principles by democratic (free) and autocratic (not free) country years
All in all, democracies’ speeches reflect an agenda for IO reform that is highly consistent with how these countries govern themselves. Without explicitly linking them to the idea of democracy, democratic states advocate the very same principles they also practice at home. But do these countries establish a direct connection between their domestic democratic practices and governance on a global level? Does their advocacy of these principles derive from the domestic relevance of these ideas? The answer to this question may certainly help to assess the explanatory power of the LoNC. For this reason, I directly inquired whether my interview partners saw a link between democratic rule inside and beyond the state, and also asked them to describe this link. And in fact, some diplomats from democratic states did not hesitate to relate their advocacy for representation, accountability, or transparency on a global level to the domestic relevance of these principles. Clearly, these countries did not only deem it possible to externalize key democratic principles from the domestic context of rule; they also claimed that this was precisely what they were doing: exporting their domestic values to the global level. As one representative argued, the principles that underpin domestic politics should also guide international rule (DIPL04). Other diplomats made similar statements:

*If […] you come from a democratic tradition that carries forward into your engagement with the organization in question […] and there are certain principles that any European and any country with a democratic tradition would try to uphold in its interaction with international organizations […]. So we do look for standards of accountability and elections where possible (DIPL25).*

*In our foreign policy […] we emphasize human rights, elections, international law […]. That’s the general foreign policy so we also promote that in international organizations (DIPL37).*

What does this imply for the LoNC? Earlier, I suggested that democracies act in a highly inconsistent way: by avoiding the notion of democracy, they do not promote beyond the state what they implement at home. The interviews change this impression. They show that democracies may not explicitly link them to the notion of democracy, but still promote the very same principles they cherish in their domestic contexts of rule – the same principles that others subsume under an ‘agenda of democratization.’ As such, democracies do not act in an inconsistent manner. They globally promote what they practice at home.
While this finding supports the LoNC, it still may not answer a fundamental question: if democracies do follow the same agenda of democratizing global rule as other states, why do they prefer not to label it accordingly? Why are democracies so much more reluctant to invoke the democratic narrative than their authoritarian colleagues? As suggested earlier, this reluctance is not based on conscious reflection. Democracies do not actively decide against using the notion. As a result, states motives cannot be directly asked for but need to be inferred indirectly from states’ responses. These responses contain some plausible clues.

Most importantly, democracies seem to distinguish two things: they separate efforts to improve global rule in line with domestic democratic principles from efforts to achieve democracy beyond the state. According to the interviewees, international governance may be brought into conformity with the principles achieved by democratic nations. Yet, this is not equivalent to implementing domestic democratic rule beyond the state. Put differently: while democracies contend that many of the principles they cherish at home – the subcomponents of democratic rule – may be extended to IOs, they prove considerably more skeptical when it comes to transferring the idea of democratic rule to this level. This is suggested by several responses from the interviewees: most importantly, many democracies firmly located the idea of democracy in the domestic context of rule. As one diplomat phrased it: “We see it in the context of nation-states” (DIPL02). This, democracies claimed, is where the idea fits best. Beyond individual democratic principles that may well be externalized, democracies did not see how the democratic idea could be detached from the nation-state and globally implemented: “on the international level this does not make sense” (DIPL03), one diplomat claimed and another one argued: “It is very difficult to apply the word democracy in the context of intergovernmental structures” (DIPL11). Other diplomats were equally puzzled: “[Global] democracy, what does that mean?” (DIPL02) was a question raised by many diplomats.167

As these statements convey, democracies struggle to transfer their domestic democratic understanding to the global realm. To them, the act of conceptualizing democratic rule beyond the state is anything but intuitive. Rather, it constitutes a complex act of translation between two levels of political organization, which requires states to redefine and thus adapt what they know from the domestic realm for the level of IOs. This act of transla-

167 For instance, DIPL37, DIPL18, DIPL38, DIPL11, and DIPL03 also raised this question.
tion turns out to be much easier for rather concrete principles of rule like representation or elections. Broader and thus more abstract notions like that of democracy present much harder cases. In fact, states may find them too difficult to translate. This is precisely what the interviews suggest: democracies perceive no way of adapting the democratic idea without compromising too much of its original domestic meaning. This, in turn, is strong proof of a concern for normative consistency. In fact, problems of translation may only arise where actors care about being consistent.

As this shows, the internalization of domestic democratic norms does not necessarily imply a stronger engagement with the global democratic narrative. In fact, the opposite seems to be the case: those who are most familiar with the democratic idea are most careful in its use. Apparently, the process of translating democracy between different contexts is significantly more complicated for actors with a nuanced democratic understanding and an awareness of the complexities involved in democratic rule. For this reason, these actors prefer to reserve the democratic idea for the context from where it originates and where they think it fits best: the domestic one. This reasoning is clearly supported by evidence from the interviews. Those states that seek to restrict their democratic thinking to the domestic realm, one diplomat argued, are mostly experienced democracies:

*I believe because we have a strong understanding of domestic democratic rule, we would not necessarily apply this term to the international level (DIPL29).*

The behavior of autocracies supports this logic, which closely links a state’s domestic democratic experience to its struggles of translating democracy for the global realm: while most democracies struggled to define democratic rule beyond the state, autocracies had less of a problem doing so. In fact, one diplomat from a highly autocratic country argued that “*there is nothing abstract*” (DIPL32) or difficult to define about the concept of global democracy. Likewise, none of the most autocratic regimes that were interviewed sought to restrict the democratic idea to the national realm. Instead, they were all surprisingly quick in drawing analogies between the domestic and the international level of rule: “*The model [of global democracy] is the same as the internal*” (DIPL24), one diplomat argued and another one claimed:

*For us, the democratic platform that we demand for the SC is very close to the democratic platform that we practice in our own country (DIPL41).*
5. CHAPTER V: The reasoning of democratic states and the norm of global democracy

Apparently, their low level of experience with democratic rule relieves autocracies of the normative concerns that plague democracies. Most importantly, autocracies do not feel the urge to align their global democratic discourse with a nuanced conception of domestic democratic rule. Their global democratic reasoning is not complicated by concerns for consistency. Rather than being stuck in translation, autocracies claimed that the democratic concept may easily travel between both arenas.

While democracies disputed this claim, they provided surprisingly few reasons for their stance. Only a few countries elaborated on the differences between rule inside and beyond the state that they saw as impeding the transfer of the democratic idea. Both levels, these countries emphasized, prioritize different actors: while the traditional subjects of domestic democratic rule are people, rule beyond the state is an intergovernmental affair. Hence, they claimed, the democratic idea just does not work in the context of IOs:

There are Western countries like us for which the idea of democracy is basically a domestic idea... which say the people take a decision, the government should be representative. And then there are other countries [...] which see it a bit differently. They think what the IO is doing should reflect the will of Member States [...]. This is a different understanding... democracy detached from the original principle... one state, one vote instead of one man, one vote (DIPL29).

Democracy... it’s a slightly tricky concept to define... rule by the people... here [at the UN] we want democratic institutions where all countries have a right to express their views (DIPL37).

Personally, I find the whole drivel of democracy a bit stupid... we just had Luxembourg on the Council... Luxembourg was great, a great member of the Security Council, but it still had the same voice as Pakistan... if one considers the difference in the size of both countries’ populations this has little to do with democracy (DIPL29).

The countries quoted hesitated to invoke the democratic idea precisely because they saw a discrepancy between statist global rule and the original meaning of democracy, namely rule by the people.¹⁶⁸ By contrast, not a

¹⁶⁸ Yet, in other contexts, democracies are less concerned about equating states and people. In fact, most democracies clearly link the democratic quality of the GA
single autocracy distinguished between people and states as democratic subjects. Instead, these countries tended to equate both types of actors:

And this is exactly what we have at the national level… if we have someone which does not need the vote of the people, then why should he or she go to the people? Because he knows I’m fine, I don’t need these people… [Likewise,] the P5 they don’t need to have the support or even need to consult the countries they are making decisions about (DIPL24).

As the interviews show, there is yet another way in which people enter states’ reflections about global democracy: diplomats from democratic nations did not only describe global rule as a statist undertaking, but also as one that prominently involves autocracies (DIPL14, DIPL29, DIPL18, DIPL17). From their perspective, intergovernmental rule does not only exclude the people from direct engagement; it even prevents their indirect involvement. That is to say, IOs empower states that fail to be responsive to their own citizens. This, in turn, thwarts any thinking about democratic IO rule. DIPL18 was not the only interviewee to critically contend that “giving power to nondemocratic countries” is a common practice in the Council. Similar criticism was voiced by DIPL29 and DIPL17:

Especially in the Security Council it is somehow strange to talk about democracy, also because we frequently elect non-democratic states to the Council and will continue to do so (DIPL29).

If in the SC all the members would have been democratic, then the Council would be also work more democratic (DIPL17).

In contrast to democracies, autocracies are largely exempt from the kinds of concerns for consistency that arise from having been socialized in a context of functioning domestic democratic institutions – concerns that are reflected in the attempt to adequately translate this democratic experience into guidelines for the global realm. Less likely to be “stuck in translation,” autocracies may eagerly embrace the democratic narrative.

Yet, such concerns are not the only force that may drive states to act consistently. In fact, there are external normative pressures that may have the same effect. Among these, the greatest pressure should be the fear of nor-

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to the fact that it functions according to the principle of “one state, one vote.” Even so, references to the traditional subjects of democratic rule, people, were much more prominent in the interviews conducted with democratic states than in those conducted with autocracies.
mative self-entrapment: autocracies should worry that embracing the global democratic narrative may lead to rhetorical entrapment and force them into domestic compliance with democratic ideas. Yet, there are no signs that autocracies entertain such fears. Apparently, given the meaning of democratic global rule that prevails internationally, autocracies have little to be afraid of: they run little risk of self-entrapment by using a concept that is utterly state centric. After all, autocracies make no concessions to the world’s people when invoking this concept. Hence, they need not fear that others might hold them to account for conceding more to the world population than they concede to their own domestic citizens. In fact, autocracies may even anticipate normative pressure by claiming that the dominant statist conception of democratic IO rule neatly fits their domestic political practices, whereby collectives rather than individuals constitute the primary subjects of rule. Put differently, many autocrats refer to their peoples as collectives “whose rights are exercised by governments” (Jackson 1990: 156); they identify some sort of “corporate national interest” (Thomas/Meyer 1980: 146) and establish themselves as its exclusive representative. Clearly, this understanding of popular sovereignty as authoritarian rule in the nation’s best interest helps to delegitimize any deviation from regime-defined purposes. But equally importantly, it does not contradict a statist concept of global rule, which puts the individual, the people, to one side in favor of the collective, the state. The opposite is true: both conceptions neatly coincide.

Free from the pressures of normative consistency, autocracies may use the democratic narrative at will – applying it to those contexts where it is of benefit and avoiding it where it is not. That said, the concept promises to be more useful where it can be linked to concrete demands for change than where it simply serves to praise the status quo. This may also explain why autocracies embrace it more eagerly in the debate about the SC than in the corresponding one about the GA.

