

UN SECURITY COUNCIL NON-PERMANENT MEMBERSHIP: EQUITABLE  
DISTRIBUTION FOR EQUITABLE REPRESENTATION?

Brian Lai

Vanessa A. Lefler  
University of Iowa

## ABSTRACT:

Does descriptive representation based on regional affiliation produce substantive representation for states within the United Nations Security Council? While calls for reform of the UNSC consistently reference the need for better representation, little research has explored whether greater descriptive representation actually produces a corresponding level of substantive representation in the UNSC. This paper explores this question by examining the American politics literature on the link between descriptive and substantive representation. It then applies this to the international level. Finally, whether descriptive representation based on region or identity produces substantive representation in the UNSC is explored empirically by comparing the voting similarity in the UN General Assembly as a proxy for similar preferences, a precursor for substantive representation. The results show that while states in regions do tend to have higher patterns of vote similarity, this effect is not present when comparing the states voted onto the UNSC with states in their region.

Despite nearly two decades of failure, attention has turned again to the reform of the United Nations Security (UNSC). On the heels of President Obama's endorsement of Japan and India for permanent membership,<sup>1</sup> an enlivened Council consisting of other permanent seat contenders – Brazil, Germany, South Africa, and Nigeria – promises to provide a glimpse of how a reformed Council might react to emergent threats to international peace and security.<sup>2</sup> More generally, proponents of Security Council reform hope that new progress may be made toward making the Council reflect the political realities of the modern era as it is generally perceived that the current composition of the Council is geographically unbalanced and not reflective of the current distribution of power.<sup>3</sup> The primary focus of these calls has been to make the membership and composition of the Council more “credible, effective, and representative.”<sup>4</sup> The means for producing representation, however, has been vaguely defined. One of many guiding principles in reform discussions reinforces the assurance of “equitable geographical distribution” of seats in the Council as set forth in the Charter and presently executed through regionally nominated slates of candidates to the UNSC membership.<sup>5</sup> But it remains a question whether “equitable geographical distribution” of seats in the UNSC fosters comparable, substantive representation of the UN's membership.

Elected positions on international organization (IGO) executive bodies are not unique to the Security Council, and petitions to improve the inclusion of underrepresented states are

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Washington Post*, 08 November 2010, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/11/08/AR2010110800495\\_2.html?sid=ST2010110402773](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/11/08/AR2010110800495_2.html?sid=ST2010110402773).

<sup>2</sup> “UN Security Council Elections” 2009; *Reuters*, 05 January 2011, <http://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFTRE7042DP20110105>; “New UN Council to Reflect 21st Century,” *Associated Press*, 05 January 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Prantl 2005; Voeten 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Martin and Pigott 1993, 6.

<sup>5</sup> Working Group Report A/63/47 2009; UN Charter, Chapter V, Article 23.

similarly made for the executive boards of the IMF and the World Bank.<sup>6</sup> In line with the calls to make IGO executive bodies, particularly the United Nations Security Council, more “representative,” we investigate the descriptively representative structure of non-permanent member elections and its impact on substantive representation. The continuing adherence to the regional representation system poses the question whether “equitable geographical distribution” leads to the election of non-permanent members that align with the policy orientations of their regions. Analyzing whether UNSC members substantively represent their respective regions allows us to better understand whether adding permanent members on the basis of region will actually lead to better representation. Further, if descriptive, geographic representation according to continental divides does not produce a substantively representative Council, what allocation strategy might?

The connections between descriptive and substantive representation have been of enduring interest to scholars in American and minority politics.<sup>7</sup> Co-ethnic identification and ward-based (as opposed to at-large) electoral rules improve policy alignments between elected officials and their minority constituents.<sup>8</sup> With respect to the Security Council, we expect that if geographic regions are relevant identities for Member States, then the election of non-permanent members to the Council according to those groupings should lead to the substantive representation of those interests in Council policy. Additionally, the substantive representation of Member States within the region should be better than would be produced if elections were held at-large among the entire UN membership because regional representatives are able to focus more closely on the local preferences necessary for nomination to the UNSC than on the concerns of the total population of Member States.

---

<sup>6</sup> Woods 2001; Cogan 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Pitkin 1972; Owens 2005; Preuhs 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Pantoja and Segura 2003; Meier, Juenke, Wrinkle, and Polinard 2005; Owens 2005; Preuhs 2006.

