

State Transformations in OECD Countries

Dimensions, Driving Forces and Trajectories

Edited by

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Internationalization and the Discursive Legitimation of the Democratic Nation State

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The literature on globalization and the democratic nation state is dominated by a crisis diagnosis that holds economic and political internationalization responsible for the waning state capacity in recent decades (Keohane and Milner 1996; Kahler and Lake 2009). Bypassed by global networks of wealth, power and information, the state is arguably losing its sovereignty, hollowed out and no longer able to assume its core responsibilities. This development – which is presumably ‘voiding of meaning and function the institutions of the industrial era’ (Castells 2004, 419) and the representative institutions of liberal democracies – has also ushered in a crisis of *legitimacy* according to pessimistic observers. While others are more sanguine about the erosion of state power (Rieger and Leibfried 2003; Leibfried and Zürn 2006) and legitimacy (Majone 2001a; Moravcsik 2005; Schneider et al. 2010), there is widespread agreement that the democratic nation state is no longer the only relevant player in a globalized and interdependent world (Zürn 1998; Albrow 2003; Hurrelmann et al. 2007). It is therefore indeed plausible to surmise that the growing prominence of international organizations and regimes in the evolving ‘post-national constellation’ (Habermas 2001) affects the degree and foundations of state legitimacy.

Nowhere does the alleged link between internationalization and state legitimacy appear more plausible than in the context of European integration, which entails unprecedented shifts of power and responsibilities from the national to the supranational level. As a consequence, the congruence of *demos*, territory and political authority that prevailed during the ‘Golden Age’ of the democratic nation state has arguably unravelled even further in the European Union (EU) than in any of the other OECD member states, diminishing the autonomy of national political regimes and raising doubts about the sources of their legitimacy (Scharpf 1999, 2000; Føllesdal and Hix 2006).

However, the causal mechanisms that link internationalization with changing perceptions and evaluations of legitimacy remain underexplored. While there are plausible *normative* accounts of internationalization effects on the

democratic nation state and its legitimacy, *empirical* perspectives on the link between internationalization and legitimacy are few and far between. Our objective in this chapter is to probe the claim that internationalization has led to an erosion of regime support in the established OECD democracies. The chapter draws on a content analysis of legitimation discourses in the quality press of two EU member states (Germany and the United Kingdom) and two non-EU democracies (Switzerland and the United States) over a ten-year period (1998–2007).

We begin by outlining our understanding of legitimacy as an empirical concept in a discourse-analytical perspective. Three hypotheses about the effects of internationalization on the legitimacy of the democratic nation state, gleaned from the extant literature, are then presented, followed by an outline of our research design, text analytical method and data. The main section of the chapter is devoted to our empirical findings. The analysis of legitimation discourses suggests that internationalization has no uniform effect on the ascription or denial of legitimacy in the public spheres of the four countries examined, and hence it does not contribute to a general decline of state legitimacy.

Legitimacy and legitimation: A discourse-analytical perspective

A political regime is legitimate if it meets certain standards of acceptability (Beetham 1991; Hurrelmann et al. 2007, 3). While the ‘diagnostic’ (Peters 2005, 99–100) perspective on legitimacy evaluates this acceptability based on the researcher’s own normative yardsticks, empirical legitimacy research considers legitimacy claims and assessments, as well as the normative criteria that underpin them, as social facts (Barker 2001; Reus-Smit 2007). Here we follow the second, empirical approach.

Understood in this empirical vein, legitimacy cannot be viewed as a quasi-objective attribute of political regimes. Rather, it is socially constructed in public spheres and political communication, (re-)produced – or withdrawn and transformed – in an interactive process in which citizens evaluate the normatively grounded legitimacy claims of political elites, accepting or contesting them based on their own legitimation criteria. This process takes place in various discursive arenas and employs characteristic practices (Luckmann 1987; Rauber 2005).

Following Easton (1965, 1975), we maintain that legitimacy claims and assessments relate primarily to the regime level of political communities and systems (as opposed to Easton’s ‘authorities’ and individual policies), and that they are the key sources of ‘diffuse’ (as opposed to ‘specific’) support. This type of support is based on moral or other normatively grounded judgements about, for instance, the democratic quality, legality or effectiveness of political systems and their institutions. The study of legitimation

discourses in public spheres gives us direct access to the practices and normative foundations that underpin the (de-)legitimation of the democratic nation state (Hurrelmann et al. 2009; Schmidtke and Schneider 2012; Haunss and Schneider 2013).

Internationalization and legitimation processes

The classic literature on political legitimacy did not look much beyond the nation state (Luhmann 1969; Habermas 1973; Weber 1978). More recently, however, internationalization has featured prominently in studies that diagnose an erosion of legitimacy caused by the growing inability of national institutions to cope with problems of global reach, to assert authority over transnational private actors and to retain sovereignty or democratic quality while new 'spheres of authority' beyond the state gain power and importance, bypassing established state institutions (Zürn 2000, 2004; Rosenau 2002). In the following section, we sum up the main arguments and develop a set of empirically testable hypotheses.