Based on the interview results, it is now possible to draw some general conclusions about the LoNC and its relevance as a driver of states’ democratic discourse. As the interviews show, the global discourse of democratic countries is clearly inspired by how these countries govern themselves. In any case, what democracies demand beyond the state is not inconsistent with their own domestic democratic practices: both the interview responses and the speeches reveal that democracies do in fact advocate a reform of

169 Autocrats often justify this role with reference to their superior knowledge of the national interest (Dahl in Mayer 2001: 147f).
IOs in line with the principles of representation, equality, and elections. Where they differ from autocracies, however, is in the way they describe their norm advocacy: while autocracies sell it as an effort of democratizing global rule, democracies avoid this label.

Democracies do not doubt that global rule can be improved by implementing democratic principles. As the interviews suggest, this is why they engage in IO reform. Yet, many of these countries question whether an equivalent to domestic democratic rule may be implemented in IOs. One reason for their skepticism is the statist way in which global rule is conducted. Put differently, some democracies clearly object to what autocracies have few problems doing: replacing the original subjects of democracy, namely people, with a new type of actor, namely states. Most importantly, however, democracies avoid the global democratic narrative because they find themselves unable to adequately translate a concept for the global level that they firmly locate in the domestic realm. Incapable of redefining democratic rule without compromising its original domestic meaning – and thus risking becoming inconsistent – these states choose to avoid the notion altogether. While normative pressure by other actors does not explain their behavior – after all, most democracies were hardly aware of their hesitance to use the discourse of democracy – norm socialization and internalization do play a role. Apparently, states with a complex understanding of domestic democratic rule find it much harder to rethink the democratic idea outside its traditional confines.

5.3. Alternative conceptions of global rule and the power of the democratic idea

As I argued earlier, the justificatory power of a norm depends on several factors: first, its meaning needs to generate sufficient agreement among those who invoke the norm; and second, only few actors should openly reject the norm as an inadequate standard for the matter under discussion. But the strength of a norm also depends on a third criterion, namely whether or not actors challenge it by reference to alternative ideas. This criterion is the focus of the following section. Chapter 3 has shown that no country openly rejects the aim of democratizing IOs. Yet, opposition does not need to be this blunt. States that object to the idea of democracy may simply introduce alternative conceptions of rule – conceptions that conflict with the aim of greater democracy. To evaluate the strength of the democratic norm, we thus need insights into the reasoning and discourse of those who avoid it. Above all, this requires taking a closer look at three
constituencies, namely the institutionally powerful – the P5 – those who aspire to formal power status – the G4 – and democratic countries. I use the insights from interviews conducted with members of each of the three groups, supplemented with information provided by other interviewees, to investigate the reasoning of each constituency: do diplomats admit privately what they do not declare publicly, namely that they question the merit of global democratic rule? And if this is the case, which alternatives do these states propose? Clearly, opposing conceptions of global rule may only challenge existing ones if they are openly promoted. As such, I will also examine whether the alternatives mentioned by states are reflected in their speeches.

In this regard, the previous section (5.2) has already offered important insights. It scrutinized the reasoning of democratic states more closely and was thus able to show that democracies do not follow an alternative agenda of IO reform. In fact, most interviewees claimed their countries would fully embrace the aim of democratizing international institutions. Yet, instead of promoting the abstract idea of democracy – an idea that democracies confine to the nation-state – democratic states promote what they deem to be the concepts’ more specific subcomponents. This practice is clearly reflected in the speeches of democratic countries: just as claimed by the interviewees, democracies embrace all of the principles of rule that others subsume under an agenda of global democratization. In short, these countries do not challenge the norm of democratic global rule. Quite the contrary, they too act as entrepreneurs for IO democracy.

However, the same thing cannot be claimed of the other two grouping. Both the institutionally powerful and those who aspire to formal power positions embrace alternative visions of rule beyond the state – visions that nicely coincide with their power interests.

G4

Just like democracies, G4 countries reveal a reluctance to use the democratic narrative. Two of their members, namely Japan and Germany, avoid this language altogether. In contrast to democratic states, however, the behavior of the G4 relies on considerable skepticism about the idea of a democratic Council: as some of these countries admitted, democracy might simply not be the right concept to guide reform. One diplomat frankly stated

170 I talked to three out of four members of the G4 as well as three out of five permanent Council members.
that the Council was never designed as a democratic organization: “the SC was not founded upon democratic principles” and as such, it “was never democratic and never meant to be so” (DIPL20). From the interviewee’s point of view, the Council’s democratic deficits are unsurprising. Whether they need to be remedied, he claimed, was another question. Yet, the diplomat did not answer it in the affirmative. First and foremost, he argued, the Council needed to be effective and efficient. For his country, democratization was a worthwhile undertaking only if it contributed to this overarching goal: “The question is whether democratization will increase effectiveness” (DIPL20). As he later stated, his country entertained serious doubts in this regard:

I am not convinced that a democratized Council would also be more effective (DIPL20).

According to the diplomat, effective and efficient rule may not be achieved in conjunction with greater democracy. The contrary is true: for his country, democracy and effectiveness constitute mutually exclusive standards of international rule. This view also pervades the thinking of those who support the G4. As one of them argued, the Council need not be democratic. In fact, he claimed, “I feel that it works because it’s not a democratic organ” (DIPL21). In their speeches, none of the G4 openly argues this way. Even so, other countries claimed that this was the message they and others received from the four (see DIPL02 and DIPL30). The literature even acknowledges how central principles of effectiveness and efficiency are to the reasoning of the G4 (Stuenkel 2010: 56; Tadokoro 1997: 126-127). After all, special privileges for powerful countries are difficult to sell with reference to democracy. They are easier to justify in terms of their contribution to functional global rule.

Another diplomat from the G4 expressed similar skepticism about the idea of a democratic Council. As he contended, the word democracy does not appear in his country’s speeches for one simple reason: what he and other G4 members demand, namely new permanent seats, is just not democratic (DIPL27). For his country, he claimed, Council reform “is not about democratization but about many [other] things” (DIPL27). The principles he mentioned may best be subsumed under the idea of responsibility: instead of being democratic, the Council needs to empower countries that take on special responsibility for implementing the body’s decisions and who thus enable the Council to discharge its main responsibility to its membership: providing peace and security in the world. As such, the idea of responsibility is not only linked to the principle of effectiveness but also
to state capacity. This, in turn, makes it particularly attractive to power aspirants like the G4: these countries submit that only “responsible” states capable of shouldering the military and financial burdens associated with the Council’s decisions” may turn the Council into “a responsible body, one that ha[s] the capacity for decisive action” (both quotes in Blum 2005: 639; see also Mahmood 2013: 12). Whether or not this body is also more democratic is less relevant for these actors.

Another principle invoked by G4 diplomats was that of legitimacy. Both DIPL20 and DIPL06 mentioned its importance to their countries’ reform demands. As DIPL06 highlighted, “we also always touch upon the issue of legitimacy.” Likewise, when DIPL20 expressed concern about the adverse effects of democratization, he did not only think about the Council’s effectiveness but also about its legitimacy. This finding is consistent with the literature, according to which Brazil and others from the G4 repeatedly emphasize the legitimacy gains that may be achieved by including them as new permanent Council members (Stuenkel 2010: 56). In contrast to effectiveness and responsibility, the idea of legitimacy is more difficult to pit against the norm of democracy. After all, it is located on a different level of abstraction. That is to say, legitimacy refers to the quality that rule may achieve if it conforms to any of the standards mentioned before. In fact, this is precisely what many countries claim: in order to increase its acceptance among the international community, an IO needs to respect democratic standards of rule.

Yet, by talking about legitimacy rather than democracy, the G4 might try to decouple both ideas: a Council that empowers them, they contend, need not be democratic but may still find the support of UN member states.

As stated earlier, alternative conceptions of global rule may only challenge existing ones if they are openly promoted. Hence, we need more detailed insights into whether the alternatives mentioned by the G4 truly pervade their public speeches. Do effectiveness, legitimacy, and responsibility indeed figure much more prominently in these countries’ speeches than among the rest of the UN membership? That is to say, do the G4 try to shift the balance of the debate in favor of these alternative conceptions

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171 On the link between state power and responsibility for the maintenance of international order see Brown (2004).
172 In fact, statements like the following are frequently heard in the Council’s reform debate: “My delegation would like to stress the need for the body that has a direct bearing on political decisions regarding international peace and security and matters of life and death for thousands of human beings to be more democratic […] and, therefore, more universally legitimate” (Honduras 2005).
of rule? To find out, I once again conducted a keyword search of states’ speeches using the WordSmith software program. In essence, I compared the prevalence of the principles of democracy, effectiveness, legitimacy, and responsibility in the speeches of the power aspirants – namely all country years that belong to the G4 – and among the rest of UN member states. Again, I divided the number of references to each principle by the number of country years included in the respective group.\textsuperscript{173} For the substitutes for the three lemmas of interest see Table XXV.\textsuperscript{174}

\textbf{Table XXV: Substitutes for various non-democratic principles (lemmas)}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lemma</th>
<th>Substitutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness / efficiency</td>
<td>effective, efficient, effectiveness, efficiency, efficiently, efficacy, efficacious, ineffective, effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy</td>
<td>legitimate, legitimacy, legitimately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>responsible, responsibility, responsibly, responsibilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As \textit{Figure XXIII} reveals, both effectiveness/efficiency and legitimacy appear much more prominently in the speeches of G4 countries than in those of other UN member states. While the G4 are more reluctant to invoke the term democracy, they clearly are more eager to espouse the other two concepts. References to responsibility, however, barely differ among power aspirants and other states. In fact, country years that do not belong to the G4 are somewhat more eager to invoke the idea. A closer examination of states’ references to this principle suggests an explanation: The principle of responsibility is somewhat difficult to disentangle both from the notion of accountability – states sometimes seem to equate accountable and responsible rule – and from references to the IO’s mandate; after all, an IO that discharges its responsibility is an IO that fulfils its mandate. As such, the notion is closely related to at least two of the principles that states associate with democratic global rule, namely accountability and the rule of law.

\textsuperscript{173} 41 country years belong to the G4, while the rest of the UN membership (including members of the UfC) includes 729 country years.

\textsuperscript{174} Information on the frequency of states’ democracy claims was not gathered via keyword analysis but relies on the dataset introduced in Chapter 3. By using this alternative source of data, I meant to exclude any references to democratic rule inside nation-states rather than beyond the state.
Yet, the data clearly show: when it comes to the ideas that countries seek to implement beyond the state, priorities differ: G4 countries balance their greater reluctance to invoke the democratic narrative with a stronger emphasis on the goals of effective and legitimate rule. By doing so, they attempt to push the debate somewhat away from the goal of democracy and towards a conception of rule that emphasizes effectiveness and legitimacy above all else.