To evaluate the connection between descriptive and substantive representation in non-permanent membership on the UN Security Council, we use data on UN General Assembly (UNGA) voting similarity to test whether 1) regional groups have a policy identity expressed through similar voting records and 2) whether UNSC members – permanent or elected, non-permanent members – are representative and actually have more similar voting records with other states in their region. If descriptive representation based on “equitable geographical distribution” leads to substantive representation, we should expect that states elected to the Security Council would align with their regional cohort on policy in the General Assembly.

The concept of elected, political representation in international organizations is not unfamiliar to those who study the European Parliament, for example. Unlike the European Parliament, however, the UN Security Council is made up states who are selected by other nations to represent the security interests of the organization. The precedent of regional representation on the Security Council carries through a number of UN subsidiary organs, such as ECOSOC, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the International Court of Justice and similar semi-elected executive bodies control the World Bank and the IMF. At a time when reform questions have returned to the foreground, it is important to consider what representation means in the context of the Security Council and how well a regional system aligns with those values. Evidence from descriptive and substantive representation research in American politics demonstrates that achieving representative institutions is often complex and conditional. Translating these concerns to the international context of the UN does little to improve the picture. We find that states tend to vote similarly to others in their region and that regional representatives to the UNSC tend to align better with their co-regional cohorts than other members of the Council. But, these effects are not substantively large and the benefit of

having a representative from one's region is limited to only a few, close votes. In as much as the reform debate is "much more about form rather than substance,"<sup>9</sup> our research suggests that calls for reform should be cautious in pursuing a goal of equitable representation through equitable geographic distribution of seats.

## 1. EQUITABLE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION...

(Semi-)elected executive bodies are not an uncommon feature of large international organizations, though the appointment processes differ across institutions. For example, the Board of Executive Directors for the World Bank consists of five seats held directly by members with the greatest investments in the institution and twenty seats elected by the larger membership. These elected seats in the World Bank directorate are often contested through a number of different "schedules" or constituencies based on economic compatibilities.<sup>10</sup> The basis for the current configuration of non-permanent membership in the Security Council, as outlined in Article 23 of the UN Charter, differs from this less formal approach. According to the Charter, non-permanent members are elected to two-year terms based,

... in the first instance to the contribution of Members of the United Nations to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the other purposes of the Organization, and also to the equitable geographical distribution.<sup>11</sup>

Despite its secondary status to the collective security objectives of the UNSC's composition, the "equitable geographical distribution" clause has been a focus of Security Council structure since the drafting of the UN Charter, tied to the guarantee of sovereign equality among states.<sup>12</sup>

Accordingly, Member States should, as legally equal entities, expect a reasonably equal chance

---

<sup>9</sup> Prantl 2005, 586.

<sup>10</sup> Woods 2001; IBRD Articles of Agreement 1989, Article V.4.

<sup>11</sup> "Chapter V: The Security Council," Article 23(1).

<sup>12</sup> Agam 1999; Hurd 2002.

to serve on the Council and be instrumental in policy-making.<sup>13</sup> This expectation led to Security Council seat allocations according to regional groups.<sup>14</sup> The earliest arrangements for geographic representation were informal but were incrementally institutionalized as membership increased and Cold War hostilities became more entrenched. Ultimately, this secondary facet of representation became a principle according to which the Security Council and other UN organs would represent the general membership in elected bodies (e.g., ECOSOC, the Secretariat, and the Committee on Conferences).<sup>15</sup> Alexander Thompson argues that the diverse, regional focus of these executive bodies improves the institution's representativeness and credibility, as the group strives to develop policy from a diverse set of preferences.<sup>16</sup>

The first allocations based on geographic representation were designed according to an amicable (though not unproblematic) "Gentlemen's Agreement" among the Permanent Members; the first non-permanent members of the Security Council were selected from the following groups:

- Two seats for Latin America,
- One seat for Western Europe,
- One seat for the British Commonwealth,
- One seat for the Near and Far East,
- One seat for the "Russian Camp."<sup>17</sup>

This 1945 formula for allocating seats largely remained in place until 1965 when formal changes were made to the size of the Security Council.

---

<sup>13</sup> Russett, et al. 1996.

<sup>14</sup> Daws 1999.

<sup>15</sup> Daws 1999; Malone 2000; Cogan 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Thompson 2006.

<sup>17</sup> Daws 1999.