Erosion of state legitimacy

The diagnosis of an erosion of legitimacy is grounded in the observation that states have become more interdependent over the past few decades (Keohane and Nye 1977; Held 1995; Zürn 1998). *Societal denationalization* – understood as processes in which economic, cultural and other social transactions increasingly transcend national borders – has led to an incongruence between the constituencies of national democratic governments and the populations affected by their decisions. Thus, the capacity of national governments to bring about desired social outcomes is challenged. These processes of societal denationalization are also expected to threaten the legitimacy of political orders because they challenge the idea of national sovereignty and the principle of the congruence of representation, and because they undermine the ability of the democratic nation state to achieve the purposes that matter to its citizens (Scharpf 2000, 107). This mechanism is arguably most pronounced in the EU, where, through the gradual removal of physical, technical and fiscal barriers to trade, market integration has greatly diminished the capacity of national governments to achieve traditional state objectives such as welfare and security (Leibfried 2000; Kriesi et al. 2008, 3).

This challenge has not gone unnoticed by political elites, who respond by establishing new international regimes or widening the scope and authority of existing ones (Cooper et al. 2008; Zürn et al. 2012). The initial aim of *political denationalization* – understood as the transfer of political authority from the national to the international level – was to restore the state capacity to act in a globalized world and to provide governments with means to achieve goals such as regulating the international economy, slowing down global warming or combating terrorism (Keohane et al. 2009, 4).

However, Robert Dahl (1999) and many others argue that these processes challenge the legitimacy of national democracies. The migration of political decision-making authority to international regimes that are inherently bureaucratic and lack the participation of ordinary citizens undermines popular sovereignty and the parliamentary accountability of national political institutions, and hence their democratic legitimacy. International regimes enable political elites to bypass national parliaments and the often cumbersome mechanisms through which citizens hold political elites accountable. Therefore, they pose a threat to the functioning of national democracies, weaken popular rule and empower special interests that undermine majoritarian preferences (Gartzke and Naoi 2011, 590).

Again, this mechanism is arguably most pronounced in the context of European integration, where the ‘creeping’ takeover of responsibilities in many relevant issue areas by European supranational institutions has even led to their deep involvement in core state powers such as internal security, taxation or welfare spending (Pollack 1994; Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2013). In sum, all of this suggests that the age of globalization is a serious threat to the legitimacy of the democratic nation state. Hence, we may expect internationalization processes to erode the legitimacy of national political orders:

H1: The more a country is exposed to internationalization processes, the more negative assessments of its legitimacy will become.

More specifically, as European integration is presumably the most consequential process of internationalization, we expect a country’s degree of integration into the EU to matter most. Finally, the effect may be expected to intensify over time as European integration deepens.

Transformation of state legitimacy

While the literature often assumes a general erosion of democratic legitimacy as a consequence of internationalization, some authors suggest that not all institutions and aspects of democratic political systems may suffer equally from internationalization. Fritz Scharpf’s theoretical distinction between input and output legitimacy (Scharpf 1999, Chapter 1) is relevant here. While the former strongly depends on self-determination and direct representation of the sovereign people within the territorial boundaries of a democratic nation state, output legitimacy relates mainly to a government’s ability to secure welfare and provide optimal solutions for problems at hand. Linking this distinction with the notion of democratic quality, one may distinguish between genuinely democratic forms of input and output legitimacy and those forms of input and output legitimacy that are independent from the notion of democracy, for instance, effectiveness or efficiency as non-democratic aspects of output legitimacy (see Schneider et al. 2010, Chapter 4).

If we follow the arguments put forward in the literature, internationalization and especially European integration should be expected to affect a nation state's ability to secure input legitimacy more strongly than its capability to produce satisfactory outputs for its population (Scharpf 1999, 2000). This applies especially to the genuinely democratic aspects of input legitimacy. National parliaments suffer most from the shift of certain responsibilities from the national to the international level, losing their ability to democratically represent citizens at the polity level where the relevant decisions are taken (Kaiser 1971, 715; Andersen and Burns 1996; Auel and Benz 2007). Hence, we expect internationalization processes to trigger particularly negative evaluations of the democratic input dimension of legitimacy.

H2: The more a country is exposed to internationalization processes, the more negative assessments of its democratic input legitimacy will become.

Again, the effect is presumably strongest in EU member states, and the deepening of European integration should lead to a decline of democratic input legitimacy over time.

Internationalization as a discursive phenomenon

From a normative observer's perspective, the case for the effects of internationalization on the legitimacy of the democratic nation state (as suggested in hypotheses 1 and 2) appears plausible enough. In an empirical perspective, however, we need to specify the causal mechanisms that link internationalization and legitimacy. Taking the notion of discursive construction seriously, we argue that internationalization can only plausibly affect legitimacy if the processes that undermine state capacity and create legitimacy challenges are important topics and communicative frames in legitimization discourses. In short, following the constructivist argument that speech may change people's perceptions of social facts (Finnemore and Sikkink 2001, 402), we consider internationalization as a (partly) discursive phenomenon, a communicative frame that links social, political and economic developments and might also mobilize legitimacy perceptions (Hay and Rosamond 2002, 151). The degree to which states are internationalized may, for instance, be exaggerated or played down in public discourses. Yet, if internationalization matters discursively, we can expect related events and developments to be the background against which the legitimacy of the state is discussed ever more frequently:

H3a: The more a country is exposed to internationalization processes, the more salient frames of internationalization will become.

Again, this appears plausible particularly for EU member states, and European integration may be thought to translate into a higher incidence

of internationalization frames over time (Wessler et al. 2008). The erosion of state legitimacy presumably induced by internationalization may therefore be a function of the discursive presence of internationalization. The internationalization frame – just like the ‘objective’ degree of a national polity’s internationalization – may be expected to have a negative effect on regime support:

H3b: The more assessments of legitimacy are framed in terms of internationalization, the more negative these assessments will become.