Yet, it is questionable whether by doing so the G4 effectively challenge the idea of IO democracy: while these countries perceive the principles they espouse – most importantly the principle of effectiveness – as competitors to the idea of democratic global rule, their capacity to serve as proper alternatives is clearly limited. There are several reasons for this: most importantly, the G4 themselves do not avoid the language of democracy. While they embrace it with greater caution, they clearly invoke the idea. As such, they fail to generate the impression that democratic global rule is by definition ineffective. In this regard – and despite clear differences in emphasis – their discourse is very much consistent with that of other states: while others place more emphasis on democracy and less on effectiveness than the G4, they also espouse both ideas in combination. Moreover, other states do not only advocate both ideas, they also openly contest what the G4 expressed in private: democracy and effectiveness may not only be pursued alongside each other; both ideas are mutually reinforcing:
Democracy, efficiency […] all interact and belong together (DIPL22).

The status quo has no justification on the grounds of efficiency and effectiveness. That would be tantamount to justifying dictatorship or one-party-state rule on the grounds that a democratically elected parliament would be unwieldy or dysfunctional. Those are discredited ideas that have long been consigned to where they rightfully belong: the garbage bin of history (Botswana 2006, SC debate).

Indonesia is convinced of the efficacy of the democratic response (Indonesia 2008, SC debate).

In sum, the G4 do in fact advocate alternative conceptions of rule. In private, they express skepticism about the idea of global democracy and a preference for IO rule that is judged according to its effectiveness, its legitimacy, and its ability to grant special responsibility to powerful states. While their speeches reflect this advocacy for alternative standards of rule, their discourse fails to mount an effective challenge to the democratic norm. After all, the aims of effectiveness, legitimacy, and responsibility appear to coexist well with the idea of democratic global rule. As such, these principles may help to shift emphasis away from the goal of global democracy, but they fail to serve as competing visions on how to conduct international rule.

P5

Compared to the G4, permanent Council members are even more reluctant to speak the language of democracy. Expressed in numbers, 49 out of 52 country years with permanent Council membership never invoke the term. Yet, in contrast to diplomats from the G4, the diplomats I interviewed from permanent Council members did not as openly reflect on their motives for avoiding the concept and on possible alternative conceptions of global rule. One of the interviews was entirely off the record. Interestingly, few of the P5 diplomats I talked to fully rejected the idea of a democratic Council. At most, they described the concept as “not too useful” (DIPL19), or contended that arguing in “normative patterns” was generally not a common practice among the P5 (DIPL40). Yet, these and other statements do convey some skepticism about the idea of democratizing IOs. And even though P5 countries did not put forward elaborate alternative conceptions of IO rule – as some of the G4 did – the thoughts they expressed in the interviews and the observations made by other diplomats
suggest that the P5 do in fact embrace some alternative standards of rule. These standards overlap strongly with the ones espoused by the G4: both the ideas of effectiveness/efficiency and of responsibility reappeared in the interviews. On the whole, this is consistent with the literature, according to which the P5 “promote reform based on the principles of ‘special responsibility’ and ‘efficiency’ rather than on the principles of equality and democratic representation” (Bourantonis/Panagiotou 2004: 99; see also Blum 2005: 645; McDonald/Stewart 2010). Again, this emphasis nicely fits the interests of these countries: it implies that in order to function properly, international institutions need to grant special status to the powerful and thus inextricably links the idea of special responsibilities with that of special entitlements (Tadokoro 1997: 126-127).

But are these competing principles reflected in the speeches of permanent Council members? Do the concepts of effectiveness, efficiency, and responsibility play a more prominent role among the P5 than among the remaining UN member states? If the P5 meant to shift the debate in favor of these ideas, their speeches would have to reflect this special emphasis.

Figure XXIV: Number of references to various principles of rule by the P5 and the rest of UN member states

In contrast to the G4, the P5 do not attempt to balance their weaker – or rather non-existent – democratic discourse with emphatic advocacy for effective and responsible global rule (see Figure XXIV). While these countries...

175 Statements that support this claim were made off the record and cannot be quoted here.
do in fact stress the need for an effective Council, this emphasis does not surpass that of the remaining UN member states. In fact, the latter are the more vocal advocates for effective international institutions. Apparently, P5 countries do not see the need to outperform others in their normative advocacy. There are two possible reasons for this: first, others do already strongly support the conception of rule favored by the P5, namely effective (and responsible) rule beyond the state. These countries simply add a democratic component that the P5 omit. And second, the P5’s interests are well secured. In contrast to the G4, permanent Council members neither have to defend nor strive to improve their current status. As such, they depend much less on normative justification than those who aspire to formal power positions.

This is not to say that the P5 remain silent about the type of IO they advocate. As Figure XXIV shows, these countries offer a clear alternative to democracy beyond the state: The IO they envision is one that conserves their power in the name of effective rule by those who (already) shoulder special responsibility. The P5 make it very clear that the aim of democratization is very low on their agenda. Still, this does not prevent other states from pursuing all three principles together – thus effectively countering any attempt to pit these ideas against one another.

5.4. Conclusion

The chapter set out with two objectives: on the one hand, it sought to investigate the reasoning that underpins democracies’ use of the democratic idea. A better understanding of their incentives to avoid the language of democracy was meant to help reassess the LoNC and its role in driving states’ democratic discourse. On the other hand, the chapter sought to evaluate the justificatory power of the democratic idea. By examining whether those who never or scarcely invoke democracy push alternative conceptions of rule, it sought to provide a more comprehensive picture of the norm of democratic global rule and its resonance within the international

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176 Yet, this is not to suggest that democratic principles played no role whatsoever in the interviews conducted with the P5 and the G4. In fact, members of both groups emphasized the need for better representation (DIPL06, DIPL 27, DIPL19, and DIPL40). But in contrast to consolidated democracies, which invoked a multitude of democratic principles, they restricted themselves to this one idea. Other principles associated with democracy beyond the state were conspicuously absent in their statements.
community. In order to gain both types of insights, the chapter relied on interviews conducted with states’ representatives to the UN.

As these interviews revealed, the LoNC constitutes an important driver of states’ democratic discourse. The reason why democracies avoid talking of democratic IO rule is clearly reconcilable both with constructivist insights in general and with the LoNC more specifically. To these countries, democracy constitutes a domestic idea that is difficult, if not impossible, to adapt to the global realm. Unable to find a global translation of how the concept is defined and exercised domestically, these countries prefer to avoid the democratic narrative altogether. Apparently, the more nuanced an actor’s understanding of a norm, the greater their struggles to redefine it for another context. Curiously, this impedes those actors that are actually most familiar with the democratic norm from embracing it in a new context.

To some democracies, it is the statist nature of global rule that complicates the act of translation. Put differently, democratic countries find it inconsistent to apply a people-centered concept to IOs that are dominated by states. To these democracies, “one state, one vote instead of one man, one vote” (DIPL29) does not constitute a legitimate way to adapt the democratic idea to the global realm. Yet, this does not mean that democracies do not act as entrepreneurs for IO democracy. Consistent with their domestic democratic practices, these countries advocate for global rule that is more representative, egalitarian and election-based. What they avoid, however, is framing this advocacy in democratic terms.

Hence, despite their reluctance to invoke the notion itself, democracies underscored their commitment to democratize global rule. This was not the case for the two other constituencies that eschewed the language of democracy. In fact, both the institutionally powerful and – even more so – those states who aspire to formal power positions expressed reservations about the need to democratize IOs. Instead, they invoked alternative conceptions of rule that nicely coincide with their power interests: above all, the G4 and the P5 strongly endorsed the idea of effectiveness, whereby (powerful) states that contribute to the functioning of IOs are given special privileges. Yet, only the speeches of the G4 reveal a special effort to shift the debate in favor of this idea. The P5, in turn, do not attempt to outperform others in their normative advocacy. While the G4 critically rely on others’ support, the P5 have little to fear from other members of the UN. As a result, they depend much less on normative justification than those who strive for formal power.
While both the G4 and the P5 prefer IOs to be judged according to other standards of rule – most importantly their effectiveness – both fail to mount a serious challenge to the norm of global democracy. As reflected in their speeches and in those of other UN member states, the idea of effectiveness coexists too well with that of democracy. As such, this principle fails to serve as an alternative vision for how to conduct global rule. This finding, in turn, contributes to the overall impression that democracy constitutes a powerful norm for states to justify their interests.

These findings were instructive in yet another regard: they showed that the arguments against global democracy advanced in the literature only partially shape the debate of skeptical practitioners. To recap, scholars give three reasons for why democratic rule beyond the state may be either undesirable or simply not feasible: the anarchical structure of the international system, which resists attempts at democratic control; the absence of a global *demos* that can engage in meaningful democratic self-governance; and a conflict between democratic decision-making and effective rule, which these analysts resolve in favor of effectiveness (see Chapter 1).

According to some analysts, “there is no […] world government to be democratized” (Bienen et al. 1998: 289). As long as this is the case, global democracy is neither required, nor truly feasible. Yet, in contrast to its theoretical importance, the argument is of no empirical relevance. In fact, not a single interviewee attributed her reluctance to speak of global democracy to the lack of a global authority. If at all, states adopted the opposite view. As both the interviews and states’ speeches reflect, many countries perceive the Council as an authoritative institution that may “issue binding obligations” (DIPL34). According to them, it is precisely its excessive authority that calls for the Council’s democratization:

*In executing its authority, the Council is endowed with far-reaching powers to adopt legally binding decisions that take precedence over any other obligations of Member States. In the light of the immense power exercised by the Council, both in terms of the impact of its decisions and its wide discretion, it is therefore important that the Council be fundamentally reformed in order to render it more democratic* (South Africa 2009, SC debate).

Another impediment to global democratic rule that is stressed in the literature is the lack of a global *demos*. While no country justified its avoidance of democratic language with reference to the *demos*, the people of the world do pervade states’ democratic thinking. More precisely, consolidated democracies see little reason to talk of democratic global rule as long as IOs remain intergovernmental structures that exclude the people. Yet, the
concerns expressed by these countries were limited to whether or not citizens had the chance to influence global decision-making. Whether or not the conditions for this involvement are actually met – that is, whether people share a sense of community sufficient to engage in meaningful democratic self-governance – remained unaddressed. As such, democracies only superficially touched on what constitutes a far more complex debate in the literature.

Yet, one scholarly argument against global democratic rule did indeed have traction among states. It establishes democratic decision-making and effective rule as incompatible goals and rejects the former in favor of the latter: if we value effective rule beyond the state, some scholars argue, global democracy is not a goal worth pursuing. Particularly the most powerful states – namely those who defend and those who pursue power prerogatives – seem to adopt this view. Yet, few of them publicly disclose these thoughts. One reason to hesitate may be the size of the opposition. In fact, many states support another interpretation of how effectiveness and democracy relate. In their view, greater democracy may also produce effectiveness gains.
The narrative of democracy has become a constant presence in international legitimacy debates. Rightful rule beyond the state, it appears, can no longer be discussed without reference to the democratic idea. In fact, some scholars argue that “democracy is becoming the paramount legitimizing principle of world politics” (Thèrien/Bélanger Dumontier 2009: 358). This is particularly visible where the foundations and criteria of legitimate international rule are most intensely discussed: the reform debates of IOs that take place within the international community.