From 1945 to 1965 there was a sizable increase in membership as decolonization progressed. Membership grew from 51 members to 117 members (120 percent increase), the majority of which were from Africa and Asia. Correspondingly, in 1965 the Council was expanded to fifteen members (from eleven – a 36% increase), increasing the number of non-permanent members from six to ten. Seats were allocated according to the new regional groupings:

- Five seats for Africa and Asia (3 – Africa, 2 – Asia),
- Two seats for Latin America and the Caribbean,
- One seat for Eastern Europe,
- Two seats for the Western European and Others group.<sup>18</sup>

Since 1965, the composition of the Security Council has gone unchanged.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, UN membership has grown 64 percent (117 members to 192), creating new concerns about the UN's capacity to respond to international crises. Two significant deficiencies in particular have been brought forward as evidence of the Council's lack of legitimacy and have motivated calls for reform: the Council's geographic imbalance and flagged response to changes in the distribution of power.<sup>20</sup> Including the United States, Great Britain, and France, and the two non-permanent Western European and Others group (WEOG) seats, Western states make up one-third of the Security Council while these states only make up 14 percent of the United Nations membership. No other regional grouping is as over-represented on the Security Council as the WEOG. Eastern Europe is almost perfectly represented with respect to regional proportionality. With one seat, plus the Russian Federation, Eastern Europe makes up 13 percent of the Council while accounting for 12 percent of the Member States. All of the other regions are substantially

---

<sup>18</sup> Daws 1999; Malone 2000.

<sup>19</sup> GA Res. 2758(XXVI) 1971; Blum 1992.

<sup>20</sup> Prantl 2005.

under-represented in comparison to their membership: Africa, with three seats, makes up 20 percent of the Council, yet 27 percent of the total membership. Asia, including China, has three seats, making its representation equivalent to Africa's.<sup>21</sup> And, the Latin American and Caribbean group makes up 17 percent of the membership while only occupying 13 percent of the seats in the Council.

The other deficiency in the representativeness of the UNSC comes from the institutions' retention of an out-dated political order. Japan and Germany have both made strong campaigns for their candidacy as permanent members of the Security Council on the basis of their increased economic relevance. Germany and Japan each contribute more to the UN budget than every other Permanent Member, except the United States.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, as the largest democratic nation in the world, India has made claims to permanent status on the Council, along with Brazil, South Africa, Nigeria, and Egypt – regional powers who argue that their presence is necessary if the UN is to continue to be relevant in coming years.<sup>23</sup>

## 2. ... TO EQUITABLE GEOGRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION

Despite these changes in UN membership, the UNSC continues to operate – and indeed makes more frequent and controversial decisions – under the political realities of an unrepresentative international order.<sup>24</sup> Yet, calls to reform the Council are not explicit about what representation in the Security Council ought to look like. The Open-Ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security

---

<sup>21</sup> The African and Asian group is technically one electoral grouping, but the two regions divide their seats (three for the African members and two for the Asian members) and act mostly autonomously. They occasionally coordinate to allocate a seat to an Arab state (Daws 1999; Malone 2000).

<sup>22</sup> Russett, et al 1996; Drifte 1998; Fassbender 2004; *Reuters*, 05 January 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Wallensteen 1994; Daws 1997; Malik 2003.

<sup>24</sup> Diehl, Reifschneider, and Hensel 1996.

Council, established in 1993, set forth several guiding principles for the composition of a Security Council that “results in a more democratic, inclusive, equitably representative, transparent, effective and accountable body.” In part, these principles include:

- “Respect for the sovereign equality of Member States,”
- “Ensuring equitable geographic distribution,” and
- “Increasing opportunity for Member States to serve on the Security Council, particularly for groups which have been traditionally underrepresented, such as small and medium states, and Africa.”<sup>25</sup>

The appeal to both “equitable geographic representation” and better inclusion of “small and medium” states opens to interpretation whether it is more important that the Council *looks* like the larger UN membership or that representatives on the Council prefer *policies* that align with their electoral cohorts. Can adherence to regional electoral groupings achieve both?

## 2.1 Theories of Representation: Descriptive and Substantive

In significant ways, the debate over the representativeness of the Security Council may be linked to research on descriptive and substantive representation that are more prevalent in American and minority politics research. Descriptive representation defines an elected body's sharing identifying characteristics with the population.<sup>26</sup> This is usually specified as a dyadic relationship between an elected official and his or her constituents. Factors that matter are usually easily observed and are attributed to an identity such as ethnicity, race, or gender. Central to descriptive representation is the degree to which the representative *looks* like the electorate on

---

<sup>25</sup> Working Group Report A/63/47 2009, 5.