Research design, method and data

Legitimation discourses – the focus of our study – take place in different arenas. However, given the role of the media as an interface and gatekeeper between citizens and political elites in democratic mass societies, a focus on media discourses is warranted (Peters 2005; Habermas 2009b). Here we consider legitimation discourses in the quality press of four established OECD democracies over a ten-year period (1998–2007): Germany (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*), the United Kingdom (*Guardian*, *Times*), Switzerland (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, *Tagesanzeiger*) and the United States (*New York Times*, *Washington Post*). While this newspaper sample arguably reflects elite discourses and mainstream positions, we also submit – in line with other recent work on public spheres (Koopmans and Statham 2010; Risse 2010) – that the quality press continues to play a key role as an opinion leader in shaping citizens’ perceptions of legitimacy.

Conventional indicators of globalization such as the KOF index consistently rank the established OECD democracies – the focus of our empirical study – as the countries with the highest levels of economic and political internationalization (Dreher et al. 2008). While the KOF index and similar quantitative indicators are thus helpful to distinguish internationalization levels among countries with widely varying societal and economic backgrounds, they do not adequately capture qualitative differences among OECD states or changes in these countries over time.¹ For instance, they count EU membership simply as one additional membership in international organizations and do not account for the qualitative changes brought about by European integration, which has a particularly strong, albeit varying impact on national political systems (Leuffen et al. 2013).

Because European integration is arguably the most consequential example of political internationalization, we focus on this process. Our country sample maximizes variation with regard to the Europeanization of national politics: (a) Germany is a founding member of the EU (1957) and has never opted out of any significant integration step (Katzenstein 1997; Bulmer and Paterson 2010), (b) the United Kingdom represents a relatively late (1973), much less enthusiastic participant of European integration

that has not joined the Schengen Agreement or the Monetary Union and can therefore be considered less internationalized in this respect than Germany, (c) Switzerland is not an EU member but adopts a considerable share of EU legislation via two sets of bilateral treaties or unilaterally (Kriesi and Treschel 2008, 172–89) and (d) the United States is, of course, neither a member of the EU nor subject to its legislation, and its overall level of political internationalization may be characterized as much lower than that of the other three countries, simply due to its size and super-power status.

A similar logic underpins our choice of a time frame. While conventional quantitative indicators reveal hardly any trend in the 1998–2007 period, these ten years cover an important period of EU expansion and deepening (Clark and Rohrschneider 2009; Hooghe and Marks 2009, 646). The time frame ranges from the year after the Amsterdam Treaty had been signed to the year in which the Lisbon Treaty was signed. Moreover, the introduction of the euro as a common currency (2001), the Treaty of Nice (2003) and the Eastern enlargement of the EU (2004, 2007) were important events in our period of observation. The two most significant sets of bilateral agreements between the EU and Switzerland were also signed and enacted in this time period (Bilateral I in 1998 and Bilateral II in 2004). With the exception of the United States – which has not been exposed to a comparable development, its NAFTA membership notwithstanding – our sample countries thus have all experienced rising levels of political internationalization over time.

Newspaper articles were sampled using a strategy of relevance or intensity sampling (Krippendorff 2004, 118).² For each country and year, we chose ten-day sampling periods which were placed around recurring events that presumably focus media attention on *national* political regimes and institutions, their functioning and their legitimacy (see Table 9.1 for details on the time windows).³ The basic units of analysis are individual propositions in the selected articles that evaluate the legitimacy of the four national political regimes or their core elements – that is, legitimation statements. These propositions were identified and coded with the help of a stylized legitimation ‘grammar’ (Table 9.2; details on text retrieval and the coding procedure are found in Schmidtke and Nullmeier 2011). Four key variables describe a legitimation statement: the legitimation object that is assessed, the positive (legitimizing) or negative (delegitimizing) character of the assessment, the legitimation criterion (normative benchmark) on which the statement is based and the speaker.

In addition, we coded whether or not a statement explicitly refers to internationalization, notably including Europeanization. Such a reference was coded when a statement links an evaluation of a legitimation object at the national level and (a) societal internationalization processes such as the growing volume and density of cross-border migration and economic

Table 9.1 Time windows and numbers of legitimation statements

Year	CH		DE		GB		US	
	articles	statements	articles	statements	articles	statements	articles	statements
1998	27	68 (05/12-16/12)	40	106 (07/11-18/11)	47	120 (21/11-02/12)	31	98 (24/01-04/02)
1999	12	45 (11/12-22/12)	39	90 (20/11-01/12)	45	145 (13/11-24/11)	57	184 (16/01-27/01)
2000	18	58 (09/12-20/12)	27	46 (25/11-06/12)	52	192 (02/12-13/12)	43	98 (22/01-02/02)
2001	18	36 (01/12-12/12)	24	53 (24/11-05/12)	50	158 (16/06-27/06)	16	30 (27/01-07/02)
2002	27	63 (23/11-04/12)	33	84 (30/11-11/12)	43	92 (09/11-20/11)	46	94 (26/01-06/02)
2003	25	74 (29/11-10/12)	30	102 (22/11-03/12)	38	87 (22/11-03/12)	82	200 (25/01-05/02)
2004	44	104 (27/11-08/12)	48	115 (20/11-01/12)	39	89 (20/11-01/12)	52	173 (17/01-28/01)
2005	15	23 (26/11-07/12)	27	82 (26/11-07/12)	45	90 (14/05-25/05)	55	124 (29/01-09/02)
2006	20	51 (09/12-20/12)	25	44 (18/11-29/11)	32	69 (11/11-22/11)	71	148 (28/01-08/02)
2007	22	81 (01/12-12/12)	19	30 (24/11-05/12)	41	91 (03/11-14/11)	42	84 (20/01-31/01)
Σ	228	603	312	752	432	1,133	495	1,233