Clearly, this is not to suggest that each and every country eagerly invokes the democratic narrative. As witnessed by the reform debate about the SC, the most powerful IO in existence today, not all states care to link their reform demands to the idea of democracy. While this is not unsurprising, it is the conspicuous silence of one particular constituency that is rather puzzling: democratic countries. Compared to authoritarian regimes, democracies appear highly reluctant to invoke the language of democracy. In fact, among consolidated democratic states – namely those awarded the best FH score available – only a quarter talks about the need to democratize IOs. By contrast, among highly autocratic regimes – those awarded the worst score – it is three fourths of states (see Figure I). This finding sits uneasily with liberal constructivist ideas. They suggest that democratic states, because they extend their domestic democratic standards to IOs, should be the most eager advocates of global democracy. As such, this finding prompted a more general question, which has guided the project at hand. It is the question of what drives states’ discourse about democratic global rule?

In brief, the two-fold observation just described – namely the prominence of the democratic narrative in the legitimation processes of IOs, combined with its reluctant use by democratic states – constituted the starting point for this project. That is to say, the project sought to identify the advocates for democratic IO rule, what they promote in the name of democracy, and – in bringing these threads together – what drives countries’ talk of democratic rule beyond the state. In tackling these questions, I also aimed to offer relevant insights into the strength of the democratic norm and, ultimately, into the prospects of more democratic global rule.

The concluding chapter fulfils two purposes: first, it summarizes the findings of this project about the democratic narrative, the patterns it takes
and the drivers behind it (6.1). And second, it provides an overview of how these findings link back to the relevant literature. Most importantly, this includes the literature on norm-based justificatory discourse and scholarship on the foreign policy consequences of different regime types (6.2).

6.1. States’ discourse about democratic global rule: the findings

The project started out with three core objectives: first, it aimed to provide a first comprehensive overview of the patterns that characterize states’ use of the democratic narrative. Second, it sought to explain these patterns with reference to two core logics. And third, in drawing these insights together, the project aimed to offer a better understanding of the reasoning that guides countries’ talk of democratic rule beyond the state. In the following, I will summarize the findings for each of these three important parts of the project.

6.1.1. States’ democratic discourse: the patterns

The project engaged in the first systematic mapping of the democratic discourse that countries address to IOs. Based on a novel dataset, which covers a decade of discourse of 159 states about two major UN bodies, the SC and the GA, it was able to provide the first comprehensive insights into countries’ references to and interpretations of democratic rule beyond the state. Based on this data, the project generated a dual finding: While the meaning states apply to the democratic idea is largely uncontested, states are divided into those that use the concept and those that prefer to avoid it. Put differently, while countries that embrace the democratic idea are very consistent in how they interpret it, not all states are willing to invoke democracy. In the following, I will expand on each of the two findings, starting with states’ democratic interpretations, followed by their willingness to invoke the notion of democracy.

It has become commonplace to describe democracy as a contested concept: The notion of democracy, scholars claim, is at best controversial, and at worst completely empty (Brown 2010; Holden 2000: 1). Yet, the findings generated by this project do not support these skeptical views. In relation to the democratic discourse of the international community, they suggest quite the opposite: among states, there is a striking convergence around one democratic understanding. In fact, states that invoke the
democratic narrative agree on the main subjects of democratic global rule and associate the democratic idea with a shared set of principles.

Independent of the IO they refer to, countries consistently prioritize states rather than people as the primary democratic subjects. From their perspective, global democracy is a democracy among states. States are no less united when it comes to basic democratic principles. First and foremost, they associate democratic rule beyond the state with the principles of representation, equality, and elections. Hence, their democratic reasoning suggests a strong leaning towards the idea of representative rule as known from the domestic democratic context of Western states – a conception of rule by elected representatives, which grants everyone “equal chances to influence the shaping of government” (Saward 2010: 86).

Thus, states are highly consistent in the understanding of democracy they invoke. Yet, a few interpretive differences do exist. They show in the reform debate about the SC and concern individual democratic principles and how these should best be interpreted. In a nutshell, these interpretive disputes all revolve around the same core question: are permanent membership and veto rights compatible with the aim of democratizing the Council – and IOs more generally – along the lines of democratic principles? While some states claim they are, others strongly disagree. I argued that despite these clear frictions, democracy is not a contested concept. In order to make this claim, I suggested an empirical conceptualization of meaning contestation. While IR scholars have frequently alluded to the contested meaning of norms, only few have specified what constitutes proper evidence of contestation. I introduced an empirical conceptualization of meaning contestation that builds on and extends these scholars’ work. Applying this framework to the democratic discourse of states generated unequivocal results: the interpretive conflicts just mentioned constitute low-level conflicts at best. While they involve principled disagreement about the meaning of IO democracy, these disputes usually involve few actors, and one interpretation always comes out as dominant. This finding refutes the claims of democratic skeptics: democracy is neither contested, nor has it been “voided of content” (Brown 2010). The lack of contestation is also instructive for analysts of the SC and its reform process. After all, the disputes about permanent membership and veto rights, which underpin different understandings of democratic global rule, are anything but new to experts of the Council. In fact, they go to the core of the reason why Council reform has barely moved forward since 1945. Because those who advocate new permanent seats (possibly including the veto) and those who strictly oppose them constitute factions of a similar size, Council re-
form has been stalled for decades. In this regard, states’ disputes over how to democratize the Council and the well-known patterns of conflict over Council reform clearly diverge: while they revolve around the same core issues, only one of the two conflicts has a clear winner. As has been shown, in each of the interpretive disputes that states engage in, there is one interpretation that clearly prevails. In all but one case, the dominant understanding is the one that associates democratic rule with non-permanency and the lack of veto privileges. The alternative view, which emphasizes the democratic merit of permanency and the veto right, fails to generate meaningful support. Hence, while Council reform is deadlocked, the question of how to democratize this UN body is largely settled.

By and large, states that invoke the democratic narrative share a common idea of how to democratize global rule. Yet, a large proportion of states never invoke the democratic idea. While the notion of democracy pervades the reform debates of both the Council and the GA, we should not overlook the fact that many countries are conspicuously silent on the matter of democratizing these organizations. The share of such countries is considerably higher in the GA than in the SC. As suggested in the introductory chapter and further elaborated in section 3.2, the patterns of use of the democratic narrative vary considerably. In essence, states are separated into those willing to draw on the concept and those who prefer to avoid it. Clearly, these differences needed to be explained.

Given the lack of any comprehensive mapping of states’ democratic discourse and the similarities and differences therein, this first step of analysis was important in its own right. Yet, it also served as the basis for the second part of the project, which aimed to explain the patterns detected and answer the question what drives states’ discourse about democratic global rule.

6.1.2. The drivers of states’ democratic discourse

In Chapter 2, I advanced two logics that may drive states’ democratic discourse: the logic of normative consistency and the logic of material interests. Anchored in different theoretical approaches to the use of norms, each of the logics provides a different account of why states choose to invoke or avoid the language of democracy or why they prefer one understanding of democratic rule over another. The empirical evidence suggests that both logics offer important insights into states’ use of the democratic narrative. I will consider each one in turn.
The logic of material interests

The LoMI suggested that the democratic discourse of states derives from their material interests, which are primarily defined in terms of power. Put differently, divergent uses of the notion of IO democracy reflect power inequalities within the respective IO. As such, states’ engagement with the language of democracy simply mirrors the power struggles states are involved in. In essence, the project looked at three types of power conflict that divide states and are thus likely to prompt differences in their democratic narrative: first, the conflict between countries empowered by the rules of the IO and states excluded from these privileges; second, the struggle between countries that pursue institutionalized power privileges and states who seek to obstruct these aims; and third, the frictions between countries that possess great material capacity and countries that lack it.

The project revealed that power inequalities and the conflicts of interest they prompt are a powerful determinant of states’ democratic discourse. In fact, divergent power interests may help to account for differences in the way countries interpret the idea of democratic rule beyond the state and help to explain differences in their willingness to invoke democracy in the first place.

First, in shaping states’ democratic discourse, institutionalized power inequalities take priority over differences in countries’ material capacity. In organizations like the SC, which are characterized by formal inequality, states’ discourse primarily reflects the struggles between those who possess and those who lack institutional power. In these contexts, conflicts about informal disparities are secondary to the way states engage with the democratic narrative. The example of the SC shows: What unites countries in their democratic criticism of IOs is their institutional, not their material weakness. Apparently, states do not have the impression that the benefits conferred by economic clout may compensate for the disadvantages of formal disempowerment. However, where formal hierarchy ceases to matter, as is the case in IOs like the GA, it may no longer dominate states’ discourse. At this point, democratic disputes that strongly coincide with states’ economic capacity come to the fore.

Second, given the predominance of one interpretation of global democratic rule, the leeway for interpretive conflicts is severely restricted. For this reason, the power conflicts states engage in are more strongly reflected in countries’ decisions to use or not use the language of democracy rather than in their interpretation of the democratic idea. Clearly, once a dominant understanding prevails, the norm can no longer be twisted as states
see fit. Rather than redefining it, states avoid a problematic norm altogether. In the following, I will first consider interpretive differences that coincide with states’ power interests and then look at how power considerations impact whether or not a state invokes the idea of democratic rule by IOs.

As elaborated in Chapter 3, the meaning of democratic global rule is largely uncontested. Yet, this does not imply that each and every state has the exact same meaning in mind when invoking the notion. As the Council debate reveals, interpretive differences clearly exist. They basically divide those who aspire to formal power status – in the Council these are the G4 states – from their immediate opponents – the UfC. Put differently, which interpretation a state adopts is a matter of the institutional power interests it pursues within the organization: States that aspire to formal power status embrace a different understanding of democratic IO rule than states that seek to frustrate these efforts. While the G4 advocate a democratic understanding that is compatible with the existence and extension of institutionalized privileges – an understanding that legitimizes the prerogatives of permanent membership and veto rights that these countries pursue – UfC countries hotly dispute this interpretation. They claim that the very idea of democracy is incompatible with the inequalities in place in the Council, let alone with exacerbating them.

While different power interests thus give rise to interpretive struggles, the fight is not necessarily a balanced one. In the SC, it has a clear winner: the UfC. Their democratic understanding, which objects to power inequalities, generates much broader support among UN member states than the opposing view. Most of the time, the G4 are rather isolated with their counter-claims. As such, their chances to increase support for their power ambitions by means of re-defining global democratic rule are slim.

Given that states’ interpretive disputes center on the democratic merit of institutional privileges, states already vested with formalized power should join the interpretive fights to defend their prerogatives. Yet, none of the P5 attempts to counter the democratic understanding advanced by the UfC. In contrast to that of the G4, their grip on power does not depend on the support of others. Hence, they perceive little need to legitimate it with reference to the norms of the international community. This urgency is only felt by the G4: in order to win favor with other states, they need to engage with their norms and re-interpret these standards to their own advantage.