<sup>26</sup> Pitkin 1972.

the basis of these attributes.<sup>27</sup> In the United Nations, members are descriptively represented in the Security Council according to their geographic region: African states are represented by other African states, Latin American and Caribbean states are represented by other Latin American and Caribbean states, etc. A critical requirement of descriptive representation is that the constituents identify with a particular descriptor (in this case, geography) and find it to be a salient part of their identity.<sup>28</sup> The continued adherence to the regional grouping system of UNSC seat allocation may be a signal that members of the United Nations find such divisions politically relevant.

Substantive representation describes how well the policies produced by an elected body align with the electorate's interests.<sup>29</sup> A substantively representative institution adopts policies that advance the interests of its constituents, and an official who substantively represents his or her district acts in alignment with his or her constituents' preferences. In the context of the United Nations, we would expect that in a substantively representative Security Council, Member States elected to the UNSC would align with other Members in their regional cohort on policy.

Though they are distinct concepts, descriptive representation and substantive representation are intimately linked as scholars investigate whether descriptive representation leads to substantive representation. The primary argument is that substantive representation improves when the elected body looks more like the electorate—that is, when it is descriptively representative. In American politics, special attention is paid to minority representatives' voting records on welfare or education spending and whether they align with their co-ethnic

---

<sup>27</sup> Owens 2005.

<sup>28</sup> Pantoja and Segura 2003.

<sup>29</sup> Pitkin 1972.

constituents who demand more of these services.<sup>30</sup> In general, the conclusions from this research are mixed, but broadly find that descriptive representation leads to substantive representation under certain circumstances. When an elected body is small, such as a school board or city council, a nominal increase in descriptive representation leads to improvements in substantive representation for minorities. In larger, more professionalized bodies, like state and national legislatures, substantive representation only improves when minority representatives are incorporated into the hierarchy and given leadership positions.<sup>31</sup> These effects are further conditioned on electoral rules. Kenneth Meier, Eric Juenke, Robert Wrinkle, and J.L. Polinard find that ward-based election rules that break up the population into districts result in better substantive representation than at-large rules. In any given district, candidates appeal to the median voter in order to win a majority. Ward-based districts produce better substantive representation because wards are more likely to have populations that have significant minority populations that bring candidates to those concerns.<sup>32</sup>

## 2.2 Descriptive and Substantive Representation on the UNSC

While it is evident that the UNSC is descriptively unrepresentative, the motivation for reform comes from the belief that the current composition of the Security Council decreases its substantive representation. According to the reform logic, if the size of regional delegations were increased, then the Security Council would adopt policy that more closely matched the interests of the membership at-large. Members in the southern hemisphere, for example, note that a large share of the peacekeeping operations that the Security Council approves are within their

---

<sup>30</sup> Owens 2005.

<sup>31</sup> Preuhs 2006.

<sup>32</sup> Meier et al. 2005.

geographic sphere.<sup>33</sup> Better representation within these regions would improve decision-making on these local issues. Regional groupings that act as electoral districts should – following the conclusions reached in American politics – improve substantive representation of disadvantaged groups, such as African Member States, by bringing co-regional members closer together over policy preferences. That Member States adhere to the regional groupings as the primary form of representation suggests that geographic location is a sufficient basis for descriptive representation. Again, the primary assumption of this argument is that geographic proximity creates similar interests amongst states. States within the same region may share similar concerns and similar preferences over international policies. These shared preferences may arise from similar historical experiences with states from outside of their region, higher levels of interaction compared with states from outside of their region, and potentially the development of institutions that formalize cooperation over similar interests within a region.

Also, states seeking to be elected and re-elected to the UNSC are likely to be sensitive to the needs of their region. As David Malone details, candidates are highly strategic in deciding when to run for a seat on the Council because running is often costly as candidates court delegations with promises, side-payments, and bribes.<sup>34</sup> Further, states that seek to have multiple appointments to the Security Council will have to demonstrate their commitment to substantive, collective interests. This, incidentally, produces candidates that often meet both of the Charter's UNSC membership requirements: capability to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security and regional representation.<sup>35</sup> The material and political incentives for running repeatedly may induce states to more closely match the preferences of the region in order to get repeated nominations—making regional representation a salient identity for

---

<sup>33</sup> Caron 1993; Bourantonis 1998.