Table 9.2 Legitimation grammar and examples

Example 1: The Liberal Democrat leader [Paddy Ashdown] told a rally in Eastbourne that the system was now so [...] inefficient and secretive that it no longer served the citizen. He said: 'Next Tuesday you could elect [...] 650 saints; but it wouldn't make any difference if our system no longer works' (*Times*, 3 April 1992).

Paddy Ashdown says:	Britain's political system . . .	is illegitimate . . .	because it is . . .	(1) inefficient; (2) intransparent.
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Example 2: The people and their representatives have been sent to the sidelines by the courts, and that's not right (*Washington Post*, 6 February 2004).

The Washington Post says:	The US judiciary . . .	is illegitimate . . .	because . . .	it undermines popular sovereignty.
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interactions, or (b) transfers of political authority to international organizations, regimes and networks governed by formal international agreements; the internationalization reference had to be placed in the same paragraph as the legitimation statement. An example for such an internationalization reference is the following statement: 'The idea that corporations rule the world has led many critics of globalisation to conclude that the State has become a feeble institution and that democracy is in peril' (*Times*, 28 November 2003). As shown in Table 9.1, 1,473 articles containing one legitimation statement or more were retrieved from the eight newspapers; a total of 3,721 legitimation statements were identified in these articles and coded.

Empirical results

How legitimate are the four political systems? Has the transfer of political authority to international regimes led to a pervasive erosion of discursive support for the democratic nation state and its core institutions? To provide answers to these questions, we discuss the three hypotheses in the light of our empirical evidence.

Erosion of state legitimacy?

In order to examine whether internationalization processes have eroded the legitimacy of national political systems in the four public spheres (H1), we calculated the surplus or deficit of positive assessments (in percentage points) for each country and year. These *legitimacy levels* range from -1 (all statements are delegitimizing) to 1 (all are legitimizing).

Figures 9.1 and 9.2 demonstrate that the reality is more complex than the erosion scenario would suggest. Considering, first, the overall distribution of positive and negative legitimation statements per country, we do not observe low legitimacy levels across the board, which would have indicated

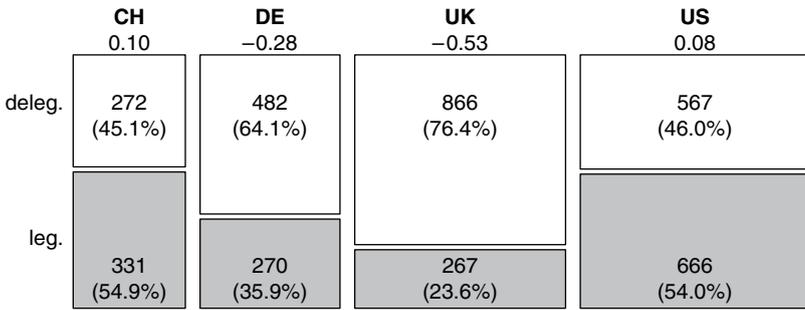


Figure 9.1 Positive and negative assessments by country (N, legitimacy levels)

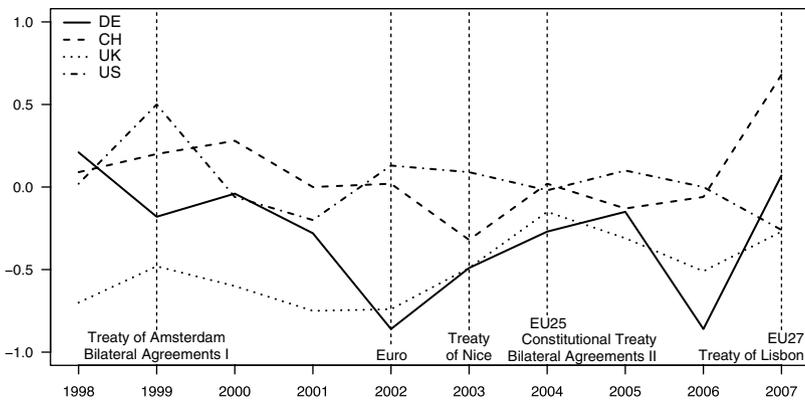


Figure 9.2 Legitimacy levels per country over time

a substantial erosion of support for the democratic nation state. Moreover, differences in the ranking of national legitimacy levels are not exactly in line with different levels of internationalization. Among our four countries, the erosion of legitimacy was expected to be strongest in Germany, a core member of the EU, not quite as strong in the United Kingdom, which opted out of the Schengen Agreement and the Monetary Union, and even weaker in Switzerland and the United States. There is indeed a surplus of positive statements in the Swiss (legitimacy level: 0.10) and US (0.08) discourses, and a deficit in the German (-0.28) and UK (-0.53) discourses.