But power interests do not only shape the democratic interpretations advanced by countries; they are also a powerful predictor of whether or not a state will invoke the language of democracy. Again, it is power disparities...
of an institutionalized kind that matter the most. Essentially, democratic global rule is a narrative of the formally disempowered. States that are excluded from institutional power status and that have no chance to ascend to power are its most eager advocates. These countries invoke the narrative to level their criticism against the elevated status of a select few states and use it to prevent any aggravation of unequal prerogatives. Their targets – namely states favored by the rules of the IO and countries with the best chances of joining the rank of formal power – are particularly reluctant to embrace democratic ideas. These ideas, they know, pose a threat to the privileges that they already possess or still pursue. Yet, the debate on the SC also reveals a difference between these countries: the reluctance to invoke democratic ideas is much stronger among those who already possess formal privileges than among those who aspire to them. The reasons were suggested above: unlike those who have already ascended to power, power aspirants cannot avoid providing justifications. If they seek to achieve their objectives, they need to bring others on board. This, the G4 seem to think, is impossible without reference to narratives that are accepted by the international community. This reasoning was also evident in the interviews conducted with G4 diplomats. While these countries – or at least some of them – reject the aim of democratizing the Council in favor of alternative principles of rule, they are rather careful about publicly expressing these views. Instead, they publicly embrace the democratic language – albeit in a hesitant way. Clearly, the G4 are aware that the democratic idea, as used by other states, is strongly at odds with their power ambitions. Given the lack of a chance to change its dominant interpretation, the G4 prefer to use the concept cautiously.

Differences in material power only leave an imprint on states’ democratic discourse where formal inequalities are not at stake. The GA is such a place. In this forum, the unity spawned by common institutional weakness is no longer able to override differences that derive from unequal economic clout. Quite the contrary: these differences come to the fore and affect states’ democratic discourse. Again, it is the powerless that are the most vigorous advocates for democratic rule beyond the state. States with little economic power prove much more eager to laud the democratic quality of the Assembly. With reference to democracy, they praise the GA as an egalitarian forum that renounces the institutionalized hierarchy laid down in the Council. For countries that lack economic clout, formal equality in the GA is clearly a greater asset than for stronger states: The less material power they can bring to the table, the more they rely on formal guarantees that their voice will be considered.
But power struggles among states do not only take place inside specific organizations; they also occur across them. That is to say, states may attempt to increase their status by shifting the balance of power among different IO bodies. The democratic narrative can support these efforts. This is exactly what we observe in the UN reform debate: for the weak, lauding the Assembly’s democratic quality is not only an indirect means of criticizing the Council, which excludes them from formal power status; it also expresses the hope of strengthening an organization on which they rely more than the powerful. That is to say, by empowering the GA over the SC, these states hope to compensate for their lack of power within the Council with greater influence over this organ. This thinking is also reflected in the democratic language of the power aspirants. In fact, their discourse mirrors awareness of the hopes of the weak. While the G4 are rather cautious when criticizing the democratic deficits of the Council, they are less reluctant to praise the democratic quality of the GA. By doing so, they (rhetorically) commit to a strong Assembly that is able to assert its influence over less egalitarian UN bodies like the SC. This, they seem to hope, might reassure other parties whose support they require: the G4’s ascent to power, they seek to convey, will not harm weaker states because these countries may exercise their influence through an empowered Assembly.

In sum, power inequalities and the different interests they give rise to are powerful predictors of states’ democratic discourse. Power struggles – particularly those about formal power positions – shape states’ incentives to invoke or avoid the democratic language and imprint on the democratic interpretations states adopt. This, in turn, lends strong support to the LoMI.

The logic of normative consistency

The LoNC suggested that the democratic discourse embraced by a country has its origin in the domestic context of rule. Countries strive to align the standards they promote on a global level with the ones they have adopted at home. Hence, normative differences on the domestic level should prompt differences in states’ global democratic discourse. According to the LoNC, two manifestations of states’ domestic normative commitments are particularly influential. These are the democratic practices inscribed in states’ domestic institutions on the one hand, and the democratic understandings embraced by their societies on the other.

The empirical evidence revealed that both features are relevant determinants of states’ global democratic discourse. While they are not reflected in
the interpretive disputes that states fight out, they clearly impact countries’ choice to invoke or not invoke the language of democracy. Put differently, states’ efforts to act consistently across the domestic-international divide boil down to a decision in favor of or against invoking the democratic idea rather than one of choosing between different conceptions of democracy. Given that states are confronted with a dominant interpretation of global democracy, this behavior is quite plausible. Under these conditions, it appears rather futile to attempt to shape the democratic understanding of the international community according to one’s own beliefs.

The project started out with a puzzling empirical pattern: a country’s domestic democratic background decisively shapes its willingness to engage with the global democratic narrative. Yet, the direction of this relationship ran counter to plausible expectations that were based on liberal constructivist insights: the more democratic a state’s domestic institutions, the less likely it is to invoke the democratic narrative. The statistical evidence confirmed this pattern as significant. While it proved to be much more pronounced in the democratic debate about the SC than in the debate about the GA, the overall tendency was consistent: Compared to states with less democratic domestic institutions, democracies are more reluctant to invoke the language of global democracy.

As suggested in the introductory chapter, this finding was difficult to reconcile with the assumptions of liberal constructivism, according to which democracies would externalize their domestic democratic standards to the level of IOs and would thus act as eager advocates for democratic rule beyond the state. The theoretical puzzle persisted even after a closer examination of the meaning that most states invest in the democratic idea: After all, the principles that they promote in the name of democratic global rule neatly fit the standards that democracies adhere to at home.

Yet, the study was able to solve the democratic puzzle by directly engaging with the representatives of democratic states and asking them about their reasons for avoiding the democratic narrative. This shed light on the reasoning involved in their behavior and was thus able to show that democracies’ reluctance to invoke the democratic idea is clearly reconcilable both with constructivist insights in general and with the LoNC more specifically. Clearly, the behavior of these countries is inspired by an attempt to ensure consistency between the norms they have internalized and inscribed in their own domestic institutions and the standards they promote abroad. In fact, some diplomats clearly linked their reticence to speak of democratic rule beyond the state to a mismatch between the statist conception of democracy that dominates internationally and their
own domestic democratic practices, which place people at the center. Put differently, these diplomats objected to what autocrats had few problems doing: replacing the original subjects of democratic rule, namely people, with a new type of actor, namely states. While few democracies were able to offer such clear accounts of their own behavior, concerns about being inconsistent seemed to motivate all of them. These concerns were evident in states’ futile struggles to adequately adapt their domestic democratic understandings to the global realm. While democracies had few problems with the conceptualization of democratic domestic rule, they strongly struggled to re-define and thus adapt this idea for the context of IOs. Unable to come up with a consistent translation, these countries signaled that they preferred to avoid the term.

Autocracies, by contrast, are relieved of the normative concerns that plague democratic states. Lacking the socialization undergone by democracies, they do not feel the urge to align their global democratic discourse with a nuanced conception of domestic democratic rule. Moreover, given the democratic meaning in use internationally, autocracies need not fear rhetorical self-entrapment. After all, by invoking a state-centric concept, they make no concessions to the world’s people. Hence, they need not worry that others will hold them to account for conceding more to the world population than they concede to their own domestic citizens. Free from the pressures of normative consistency and problems of adequate translation, autocracies may use the democratic narrative at will.

But the democratic quality of states’ domestic institutions did not prove to be the only determinant of countries’ global democratic discourse. The empirical results also revealed a relevant role for the understandings of domestic democratic rule that prevail inside countries. More specifically, differences in states’ willingness to use the global democratic narrative clearly coincide with regional differences in the interpretations of domestic democratic rule embraced by national societies. Across both IOs analyzed, Latin American states turned out to be the most eager advocates for democratic IO rule. All other regions of the world, the West included, made far fewer references to the democratic narrative. Clearly, regional affiliation only serves as a rough and somewhat unsatisfying proxy for shared understandings of domestic democratic rule. Conceptions of democracy that prevail outside the West have only recently entered the research agenda of political scientists. Thus, the project had to limit itself to some preliminary conjectures about why the concept of global democracy embraced by the international community seems to constitute such a neat fit with the democratic understanding that prevails inside Latin America. Yet, one of these
conjectures is particularly plausible: as several studies suggest, for Latin American states, the notion of domestic democracy is closely linked to the idea of emancipation (Maia/Santoro 2013: 106). In the domestic context it is mainly associated with the fight against “economic and cultural dependence” (Pavlova 2013: 91f), but this emancipatory thrust of the democratic idea is also highly compatible with a conception of global democracy that is anchored in the concept of empowerment and the idea of eliminating international structures of exclusion and subordination.

In sum, a country’s domestic democratic institutions and understandings decisively shape the democratic discourse it adopts beyond the state. While domestic normative differences do not shape the interpretations of democratic rule states embrace, they clearly influence whether or not a country joins those who invoke the global democratic narrative. This, in turn, lends strong support to the LoNC.

6.1.3. The narrative of global democracy

The first chapter introduced democracy as one of the most prominent current narratives of legitimate rule beyond the state. Given its importance, I argued, scholars are well advised to better understand this central narrative, the patterns it takes and the drivers behind it. I claimed that this was even more vital given the counter-intuitive observation made at the outset: the states driving this narrative were clearly not the most democratic ones. In other words, scholars required answers to three main questions: who are the advocates for the democratic narrative, what do they promote in the name of democracy, and what does this suggest about the overall logic that anchors states’ talk of democratic global rule? Based on the findings summarized in the previous paragraphs, it is now possible to briefly answer these questions.

The project clearly revealed that the most eager proponents of the democratic narrative are the disempowered. Whether they are disadvantaged by the rules of the IO or lack the economic clout that could compensate for a lack of formal privilege, the powerless are the strongest spokespeople for democratic rule beyond the state. Only those states among them with a realistic chance of ascending to formal power are more cautious in their democratic language.

But the project also discovered which states do not engage with the democratic narrative: apart from the powerful, this clearly includes democratic states. Yet, in the case of democracies, one needs to distinguish two
things, namely states’ advocacy for democratic global rule and their use of the democratic narrative. In fact, when applying the democratic understanding embraced by the international community – namely a statist conception of rule that emphasizes the principles of representation, equality, and elections – democracies do not differ all that much: they actively promote global rule that conforms to all these criteria. In contrast to other states, however, democracies do not frame their demands in the language of democratization. Hence, while they act as entrepreneurs for more democratic global rule, these states are not among the sponsors of the global democratic narrative.

To understand the democratic narrative, it is not only important to identify its proponents; it is equally relevant to know its content: what do states demand in the name of democracy? As the project showed, the concept of democratic global rule is anything but “substantively hollow” (Brown 2010). States use it as an empowerment concept – a concept that rejects concentrations of might in favor of granting everyone equal access or at least an equal chance to choose and control those in power. As such, the democratic idea strongly contradicts IO rule that grants special prerogatives to a select few states. This, in turn, makes it particularly useful for the weak and is precisely the reason why the disempowered heavily rely on this narrative. The strong aversion against any form of power hierarchy that underpins the democratic idea may also explain its frequent use by Latin American states. It simply fits their understanding of domestic democratic rule, which puts a strong emphasis on the idea of emancipation from relationships of subordination (Maia/Santoro 2013; Pavlova 2013).