<sup>34</sup> Malone 2000; Hurd 2008.

<sup>35</sup> Agam 1999.

substantive policy positions. From this, we should expect that descriptive representation according to geographic groupings supports substantive representation by the elected non-permanent member.

*Hypothesis 1: States within the same regional grouping are more likely to have similar policy preferences than two states from different regional groupings.*

*Hypothesis 2: A non-permanent UNSC member is more likely to have similar policy preferences to another member of its regional grouping than an external UNSC member (permanent or non-permanent) is with another member not of the same regional grouping.*

### 3. LIMITS ON SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION

#### 3.1 Structural Limitations and Strategic Incentives

Institutional features of the non-permanent member election process, such as consistently-defined contest boundaries, ought to improve substantive representation of the UN general membership in the Security Council. Yet, other evidence from the literature warrants some caution. Robert Pruehs argues that the presence of minority representatives, alone, does not lead to substantive representation of minorities in legislative bodies.<sup>36</sup> Adrian Pantoja and Gary Segura validate this theory and show that minority representatives need to be incorporated into the elected body's leadership structure in order to effect policy that favors their co-ethnic interests.<sup>37</sup> With respect to representation on the Security Council, incorporation is not possible because of term limits. Furthermore, strategic incentives among the permanent members reduce

---

<sup>36</sup> Pruehs 2006.

<sup>37</sup> Pantoja and Segura 2003.

non-permanent members' influence.<sup>38</sup> Despite the necessity of their consent in passing resolutions,<sup>39</sup> regional representatives may not have the chance to gain enough experience to counteract pressures from the Council's veto-holding powers.<sup>40</sup>

Rules that allow members to introduce agenda items and be present for debate may also diminish non-permanent members' roles as regional representatives. Any member of the United Nations or informal group may request that an item of concern be placed on the Council's agenda.<sup>41</sup> UNSC members may also extend invitations to outside members to participate in the Council's proceedings – and in nearly one-third of all Council meetings, such invitations are extended. From this, Ian Hurd suggests that a regional representative may be unnecessary from members' points-of-view.<sup>42</sup> Because Member States can otherwise directly convey their interests, the need for substantive representation through an elected, executive body decreases.

A second reason why regional geographic distribution may not provide a basis for descriptive and substantive representation is that Member States may not view their role on the Security Council as being representative of any interests other than their own.<sup>43</sup> There are substantial material and symbolic benefits to membership on the Security Council, which makes competition for the comparatively few seats costly and intense.<sup>44</sup> Ilyana Kuziemko and Eric Werker show that during their tenure, states' foreign aid receipts from the United Nations, the United States and UNICEF (a U.S.-controlled arm of the UN) increase, providing material incentives for states to constantly seek election to the Security Council.<sup>45</sup> Further, voting in the

---

<sup>38</sup> Voeten 2005.

<sup>39</sup> Thompson 2006.

<sup>40</sup> Voeten 2001; Voeten 2004; Hurd 2002; Bueno de Mesquita and Smith 2010.

<sup>41</sup> Hurd 2002; Prantl 2005.

<sup>42</sup> Hurd 2002.

<sup>43</sup> Hurd 2008.

<sup>44</sup> Malone 2000.

<sup>45</sup> Kuziemko and Werker 2006; but see also Bueno de Mesquita and Smith 2010.

Security Council is highly strategic and non-permanent members may be further courted by Permanent Members attempting to secure votes.<sup>46</sup>

Rather than a devotion to principle, adherence to regional allocation of seats may be a means to improve individual chances of election to the Security Council. There are 33 members of the Latin American and Caribbean group, which has two seats on the Security Council. In any given year, this gives a member of the Latin American and Caribbean group a one in 31 chance of being elected (approximately 3.2 percent). Compared to the five in 177 chance of being elected if the system were at-large (approximately 2.8 percent), the state seeking election from the regional group has a slightly better probability of being seated, without taking into the consideration the norms of nominating clean slates of candidates, which give regional groupings more control over the election process.<sup>47</sup> Given the electoral advantages of regional groupings, it may be reasonable to expect that Members will continue to advocate reform on the basis of regional groupings while increases in Security Council membership from reforms improve their probability of serving on the Council. If this is the case, we should not expect there to be a relationship between descriptive and substantive representation in non-permanent member selection.