Thus the two non-EU states, Switzerland and the United States, have moderately positive and essentially the same legitimacy levels while evaluations of the legitimacy of the EU member states, Germany and the United Kingdom, are predominantly negative. The finding suggests that European integration might indeed affect legitimacy evaluations more than other, less pronounced forms of political internationalization. However, the legitimacy levels do not

reflect the varying degrees of European integration. Interestingly, the United Kingdom rather than Germany has the lowest legitimacy level. If we factor in the presumably negative bias of media reporting and commentary, our data do not support the notion of an across-the-board erosion of the legitimacy of the democratic nation state caused by internationalization processes. The thrust of legitimation discourses is even positive in two national public spheres, overall legitimacy levels vary widely, and factors other than the United Kingdom's degree of internationalization must account for the particularly low value of that country.

A glance at developments over time confirms that the hypothesis of an erosion of legitimacy driven by internationalization needs to be qualified. Only in two years (2002 and 2006) is the ranking of legitimacy levels in line with the hypothesis that the degree of internationalization – with Germany at the top, followed by the United Kingdom, Switzerland and the United States – is inversely related to discursive support. In the remaining eight years, the positions of at least two countries do not correspond to their anticipated rank. The national legitimacy levels are even less in line with the country ranking of the KOF index: Not a single year yields a legitimacy ranking with the United States at the top, followed by Germany, the United Kingdom and Switzerland.

Even though no clear trend emerges from our analysis of legitimacy levels, European integration might still play a role in the legitimation discourses of its member states. If there is no downward trend in legitimacy levels, then perhaps major events of the European integration process impact on discourses in the years in which they occurred. For Germany, one may then expect a drop in legitimacy levels in 1999 (when the Treaty of Amsterdam entered into force), in 2002 (when the euro was introduced as a cash currency), in 2003 (when the Treaty of Nice entered into force), in 2004 (when the Constitutional Treaty was signed and the major wave of Eastern enlargement took place) and in 2007 (when the Treaty of Lisbon was signed and Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU). Except for the impact of the introduction of the euro, the same may be expected for the UK case. The Swiss discourse might reveal downturns of legitimacy levels in 1999, 2000, 2004 and 2005 when the Bilateral Agreements I and II with the EU were signed and subjected to referenda.

Yet while Figure 9.2 shows that legitimacy levels vary over time, annual fluctuations are not consistent with such expectations. Fluctuations are strongest in Germany and Switzerland, where legitimacy levels have ranges of 1.07 and 1.00, respectively. In the United States, legitimacy levels vary between -0.26 and 0.50 (range = 0.76), while in the United Kingdom legitimacy levels are consistently negative (range = 0.60).

As regards the expected declines in the years in which European integration was deepened or the EU enlarged, we get ambiguous results for all three European countries. In the German discourse, legitimacy levels partly

correspond to expectations, as they decreased in 1999 and 2002. However, the same is not true for the second part of the observation period. In 2003, 2004 and 2007, legitimacy levels even increase quite considerably, with 2007 displaying the second highest value in the entire ten-year period. For the United Kingdom, our data contradict expectations completely, because progress in European integration is invariably accompanied by increasing legitimacy levels. In the UK discourse, all relevant years (1999, 2003, 2004 and 2007) are characterized by above-average legitimacy levels; 2004 and 2007 even rank first and second. Finally, the years in which the Swiss–EU Bilateral Agreements were signed and subjected to referenda display increasing legitimacy levels with the exception of 2005. Only in 2005, when parts of Bilateral II on internal security (Schengen) and asylum (Dublin) as well as the extension of Bilateral I to the new EU member states were put to successful optional referenda, the level of legitimation decreased and fell below average. By contrast, values for the remaining years are around or even above the average; in 2000, when the complete set of agreements under Bilateral I was subjected to a successful optional referendum, the level of legitimation even increased to the second highest value in the period of analysis.

In sum, the erosion hypothesis (H1) cannot be confirmed in the light of empirical evidence on overall levels of legitimacy or developments over time. Contrary to the hypothesis that the legitimacy of the nation state is subject to the uniformly negative impact of internationalization processes and especially the process of European integration, national legitimacy levels do not decrease over time but follow country-specific patterns that are often not synchronized with the growing centralization of power and responsibilities in the EU. Considering the entire ten-year period examined here, we observe marked ups and downs, but overall legitimacy levels hardly indicate a crisis in three of the four countries. As for the UK exception, a link with internationalization appears implausible. In short, if internationalization influences the evaluation of the legitimacy of national political orders at all, the effect is too small to show up in legitimacy levels.

Transformation of state legitimacy?

The results so far indicate that internationalization does not generally affect legitimation discourses negatively. But as our second hypothesis suggests, the erosion of legitimacy might not be a uniform process, and might only affect some aspects of the democratic nation state. In particular, internationalization at large and the process of European integration with its transfer of power from the national to the European level might only affect evaluations of democratic input legitimacy negatively while leaving assessments based on output criteria untouched (H2).

To address the second hypothesis, we calculate the legitimacy levels of all legitimation statements that use democratic input criteria for each country and year, and contrast them with the corresponding values of statements

that refer to non-democratic or output criteria. Statements in the category of democratic input legitimacy refer to popular sovereignty, participation, deliberation, transparency, accountability, legality and credibility – core aspects of democratic representation and decision-making that seem to be particularly threatened by transfers of power and decision-making authority from national legislative institutions to bargaining networks and executive institutions at the international level.