What does this suggest about the overall logic that underpins the democratic narrative? In essence, democracy is the keyword for conceptions of rule that reject inegalitarian relations of power in favor of sovereign state equality. As such, the democratic narrative is a narrative of the weak and for the weak: a strong discourse of empowerment that underpins the struggle of those who are disadvantaged by the power structures of IOs.177 Put differently, for weak states, democracy constitutes a powerful justificatory norm that backs their demands with legitimacy and thus lends them much greater force. On the one hand, these countries may use the democratic idea to justify their opposition to the power gap that exists among states; but they may also employ the concept for more specific purposes: namely

177 Using the vocabulary of Scott (1985) one may even describe the democratic narrative as a “weapon of the weak.”
to legitimize their efforts to keep others from acquiring privileges that are denied to themselves. In this sense, the narrative of democratic rule beyond the state underpins a justificatory discourse that is meant to delegitimize the privileges that are already in place and the power ambitions of those who seek to extend them.

6.2. Contributions to the scholarly literature

How do these findings link back to the relevant literature? In its effort to uncover the patterns and drivers of states’ discourse about democratic IO rule, the project has engaged with several strands of literature. It has contributed to research on the social legitimacy of IOs, has engaged with scholarship on the contested meaning of norms and political concepts, and addressed the global democracy research. The project’s contributions to these literatures have been highlighted throughout the study. Yet, by introducing the LoNC and the LoMI, the project has also drawn on two further strands of research, which are the focus of the following sections. More precisely, it has engaged with scholarship on the foreign policy impact of a state’s domestic regime type and research on norm-based justificatory discourse. While the project heavily relied on their insights, it also highlighted the lacunae that characterize these approaches. In the following, I will elaborate how my project addressed them.

6.2.1. The foreign policy of democratic states

Recent scholarship has highlighted the role of states’ domestic democratic norms for the type of IOs countries join and create.178 Most importantly, these scholars have invoked processes of norm socialization and internalization to argue that democratic states help to democratize IOs by transferring their own domestic democratic standards into global structures and decision-making procedures. Democracies do so, scholars argue, because they strive to apply “a consistent set of […] standards to all levels of political organization” (Tallberg et al. 2013: 44). By introducing the LoNC, this project draws heavily on these insights. Yet, it also argues that this scholarship is characterized by a shortcoming. Rather than examining the reasoning that induces democratic decision-makers to externalize their domestic

standards, scholars have generated the impression that politicians act on the basis of an automatism: After having internalized domestic principles, they always and unconsciously apply them to every other level of rule. This automatism, however, is not very plausible. On the one hand, it is based on a rather limited understanding of norm internalization – namely an understanding that precludes any form of conscious reasoning about the norm in question – which is unlikely to have guided the scholars in question. On the other hand, this automatism encounters some empirical problems: after all, it seriously contradicts the starting puzzle of this project, namely the great reluctance of democratic states to invoke the global democratic narrative.

Rather than implying an inevitable process whereby politicians automatically extend their domestic standards to IOs, the project sought to offer comprehensive insights into the reasoning that guides democratic states in their decision to transfer their domestic norms to the global realm. Relying on the insights from semi-structured interviews conducted with diplomatic officials from 41 UN member states, it aimed to expand scholars’ understanding of the conditions under which decision-makers conclude that their domestic standards can and should be applied beyond the state.

In this regard, the interview results are very clear (see section 5.2 in Chapter 5): they show that there is no such thing as an automatic transfer of domestic ideas to the global level of rule. Instead, states’ decisions to externalize their own standards reveal a much more nuanced pattern. When it comes to the norm of democratic rule, the interview results show the opposite of an automatic transfer: democracies struggle to define the democratic idea in anything other than the domestic context. As one diplomat phrased it: “It is very difficult to apply the word democracy in the context of intergovernmental structures” (DIPL11). Another one went even further: “on the international level this does not make sense” (DIPL03). According to these actors, the concept of democracy is first and foremost a domestic one. It is the domestic context of rule where the norm fits best and its meaning is clearest. This suggests that for democracies, there is no easy and straightforward transfer of the domestic democratic idea to the global level of rule. Instead, applying the concept to IOs requires an active effort of translation – an effort of adapting it to the global realm without stripping it too much of its original domestic meaning.

Hence, what others have analyzed for the diffusion of norms from the global to the domestic realm is no less true when norms travel the opposite way: The successful transfer to a new context is contingent on a process of
translation (Zwingel 2012). Yet, both scholars on norm diffusion and the interview results of this project suggest that this process does not always succeed. I show that whether it does or does not depends on the specificity of the norm in question. While democracies find it difficult to transfer the rather abstract concept of democratic rule, they readily externalize the concept’s subcomponents, which are clearly more concrete. Put differently, what these countries cannot picture for the democratic idea as such, they can easily visualize for a set of specific democratic standards: According to them, principles like representation, equality, and transparency can be easily detached from their domestic origin and implemented inside IOs. In their democratic reasoning, democracies thus carefully separate efforts to improve global rule in line with their domestic democratic principles from attempts to achieve domestic democratic rule beyond the state.

In sum, democracies do not automatically transfer the standards they have internalized at home to another level of rule. Whether or not states extend their domestic principles is contingent on a process of translation. That is to say, states attempt to apprehend whether and how the original meaning of the principles in question may travel to the new context. This project showed that there is no guarantee of success. Yet, the more specific the standards in question, the more likely they will be externalized.

6.2.2. The norm of democratic global rule: assessing its power

The LoMI builds on insights from both constructivist and rationalist research. While the former has highlighted the normative constraints of international communication, the latter has focused on the consequences, namely the strategic use to which norms may be put. In sum, these accounts have alerted us to a practice that is often referred to as justificatory discourse: States invoke norms to justify their parochial demands. By anchoring their discourse in powerful norms – that is, by reframing their demands in what they perceive as generally acceptable terms – actors hope

179 For scholarship on norm diffusion from the global to the local, see also Acharya (2004) and Zimmermann (2014).
180 See also Finnemore/Sikkink (1998: 906-907) and Legro (1997: 34), who link the likelihood of a norm’s adoption to the clarity of the norm.
they can disguise their self-serving motives and thus increase support for them (Elster 1992: 18; Hurd 2008b: 200).

Naturally, not every norm will be equally helpful in this endeavor. Yet, those who have invoked the idea of justificatory discourse have provided little detail on which norms do and which do not qualify in this regard. Put differently, what is a “powerful” justificatory norm? Which norms constitute “generally acceptable” justifications for one’s parochial demands? Or, in sum: when does a norm fulfil the hopes that were placed in it, namely that it boosts the legitimacy of one’s claims?

This project aimed to answer these questions. As described earlier, it was able to show that states’ references to the democratic idea coincide with their power interests. This, in turn, constitutes strong proof that states believe in the justificatory power of this norm. That is to say, they use democracy as if it were a strong justificatory norm that resonates widely and thus helps legitimize their claims. The project also revealed that, by and large, states’ beliefs are well-founded. The idea of democratic global rule finds considerable resonance within the international community. As such, democracy constitutes a useful means to justify the power interests one pursues in IOs.

In order to make this argument, I introduced a set of criteria to evaluate the justificatory power of norms and applied it to the idea of global democratic rule. By drawing together the insights from different chapters of this project, I thus provided an overall picture of the strength of the norm that underpins the democratic narrative. In the following, I will briefly look at each criterion in turn and summarize how the democratic idea scored on it.

Open rejection, I argued, is one clear sign of weak norm resonance. A norm that is widely described as an inappropriate standard to judge a matter under discussion can hardly serve to justify one’s stance in the respective debate. While doubts that remain unexpressed may not serve to weaken the norm, open rejection surely does. Judged by this criterion, the norm of democratic global rule resonates particularly well. In fact, I found no state that openly contests its relevance for international rule. Countries that invoke the democratic idea emphasize its importance. This applies to both the debate about the SC and the corresponding one about the GA. This is not to suggest that all states embrace the aim of democratizing IOs. Yet, those who entertain doubt – either because they question that the concept fits beyond the state or because their aims are irreconcilable with democratic standards – prefer not to make these views publicly known. A
norm that manages to silence those who oppose it may certainly count as a powerful one.

Yet, opposition does not need to be this blunt. States that object to a norm do not have to openly reject it. Instead, they may simply propose alternative standards that conflict with the original norm. By doing so, they may launch a challenge that is more implicit but not necessarily less effective. In Chapter 5, I analyzed whether those who eschew the language of democracy openly advocate alternative standards of rule. The results show: while democracies avoid labelling it as such, they do in fact advocate a reform of IOs in line with democratic principles. Clearly, democratic states do not embrace an alternative agenda for IO reform. Yet, both the institutionally powerful and those who are pursuing positions of institutional power balance their greater reluctance to engage the democratic idea with a stronger emphasis on other standards of rule. Most importantly, both groups of states attempt to shift the reform debate in favor of a conception of IO rule that centers on the goals of effectiveness and efficiency. Yet, both the G4 and the P5 fail to establish these standards as antipodes to the aim of democratization. Hence, their discourse fails to mount a successful challenge to the democratic norm. In fact, the dominant perception among the international community seems to be that democratizing IOs may also help to increase their effectiveness. In sum, this lack of strong normative competitors surely signals the strength of the idea of global democracy.

Lastly, a norm may only count as strong and thus useful for the purpose of justification if its meaning is fairly clear and generates sufficient agreement among those who invoke it. This point is also highlighted in the literature (see Deitelhoff 2013 and Deitelhoff/Zimmermann 2013). According to Deitelhoff (2013) disagreement of a principled kind – that is, disagreement about the basic expectations raised by a norm – challenges the core of the norm and thus compromises its stability (Deitelhoff 2013: 31). Put differently, disagreement of this kind casts legitimate doubt on whether there is any norm at all. If based on such disagreement, states’ shared desire for more democratic rule by IOs would be meaningless. After all, states would simply invoke a concept that is void of substance. And in fact, this is what many scholars claim is the case. While their focus is on the concept of domestic democratic rule, they contend that the notion has been converted into an empty signifier that means “all things to all people” (Fierlbeck 2008: 2). In the pessimistic scenario they envisage, democracy has become an “empty signifier to which any and all can attach their dreams and hopes” (Brown 2010).
As regards the concept of domestic democracy, their fears may be justified. But when it comes to global democratic rule, they are greatly exaggerated. As Chapter 3 revealed, the norm of democratic global rule neither raises much disagreement, nor does it constitute an empty concept. In fact, countries are remarkably united in their democratic understandings. They consistently support a statist conception of global democracy that is linked to the principles of representation, equality and elections. As such, they jointly adopt a notion of IO rule that closely resembles the idea of representative democracy from the domestic context of rule. The few interpretive disputes countries fight out constitute low-level disagreements rather than acts of outright contestation. Thus, states who talk of democratic IO rule appear to speak of the same thing. Rather than being contested, the meaning of global democracy is largely settled. Moreover, the great overlap in the core democratic principles and subjects of rule mentioned by states suggests that for countries, the idea of global democracy possesses “some irreducible content” (Morozov 2013: 5). As such, it does not constitute an empty concept. This, in turn, speaks in favor of a strong norm of democratic global rule.