### 3.2 Geographical Salience and International Prestige

The above critiques suggest that states from the same region may not have similar interests, but another component of the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation is the salience of the identity represented. While some structural rules may decrease representation of regional interests in the UNSC, if geographic region is not a relevant

---

<sup>46</sup> Voeten 2007.

<sup>47</sup> Malone 2000; "UN Security Council Elections" 2009.

source of identity, we should not expect there to be a relationship between the policy preferences of the regional representative and the region's members, all else equal. One reason why geographic region may not be a relevant source of identity that produces descriptive (and subsequently substantive) representation is that geographic regions are not strong political identities and that states may identify more with cohesive caucusing groups within the General Assembly (UNGA).<sup>48</sup> David Bearce and Stacy Bondanella suggest that this may be especially relevant in the UN because these voting blocs can deter the convergence of preferences between bloc members and non-bloc members.<sup>49</sup> For example, a non-permanent candidate to the Council may seek to represent other coalitions such as the Non-Aligned Movement or the Group of 77 – groups that are active in lobbying and drafting resolutions and that serve as important veto groups in a measure's approval in the UNGA. Thus, while states may be elected to the Security Council from regional groupings, non-permanent members of the UNSC may actually substantively represent constituencies outside their region. Representation of groups outside of one's own constituency (in this case region) in order to build broader coalitions is often referred to as surrogate representation. This type of representation is potentially likely in the UNSC because states in different regions with similar political or economic situations may have more in common with each other than states in the same region that may have vastly different domestic conditions. Research on the determinants of similarity in UN General Assembly voting have found support for this idea, noting that the effect of differences in development level between two states strongly influences UNGA voting patterns.<sup>50</sup> This research suggests that similarity in the status of a state may be an important factor in determining which states will represent another's substantive interests. Therefore, it may be reasonable to expect the alternative

---

<sup>48</sup> Schreuer 1995; Bourantonis 1998; Forman and Greene 2004.

<sup>49</sup> Bearce and Bondanella 2007.

<sup>50</sup> Bearce and Bondanella 2007; Lai and Morey 2006.

hypothesis that non-permanent members of the Council are more likely to have similar preferences with other states that are politically or economically similar to them than they are to align with members of their geographic regions.

*Hypothesis 3: Members of the Security Council are more likely to have similar policy preferences with states that are politically or economically similar to them.*

If Member States focus more on surrogate representation than descriptive representation based on geographical region, then reforms that increase membership according to the current regional groupings may not produce the desired effect of improved representation on the Security Council.

#### 4. RESEARCH DESIGN

To test whether descriptive representation translates into substantive representation, this paper uses two different sets of empirical analyses. For both, substantive representation is measured by examining similarity in UN General Assembly votes. The analyses differ based on the sets of states studied. For the first set, all pairs of states are examined to determine whether regional affiliation significantly influences similarity in UNGA voting patterns, while the second looks only at pairs of states where the first state is a UN Security Council Member. The former data consists of all non-directed dyads from 1966-1996, while the latter is directed dyads from 1966-1996 where the first country in each dyad is limited to a UN Security Council Member. For example, only the US, UK, France, China/Taiwan, and Russia are in the directed dyad data as the first country for the whole time period under study because they are permanent members. Other countries enter and exit depending on when they are elected and some countries are never the first country in the data. Data on UN Security Council Members is from the UN's website. We

start the analysis in 1966 because that is the year that the current regional system was implemented.

As discussed, the dependent variable for all empirical analysis is similarity between two states' UNGA voting record. This is a useful measure of substantive representation for a few reasons. First, while actual voting in the Security Council is often strategically motivated, UNGA voting is more likely to express true state preferences because of the lack of action associated with UNGA votes. Thus, these votes are a good way to determine state preferences over particular issues. Second, similarity, especially for the directed dyad analysis (e.g. UNSC-all states), allows for an examination of whether UNSC members actually share the same preferences over issues as other members. While we do not know how all states would vote on UNSC matters (nor do we know how UNSC members would vote on all UNSC matters since not all of these come to a vote), we do know how they did vote on specific issues in the General Assembly, and more importantly, we also know how other states voted, allowing us to determine whether the representatives have the same preferences over issues as their constituents. Finally, this measure provides a very direct test of substantive representation by analyzing whether two states have similar preferences over issues and more importantly whether UNSC members have similar preferences as their constituents. While most measures of substantive representation look at legislative behavior unique to a particular identity (e.g. do female legislators vote more for bills on women than male legislators), similarity of preferences looks at whether a representative and constituent actually share the same views over issues as opposed to whether a representative voted for a particular issue, which is likely to be influenced by other legislative dynamics. While the similarity variable does not measure whether substantive representation is carried out in terms of Security Council action, it does allow us to determine at a more basic level what factors

influence when UNSC representatives have the same interests as non-UNSC members, a crucial first step for these UNSC representatives to then pursue actual representation through policy.