Figure 9.3 plots the legitimacy levels of statements using democratic input criteria and of statements drawing on other criteria for each country over time. At first glance, the figure seems to confirm the expectation that the four nation states are consistently evaluated more negatively with respect to democratic input criteria than to the other criteria. This is because the legitimacy levels of the four political systems are lower when these evaluations refer to aspects of democratic input legitimacy than when they refer to other criteria. The democratic quality of the four countries is thus evaluated more negatively than their ability to produce satisfactory policy outputs.

However, a closer inspection of the data reveals that this surplus of negative evaluations of democratic input legitimacy is not spurred by internationalization. In fact, Figure 9.3 shows only two years (1999 and 2002) in which the country ranking of input legitimacy levels corresponds to the ranking in terms of internationalization levels. Apparently, a country's relative level of democratic input legitimacy is not related to its level of internationalization. Moreover, and in line with findings for the overall legitimacy levels, the levels of democratic input legitimacy in Switzerland, Germany and the United States strongly fluctuate over time, with ranges of 1.30 (CH), 1.27 (DE) and 1.22 (US). The United Kingdom shows less fluctuation, with a range of 0.31 and levels between -0.93 and -0.62 . Admittedly, adding a

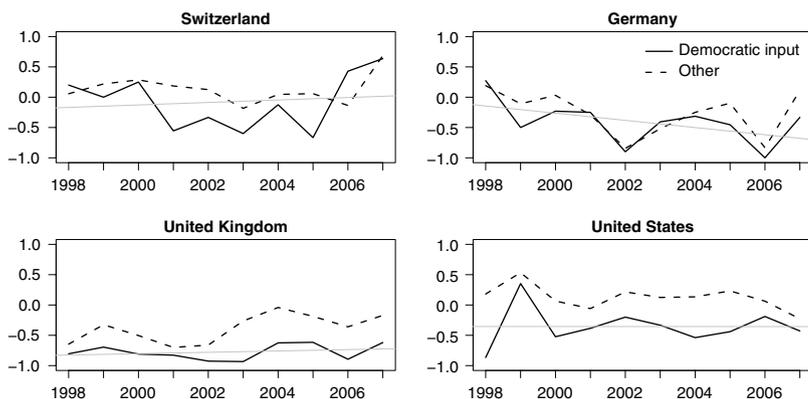


Figure 9.3 Legitimacy levels of democratic input and other criteria over time

trend line to the plots suggests a negative trend for Germany and slightly positive trends for Switzerland and the United Kingdom, while the line is flat for the United States. Yet, the low number of data points combined with the large spread of values in three of the four countries studied forces us to take the linear trend lines with a pinch of salt. We therefore conclude that the data essentially contradict the hypothesis that increasing levels of internationalization correspond to decreasing levels of democratic input legitimacy. Only developments in Germany and the United States might conform to the hypothesis. For the United Kingdom and Switzerland, one would have expected a pronounced negative trend, because both countries are affected by European integration, albeit to a lesser degree than Germany. Hence the positive trend lines for both countries run completely counter to theoretical expectations, even though the democratic input legitimacy level is invariably lower than for other criteria in the UK discourse.

Nor is the theoretical expectation confirmed that in years of deepening European integration democratic input legitimacy levels might decrease more substantially than the values for assessments based on other evaluation criteria. In Germany, the levels of legitimacy for democratic input fall below those for other evaluation criteria in 1999 and 2007. While this is in line with theoretical expectations, the results for the other three years that we singled out above (2002–2004) are not, because the legitimacy levels of both groups of criteria develop in the same direction and display quite similar values. The findings for Switzerland are equally ambivalent. In 1999 and 2000, the levels of democratic input legitimacy are, contrary to our expectations, similar to the legitimacy levels of other criteria. Only in 2004 and 2005, legitimacy levels for democratic input are indeed below those of other criteria. However, only in 1999 and 2005, a decreasing value may be observed, whereas 2000 and 2004 show substantial increases. In even starker contrast to expected developments, we note increasing rather than decreasing levels of legitimacy for democratic input in the UK discourse in three out of the four years of growing European integration (1999, 2004 and 2007). Only in 2003, there is a slight decrease. In conclusion, the empirical evidence on legitimacy levels of democratic input criteria also contradicts the expectation of a negative influence of internationalization on the legitimacy of the democratic nation state.

Internationalization frames

The final set of hypotheses addresses the discursive context in which the legitimacy of the nation state is assessed. As suggested above, to have a plausible discursive effect the salience of internationalization in legitimacy-related discourses must be high and growing. We expect this to be the case, especially concerning references to European integration (H3a).

Figure 9.4 indicates the share of legitimation statements made in the context of internationalization frames across countries and over time. It reveals,

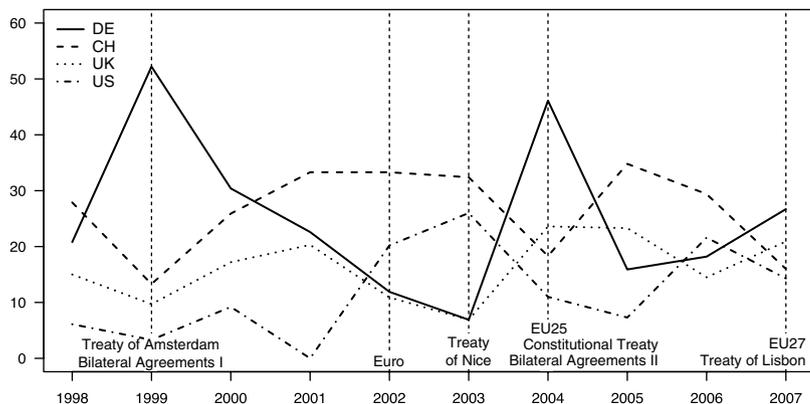


Figure 9.4 Shares of internationalization frames over time (%)

first of all, that internationalization frames indeed play more than a negligible role in all four countries. Although they are not the dominant frames in national legitimization discourses, references to internationalization feature rather prominently in these discourses, quite independently from the degree to which the countries are integrated into the EU.