In conclusion, the democratic idea scores well on all three criteria. It does not face open rejection or serious challenges from alternative standards of rule, and its meaning is fairly clear and sufficiently shared. As such, the norm resonates well enough to be considered a generally acceptable justification for one’s parochial demands. Thus, it is likely to fulfill the hopes states place in it when they use it to justify their power interests.

If democracy is indeed becoming “the paramount legitimizing principle of world politics” (Thérien/Bélanger Dumontier 2009: 358), I claimed at the outset, scholars are well advised to consider what it actually means to those who shape global politics. More precisely, scholars need to better understand this central narrative, the patterns it takes and the drivers behind it. These insights, I suggested, are not only relevant in and for themselves. They may also shed some light on the prospects of democratizing global rule. In this regard, the project’s findings are both encouraging and discouraging. On the one hand, they have attested to the justificatory power of the democratic idea. Those who embrace democracy do in fact share a common understanding of the notion and thus follow a common agenda for changing global politics. As a result, it has become highly difficult to seek dictatorial privileges. Those who do may no longer hide from the democratic demands that confront them. Instead, these states need to actively engage the democratic concerns of others. These are certainly encouraging findings. On the other hand, this imperative to engage demo-
ocratic ideas and reassure others clearly has its limits. Most importantly, it still spares those who already benefit from hierarchy beyond the state. In fact, secure in their superior positions of power, these countries feel little need to defend their undemocratic privileges. In sum, the democratic narrative might not have gained sufficient power to reverse the authoritarian structures of international rule that are already firmly established. Yet, it appears strong enough to prevent these inequalities from being exacerbated. Clearly, extending patterns of rule that subvert basic democratic standards has become increasingly difficult.
In the following paragraphs, I provide some more details about how I conducted qualitative content analysis. These details complement the information already provided in Chapter 3, section 3.1.3. As I am interested in the democratic understandings expressed by countries in a certain year (democratic understandings of country years), the units of analysis are all democracy claims made by a country in its one yearly reform speech. The coding unit – that is, the unit of text to which the coding scheme is applied once (Früh 2007: 95) – is the democracy claim. More precisely, I examine each semantic unit (coherent statement) that contains the keyword democracy in order to determine which category of the coding scheme it fits. As such, the same category can be coded only once per democracy claim irrespective of the number of indicators contained in the claim.

The coding scheme itself was developed inductively. While the key overarching categories were derived from democratic theory, all subcategories were derived inductively. They resulted from the in-depth scrutiny of states’ democracy claims and did thus “flow from the data” (Hsieh/Shannon 2005: 1279). Categories established in this manner had to satisfy two main criteria: they had to be mutually exclusive and exhaustive. States...
were able to link the concept of democracy to more than just one principle or subject of democratic rule. In fact, a model of democracy is precisely defined in terms of a recognizable combination of principles and values.\footnote{See, for instance, Kurki (2013: 113).}

Yet, every category (that is, every actor or principle mentioned by countries and every specification of the principles states provided) needed to represent clearly delimitable semantic content (Früh 2007: 87). By paying due attention that there was no overlap in the way different categories were operationalized (see Table XXVI and Table XXVII), I ensured that categories were mutually exclusive. Since categories were built from the empirical material itself they also promised to be exhaustive with respect to the text material.

The coding process itself needs to fulfil some basic standards of good measurement. Most importantly, it has to ensure validity and reliability. Simply put, validity captures whether we are actually measuring what we set out to measure (Früh 2007: 120), whereas reliability concerns “the extent to which a measuring procedure yields the same results on repeated trials” (Neuendorf 2002: 112). I will address each in turn.

Validity concerns the link between an indicator (the coding instructions) and the concept (category) that the scholar aims to measure.\footnote{Neuendorf (2002: 115) defines it as “the match-up of a conceptual definition and an operational definition.”} It refers to the question of whether the coding rules provided really help to identify states’ understandings of democracy – that is, the basic principles and subjects they associate with democratic rule. The instructions both for detecting democracy claims and for matching categories to the text strongly rely on keywords. Focusing on such manifest (rather than latent) content thus minimizes problems of translating abstract constructs.\footnote{See Potter/Levine-Donnerstein (1999: 268-269).} Yet, the strongest case for validity is the extremely close match between the categories detected on the basis of the coding scheme and the insights generated from the interviews conducted. The fact that interviewees mentioned the same actors and principles when elaborating their democratic understanding as the ones deduced from their speeches increases confidence in the validity of the coding scheme.

Reliability refers to the reproducibility of results – both across different coders and over time. It is considered high if different scholars assign the same codes to the text (inter coder reliability) or if the same coder, in recoding the text after some time, arrives at the same coding decisions (intra
Reliability can be greatly increased if the coding process is guided by a well-defined category scheme that is systematically applied to the text. It is precisely the category scheme and the coding rules contained in it, which render the analytical process transparent and systematic and thus increase the reliability of the results. On the basis of a preliminary version of the coding scheme, I conducted a pilot study on one third of the democracy claims detected in states’ speeches. I coded these claim twice (with a time lapse of one month in between both codings) and arrived at a satisfactory intra coder reliability result: more specifically, only two out of a hundred democracy claims were assigned a different code in the second trial. After revising the coding scheme and instructions based on the troublesome cases, I applied the final scheme to the full text corpus.

7.2. Coding scheme

The final coding scheme is displayed in Table XXVI and Table XXVII. The first column of Table XXVII contains the complete list of democratic subjects mentioned by states. The first column in Table XXVI lists all principles states associated with the idea of global democratic rule. The coding instructions specify what information a democracy claim needs to contain for a specific code to be assigned. Among other things, this includes a short specification of the basic idea behind a democracy claim that is linked to the respective subject or principle (categorical statements), as well as key words and text examples.

189 See Früh (2007: 120) and Titscher et al. (1998: 85).
Table XXVI: Coding scheme: democratic principles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Categorical statement</th>
<th>(Keyword) Indicators</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Representation</td>
<td>A democratic IO is one that is representative.</td>
<td>- representation</td>
<td>We should aim for global coalitions to achieve the international goal of creating a more democratic Security Council, a Council that better represents the general membership of the Organization. (Egypt 2007, SC debate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>A democratic IO ensures equality among its members.</td>
<td>Synonyms for equality are:</td>
<td>The General Assembly is the most representative decision-making body of the United Nations. Its legitimacy is drawn from the universal nature of the membership, operating under a democratic statute, wherein all Member States are treated as equals and interact with each other as such. (Brazil 2009, GA debate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principle</td>
<td>Categorical statement</td>
<td>(Keyword) Indicators</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elections</td>
<td>In a democratic IO, membership is based on elections.</td>
<td>A synonym for elections is:</td>
<td>My delegation is in favour of enhancing the democratic legitimacy of the Security Council through an increase in elected members with terms of varying duration. Only through elections can democracy and accountability be sustained. (South Korea 2008, SC debate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- voting for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- disenfranchising someone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>An opposite is:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- disenfranchising someone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>A democratic IO can be held to account.</td>
<td>Synonyms for holding accountable are:</td>
<td>The reform of the Security Council must prescribe ways and means to introduce greater democracy and due process into its deliberations and decision-making. [...] The exercise of the veto must be fully justified, including allowing a possible review by the General Assembly and even by the International Court of Justice. Similarly, the Council’s decisions to take enforcement action under Chapter VII should be subjected to a periodic review by the United Nations General Assembly to ensure against injustice and injury to less powerful nations. (Pakistan 2004, SC debate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- checking / monitoring / supervising</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- exercising oversight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- exercising control over</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- reviewing / evaluating / scrutinizing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- requiring someone to seek approval / endorsement / confirmation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- recalling someone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>A democratic IO is responsive.</td>
<td>Synonyms for being responsive are:</td>
<td>We are witnessing an ever-increasing adoption of democratic principles all over the world [...] In the same vein, it is imperative that the Security Council open its select club of permanent members to accommodate the legitimate claims and aspirations of an ever-changing world [...] (Mauritius 2006, SC debate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- being attentive to / hearing / taking up / taking into account / accommodating the concerns / aspirations / interest of someone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- reflecting / addressing these concerns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- acting in / advancing / serving / working for someone’s interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- fulfilling someone’s will</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Opposites are:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- promoting one’s own / narrow interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- ignoring the voice of someone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- frustrating the will of someone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principle</td>
<td>Categorical statement</td>
<td>(Keyword) Indicators</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>A democratic IO allows for participation.</td>
<td>Synonyms for participation are:</td>
<td>Democratization of international relations is a global trend, which should also be reflected in the Security Council […] China holds that expansion of the Council should give priority to augmenting the representation of developing countries in general and African countries in particular, and should increase the opportunities for more countries, particularly small and medium-sized countries, to participate in the Council’s decision-making process. (China 2005, SC debate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>A democratic IO is characterized by transparency.</td>
<td>Synonyms for transparency are:</td>
<td>The Security Council has become an anti-democratic and conspiratorial body that acts on the basis of the opacity and secrecy of informal consultations, which have become the norm, not the exception. (Cuba 2003, SC debate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principle</td>
<td>Categorical statement</td>
<td>(Keyword) Indicators</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-domination</td>
<td>A democratic IO does not allow for practices of domination.</td>
<td>In addition to the notion of non-domination, statements about this principle may include references to:</td>
<td>Silence vis-à-vis that practice implies tacit consent to the practice of one State, or a few States that are permanent members of the Security Council, dominating the process of decision-making in the Council. (Libya 2004, SC debate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- hegemonic / imperialistic behavior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- power politics / law of the strongest / concert of power</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- abuse / misuse of power</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- imposition (of certain measures / policies)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- threatening / coercing / exerting pressure / forcing / intimidating / injuring someone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- behavior of high-handedness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule of law</td>
<td>A democratic IO acts in accordance with the rule of law</td>
<td>- acting in accordance with international rule of law / international legality</td>
<td>It is the view of my delegation that meaningful reform should uphold the principles of the Charter of the United Nations in order to render the Council more representative, accountable, transparent, efficient and democratic. (North Korea 2008, SC debate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- acting in accordance with the UN Charter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- acting in accordance with the mandate of the IO, including:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- fulfilling the mandate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- not exceeding the mandate (no encroachment into competences / prerogatives of other IOs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>A democratic IO conforms to the principle of justice.</td>
<td>- justice</td>
<td>[...] I am confident that [...] we can reach an agreement on the reform and expansion of the Security Council, built on solidifying the principles of justice and equality in rights and obligations which would allow the Security Council to become a platform for democracy, transparency and accountability. (Egypt 2009, SC debate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- fairness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Impartiality

A democratic IO deals with issues / actors in an impartial way.