Hence there is what might be called ‘smoking gun’ evidence that internationalization has an impact on legitimization discourses despite the fact that the first two internationalization-related hypotheses had to be rejected. In fact, this observation helps us to understand much better why there is no erosion of legitimacy levels. While our data demonstrate that internationalization processes are a feature of national legitimization discourses, internationalization is rarely the dominant frame when the legitimacy of the four democracies examined is assessed by their media publics. In contrast to the implication of the erosion hypothesis, internationalization is simply not the most prominent lens through which the legitimacy of the democratic nation state is evaluated.

As regards the relative differences between countries, the empirical evidence on the aggregate share of internationalization frames over the entire period of analysis is not quite in line with our theoretical expectations. While the German and US discourses rank as expected, the ranks of Switzerland and the United Kingdom do not match our initial expectations. With a share of more than one quarter of all relevant statements (25.8 per cent), internationalization frames are most frequent in the German discourse. This is compatible with the strong internationalization of the German polity. By contrast, in the US discourse internationalization frames are only half as frequent (13.3 per cent). The Swiss legitimization discourse, however, does not match the theoretical expectations. Although as a non-EU member state Switzerland

is less politically internationalized than Germany and the United Kingdom, its legitimation discourse features a share of internationalization frames (25.2 per cent) that is similar to the German discourse and considerably higher than in the UK discourse. Contrary to theoretical expectations, the results for the UK discourse (16.2 per cent) are more similar to those for the US than for the German discourse. In sum, internationalization frames play a more important role in the two continental European countries of Switzerland and Germany, and are less frequent in the two Anglo-Saxon countries.

This mixed outcome with respect to our hypothesis is further illustrated by developments over time. Contrary to our theoretical expectations, Figure 9.4 reveals country-specific cyclical developments that do not seem to be driven by advancing internationalization. These fluctuations are most pronounced in the German discourse where our data show, on the one hand, peaks in 1999 and 2004, years in which internationalization frames dominate the legitimation discourse, and, on the other, troughs especially in 2002 and 2003, when the frequency of internationalization frames shrinks to approximately ten per cent. Although these cyclical development patterns are weaker in the other three countries, where the difference between the absolute highs and the absolute lows is less than half that of the German case, all four countries follow distinct trajectories that do not match the process of European integration, with peaks and troughs occurring at different points in time. Our data on the German discourse are in line with the theoretical expectations for 1999 and 2004: Steps towards integration are accompanied by the highest shares of internationalization frames. However, we also note a decrease to the second lowest and lowest share in 2002 and 2003. Conversely, the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007 is only accompanied by marginal increases to an average value. In particular, the results for 2002 and 2003 contradict our expectations.

Results are equally mixed for the UK discourse, where we find increasing shares of internationalization frames in 2004 and 2007, but a decrease to the second lowest and lowest value in 1999 and 2003. Similarly ambivalent results obtain for Switzerland, because we find shares decreasing to below-average values in 1999 and 2004, and shares increasing to above-average values in 2000 and 2005. This could indicate that it is not so much the signing of international treaties such as Bilaterals I and II in 1999 and 2004 but rather their ratification through referenda in 2000 and 2005 that contributes to the stronger attention of legitimation discourses to processes of internationalization.

We now turn to our final hypothesis (H3b) and ask whether the presence of internationalization frames negatively affects the legitimacy levels of the democratic nation state. According to this hypothesis, we do not necessarily observe a general erosion of legitimacy levels, but legitimation statements framed in the context of internationalization should display lower levels of legitimacy than differently framed statements. To test the hypothesis, we

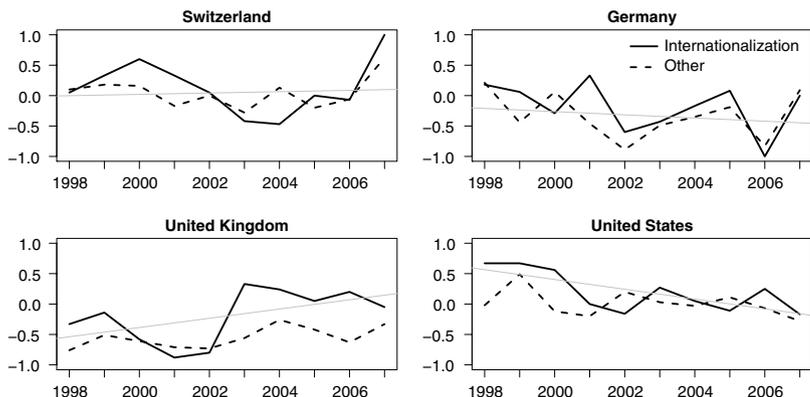


Figure 9.5 Legitimacy levels of internationalization frames per country over time

calculated legitimacy levels for statements made in the context of the internationalization frame and for all other statements.

Figure 9.5 plots the results for each country and over time. One observation that immediately strikes the eye confirms our previous results for developments over time: Legitimacy levels follow nationally distinct trajectories rather than a uniform downward trend. Moreover, levels of legitimacy for statements with and without the internationalization frame are quite similar. Thus, our hypothesis that legitimation statements made in the context of internationalization frames will have lower levels of legitimacy (H3a) is not confirmed by the data. The overall levels of legitimacy for statements linked with the internationalization frame are even higher than for other statements in Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States – in Switzerland, aggregate levels are almost indistinguishable. Higher levels of legitimacy for statements made in the internationalization frame are even a quasi-permanent feature of all four discourses.

This result is most pronounced in the United Kingdom, where it is the case in eight of the ten selected years, including the four decisive years of European integration (1999, 2003, 2004 and 2007). In Germany and the United States, legitimation statements framed in the context of internationalization display a higher level of legitimacy in seven of the ten years, and in Switzerland this is still the case in six years. In the German discourse, and except for 2003 and 2007, when levels of legitimacy for both groups of statements are almost similar, the years in which European integration advanced (1999, 2002 and 2004) are marked by higher levels of legitimacy for evaluations made through the lens of internationalization. In Switzerland, the results are more mixed, because in 1999, 2000 and 2005 legitimacy levels for statements linked with the internationalization frame are higher than

for other statements, whereas it is the other way round in 2004, when the respective level of legitimacy falls to the lowest value in the analysed time period. In short, the empirical evidence shows that legitimization statements framed in an internationalization context, though generally not more positive, tend to increase rather than decrease the level of legitimacy in the four democracies. Hence the hypothesis that internationalization as a discursive frame impacts negatively on the legitimacy of the democratic nation state cannot be confirmed based on our data.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we tested empirically the frequently made claim that internationalization processes erode the legitimacy of the democratic nation state. In the light of our empirical evidence on national legitimization discourses, this claim cannot be confirmed. In our four established, stable democracies, levels of legitimacy fluctuated considerably during the ten-year period between 1998 and 2007, but we do not observe a consistent downward trend. Moreover, the fluctuations do not correspond to the varying degrees of internationalization of the four countries examined. However, this result does not mean that internationalization is irrelevant for public legitimacy assessments. In our four countries, between one-seventh (US) and one quarter (DE and CH) of all legitimization statements are made together with an explicit reference to internationalization processes. Thus internationalization and especially Europeanization are present in public discourses about the legitimacy of national political orders. Actors explicitly refer to the deepening of European integration and other processes of internationalization, but this does not translate into lower legitimacy levels of the democratic nation state. Rather, our findings suggest that the nation state may even regain legitimacy when it is assessed with a view to the consequences of internationalization. This confirms earlier findings by Frank Nullmeier and his collaborators (2010) that international organizations and especially the EU enjoy much less legitimacy than the democratic nation state, and that their legitimacy levels are often even critically low.

Our results thus indicate that the notion of an automatic link between processes of internationalization or European integration and the discursive evaluation of a political system's legitimacy is theoretically questionable and not corroborated by empirical evidence. The discursive construction of legitimacy does not simply mirror external macro processes. Actors participating in legitimization discourses consciously reflect on processes of internationalization. They evaluate how internationalization or Europeanization affects their notion of the legitimacy of the democratic nation state, its principles and its institutions – and their evaluation is not always negative.

Moreover, legitimization discourses are influenced by numerous factors. Elsewhere we have shown that the overall configuration of national

legitimation discourses is strongly influenced by (a) the institutional design of political systems and (b) the idiosyncrasies of the media systems (Haunss and Schneider 2013). The varying legitimacy levels of different national public spheres are, for instance, strongly influenced by whether or not evaluative statements by journalists are limited to the editorial pages and by the degree to which government representatives – after all, the main legitimizers – are given voice in the quality press.

The fluctuation of legitimacy levels over time is also event-driven. In the United States, for example, the impeachment against President Clinton and the Iraq War shaped the debate to a large extent, and similarly different short-term policy issues influenced legitimation discourses in the other three countries. Legitimation discourses are thus characterized by what we have called ‘legitimacy attention cycles’ (Schneider et al. 2010, 63). The media’s limited attention span has the effect that issues relating to the legitimacy of political orders, their institutions and values typically remain in the focus of public debate for no more than a limited period of time.

These results do not contradict the theoretical argument that internationalization processes seriously impede the ability of citizens and their elected representatives to control social processes that directly affect their daily lives. Supranational technocratic decision-making without democratic control by the people who are affected by these decisions – like the policy prescriptions of the Troika in the euro crisis – are highly problematic developments. However, the translation of these developments into evaluations of national political systems is not automatic, but rather follows its own logic of discursive interaction.

Notes

- 1 Based on the mean value of the KOF index on globalization for the 1998–2007 period, Singapore is the only non-OECD country among the 25 most internationalized countries. On the 100-point scale of the KOF index the mean values of our four countries are 88.9 (Switzerland/CH), 86.3 (Germany/DE), 81.4 (United Kingdom/UK) and 76.2 (United States/US), with a variation over our ten-year period of less than five points for each of the four countries.
- 2 Patton (2002) describes this method as the selection of those information-rich cases that intensely display the phenomena of interest.
- 3 The time windows are ‘anchored’ by the following events: the parliamentary debate on the so-called annual objectives (*Jahresziele*, CH), the Chancellor’s government declaration in the annual budget debate (DE), the Speech from the Throne (UK) and the State of the Union address (US).