**Example:**

```
None of us can deny that the current situation in the Security Council is a result of the outcome of the Second World War. It is a situation that was imposed on the entire international community by the victors in that war. They controlled the Security Council and made it the predominant body, unequal, imbalanced and lacking democracy, where the right of veto is abused and where discriminatory problems are dealt with selectively and where on countries that do nothing to deserve it, for no other reason than that their policies do not serve the interest of some of those privileged members of the Council. (Libya 2005, SC debate)
```

#### Keywords
- objectivity
- neutrality
- selectivity
- arbitrariness
- double standards

#### Opposites
- discrimination
- selectivity
- arbitrariness
- double standards

### Respecting rules of procedure

A democratic IO acts in accordance with its rules of procedure.

**Example:**

```
[...Madagascar is neither excluded nor suspended from its rights and privileges as a member under rule 83 of the rules of procedure, which requires that decisions on important questions, such as the determination of a State Member's sovereignty, shall be made by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting for the sake of good sense and respect for democracy, that question should not be left in the hands of a small number of States.] (Madagascar 2009, GA debate)
```

#### Keywords
- rules of procedure

### Majority decisions

In a democratic IO decisions are taken by majority vote.

**Example:**

```
[...decisions in the General Assembly [...]] is a real example of democracy in international action, since these decisions are taken by a majority of those voting.] (Yemen 2003, GA debate)
```

#### Keywords
- majority

### Deliberation

A democratic IO allows for discussion and debate among member states.

**Example:**

```
As the most important democratic deliberative body on the planet – where each Member State has a voice and a vote – it is imperative to give it the necessary capability to lead the international community. (Ecuador 2004, GA debate)
```

#### Keywords
- dialogue / debate / discussion
- exchanging / consulting different views
- if used as a synonym for deliberation
### Table XXVII: Coding scheme: democratic subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>(Keyword) Indicators</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rule by…</td>
<td>References to who decision-making and governing processes are to involve (directly or indirectly) or whose preferences they are to reflect</td>
<td>Together we should reduce the distance that still separates us, work towards finding common ground and, in a realistic way, give the world a functional, credible, efficient and democratic organ that can represent the aspirations of peoples and the will of States. (Cape Verde 2008, SC debate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule for…</td>
<td>References to whom democratic procedures are ultimately meant to benefit</td>
<td>The Charter goals of saving humanity from the scourge of war and promoting social progress and a better standard of life in larger freedom remain a profound collective challenge. For the Security Council to play its crucial role […] it is critical that the Council be democratic […]. (Indonesia 2011, SC debate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…states</td>
<td>Synonyms for states include references to: - intergovernmentalism - international community - multilateralism - SC / GA members / membership - powers - countries / nations - membership categories or privileges that are reserved for states (e.g. permanent SC seats, non-permanent SC seats, veto power)</td>
<td>But when we have a Security Council in which there are countries with certain privileges in comparison to others, that is not democracy. (Bolivia 2007, SC debate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…peoples</td>
<td>Synonyms for people are: - world citizenry - the world’s population - humanity / humankind / human beings - global public</td>
<td>[W]e hope that the entire United Nations membership will be enthusiastic and responsible in undertaking reform of this Organization, which is the basis of international democratic action to realize the aspirations of our peoples to security and stability. (Syria 2004, SC debate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…people</td>
<td>Synonyms for people are: - world citizenry - the world’s population - humanity / humankind / human beings - global public</td>
<td>Only a modernized, dynamic and fully democratic United Nations can best guarantee a safe and secure world for all of humanity. (Ghana 2006, SC debate)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

190 Article 31 states that “[a]ny Member of the United Nations which is not a member of the Security Council may participate, without vote, in the discussion of any question brought before the Security Council whenever the latter considers that the interests of that Member are specially affected.” Article 32 states that “[a]ny Member of the United Nations which is not a member of the Security Council …”
7.3. Interpretive differences about democratic principles: overview

The following provides an overview of the democratic principles states mention and the interpretive differences they involve – be they differences in emphasis or truly conflicting views. I include separate tables for the democratic discourse about the SC (Table XXVIII) and the corresponding debate about the GA (Table XXIX). In each case, I identify the main principles states associate with democratic rule by the respective IO (as well as the country years which invoke it), I list the main questions states use to specify their understanding of these principles, and I present the answers countries provide in this regard (including who these country years are). Where interpretations conflict with one another (rather than simply indicating differences in emphasis), they are indicated in bold. Below each table, I also list the principles that are not subject to interpretive divides as well as the country years that invoke them.

Council or any state which is not a Member of the United Nations, if it is a party to a dispute under consideration by the Security Council, shall be invited to participate, without vote, in the discussion relating to the dispute. The Security Council shall lay down such conditions as it deems just for the participation of a state which is not a Member of the United Nations.”

In the case of the SC this includes all principles mentioned by more than three country years and in the GA, where democracy claims are rarer, it includes all those invoked by more than one country year.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Line of specification</th>
<th>States' responses</th>
<th>Country years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Without veto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>San Marino 2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table XXVIII: Democratic principles – interpretive differences in the UN reform debate

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748909347

Generiert durch IP '54.70.40.11', am 13.09.2020, 07:29:44.
Das Erstellen und Weitergeben von Kopien dieses PDFs ist nicht zulässig.
### Principle Lines of Specification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States' responses</th>
<th>Country years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Longer non-permanent positions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent and non-permanent positions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Marino 2010</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Equality


The relationship between WHICH ACTORS is characterized by inequality?

- Relationship among all states
- Relationship among large and small nations
- Relationship among SC members and non-members
- Relationship among the P5 & new permanent members
- Relationship among the P5 & ...non-perm./non-members of the SC
- ...small/medium states among the non-perm./non-members

- Malaysia 2010
- Philippines 2008
- Egypt 2006, Myanmar 2003, Zambie 2011

- Colombia 2008
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Lines of specification</th>
<th>States' responses</th>
<th>Country years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WHAT are the causes of and remedies for inequality?</td>
<td>Causes of inequality: Unequal weight of votes of SC and GA members in the election of Judges of the ICJ</td>
<td>Philippines 2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unequal representation of regions</td>
<td>Costa Rica 2004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unequal chances to participate in SC decision-making sessions…</td>
<td>India 2004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>…among affected states</td>
<td>Cuba 2003</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>…of non-permanent SC members vs. the P5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Permanency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Existence of veto power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Veto power for only some states</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Remedies for inequality: Equal weight of votes of SC and GA members in the election of Judges of the ICJ</td>
<td>Philippines 2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principle</td>
<td>Lines of specification</td>
<td>States’ responses</td>
<td>Country years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Indiscriminate) representation of regions</td>
<td>Costa Rica 2004, Georgia 2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Indiscriminate) participation in SC decision-making…</td>
<td>India 2004</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…by all affected states</td>
<td>Cuba 2003</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricting/abolishing the veto…</td>
<td>Malaysia 2010</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not extending permanent membership</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extending the veto to new permanent members</td>
<td>Egypt 2006, Zambia 2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ELECTIONS**


**HOW are elections to be conducted?**

- Periodically
  - ↓

- One time election/two elections followed by permanency
  - ↓

- Possibility of immediate re-election
  - ↓

- No immediate re-election
  - Costa Rica 2004
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Lines of specification</th>
<th>States' responses</th>
<th>Country years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACCOUNTABILITY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To WHOM?</td>
<td>To the UN membership in general To Affected states To one's region</td>
<td>Albania 2004, Italy 2003, Italy 2004, Myanmar 2008, South Korea 2008, South Korea 2009, Spain 2006, Ecuador 2013</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principle</td>
<td>Lines of specification</td>
<td>States’ responses</td>
<td>Country years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
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<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.3. Interpretive differences about democratic principles
### DOMINATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Lines of specification</th>
<th>States’ responses</th>
<th>Country years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DOMINATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### IMPARTIALITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Lines of specification</th>
<th>States’ responses</th>
<th>Country years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IMPARTIALITY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Principles that are not subject to interpretive disputes:

### Table XXIX: Democratic principles – interpretive differences in the GA reform debate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Lines of specification</th>
<th>States' responses</th>
<th>Country years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship between powerful and powerless</td>
<td>Nigeria 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WHAT are the causes of (and remedies for) in-/equality?</td>
<td><strong>Causes of equality:</strong></td>
<td>Madagascar 2009, Pakistan 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Equal rights to participate in Assembly debates</td>
<td>Belize 2003, Ecuador 2004, Egypt 2011, Jamaica 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>One state, one vote principle</td>
<td>Nigeria 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Causes of inequality:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Differences in financial resource endowment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Remedies for inequality:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increasing the staff of the Office of the President so that new Presidents need not bring their own personnel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Smaller delegations from the developing countries in particular</td>
<td>Malaysia 2003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Principles that are not subject to interpretive disputes:

- Elections: Nigeria 2003
- Respecting rules of procedure: Madagascar 2009
- Accountability: Egypt 2007, Egypt 2008
- Deliberation: Ecuador 2004

7.4. Interview questionnaire

1) Opening question:

I would like to get a better understanding of the process of speech-writing by you/your mission. Your country’s speeches on Security Council reform always contain a combination of very specific demands (e.g. “Let’s abolish the veto!”) as well as more abstract demands (“We need a Council that is more legitimate!”). For instance, in your country’s speeches I saw demands to make the Council more [credible, legitimate, democratic,…].

When you/your mission’s representatives prepare these speeches, how do you/they decide which of these more abstract concepts/words to put in?

Has your capital ever commented on your choice of these more abstract concepts/words? That is to say, has your capital ever demanded to leave out a certain concept, to mention it more often, or to replace it by another one? If so, could you give an example?

How far do you think is the choice of these more abstract concepts/words the personal fingerprint of the writer?
2) Language of democracy:

Looking at the speeches your country made on the topic of Council reform, the demand for a more democratic Council DOES/DOES NOT play a role. Is that deliberate (to invoke/not invoke democracy)?

**ANSWER is YES:** Why?

**ANSWER is NO:** Independent of the speeches you gave: For your country, is Council reform about democratizing the Council?

If the idea of democratization captures (well) what Council reform is about for your country, could you explain why? (What about the idea of democracy fits (so well) in the context of the Council?)

Could you give an example of what your country finds (un)democratic about the Council? Please elaborate!

Could you give an example of international organizations that your country considers to be more democratic than the Council? Please elaborate!

From the point of view of your country, is the General Assembly more or less democratic than the Council? Please explain!

If the idea of democratization does NOT capture (well) what Council reform is about for your country, could you explain why? (What about the idea of democracy does NOT fit (so well) in the context of the Council?)

Are other concepts more adequate/useful to describe what Council reform is about for your country? Which? Why?

For your country, is the reform of international organizations (NOT) about making them more democratic? (Does your country think it makes sense to describe international organizations as (un)democratic?)

What is your impression: Does the concept of democracy play a role in other states’ speeches (as well)? Which? How would you explain this?
What is your impression: Are there states in whose speeches the concept of democracy does not play a role? Which? How would you explain this?

Does your country see any kind of connection/link between democracy within nation-states and democracy within international organizations? Why (not)? Please elaborate!

Is there anything you feel is relevant to this topic that I did not ask about?
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