This paper uses Signorino and Ritter's<sup>51</sup> S score to measure similarity in votes over a UN session, which is applied to a particular year. The S score has been used in other research on UNGA votes<sup>52</sup> and provides a more sophisticated spatial representation of vote similarity than simple agreement. Specifically, it allows abstentions to be considered less of a dissent than voting the opposite of a state. So for agreement measures, if state A votes yes, State B votes no, and State C abstains, B and C are treated as being equally in disagreement with A. The S measure allows C's abstention to be interpreted as less of a disagreement with A than B.

The primary independent variables used to test hypotheses 1 and 2 measure descriptive representation between two states. These variables are meant to capture the degree of descriptive similarity between pairs of states. The first is whether the two states are in the same UN Security Council voting region. As previously discussed, for purposes of voting for non-permanent members, states are divided into regional groupings. If descriptive representation produces substantive representation, those voted to the Security Council from a particular region should share the same preferences as other states in the region. So, being part of a region (a descriptive identity) should produce similar preferences over issues (the dependent variable) leading to advocacy in the UNSC on behalf of the region's interests (substantive representation). Data on what states are in what regions is from the UN website. In general, countries' regional affiliations match those in the Correlates of War state numbering, though there are some exceptions. Specifically, Eastern and Western Europe are divided on primarily Cold War lines in the UN data. Also, advanced industrial democracies (with the exception of Asian ones) are placed with

---

<sup>51</sup> 1999.

<sup>52</sup> Bearce and Bondanella 2007; Lai and Morey 2006.

Western Europe (e.g. Israel, Australia, Canada, etc) as opposed to their geographic region. From this regional data, we produce four exclusive dichotomous variables. The first is whether two states in a dyad are in the same region and are not permanent UN Security Council members (US, UK, France, Russia, China/Taiwan<sup>53</sup>). The second is whether a dyad is composed of a permanent Security Council member and any state that is not a permanent UNSC member. The third is whether a dyad is composed of two permanent UNSC members. The fourth is whether a dyad is composed of two non-permanent members from different regions. This latter variable is the excluded category in all the empirical models. In the directed dyad models, an additional variable is included which is non-permanent UNSC member as state 1 and permanent UNSC member as state 2.

The next set of descriptive representation variables are based on sharing similar identity characteristics. Similar to the idea that women or minority legislators are likely to advance the agenda of their respective groups; states with similar identity characteristics might share the same preferences and thus advance the agenda of that identity group within the UN Security Council. Three sets of identity characteristics are analyzed: religion, ethnicity, and language. For each, a dichotomous variable is constructed which indicates whether a pair of states' highest percentage group is of the same religion, ethnicity, or linguistic group, producing three variables, one for each type of identity measure. Data is from Ellingsen.<sup>54</sup>

In addition to these measures of descriptive representation, several other variables are used to examine hypothesis 3. These are measures of substantive interests between pairs of states that should influence preference similarity especially in terms of UNGA voting. The first is the

---

<sup>53</sup> For part of the time period, Taiwan is the permanent member of the UN Security Council. Taiwan is coded as being a UNSC member from 1966-1971. China is coded as a UNSC member from 1972-1996.

<sup>54</sup> 2000.

joint regime type of a dyad. States with similar political systems are more likely to ally<sup>55</sup> and Erik Gartzke even argues that the lack of conflict between democracies may be driven by their shared preferences.<sup>56</sup> Looking at the dimensions of UN voting, some find that democracies are also more likely to vote together,<sup>57</sup> so two measures of political similarity are employed. The first is a simple measure of joint democracy which is 1 if both states have a Polity IV<sup>58</sup> score of 6 or greater and 0 otherwise. The second measure examines how far apart the two states are on the Polity scale. It is simply the absolute value of the difference between the two states' Polity IV scores with 0 indicating they share the same score and 20 indicating maximum difference.

The next measure is the similarity in development levels. Again, research examining UN votes has found that wealthier states tend to vote together<sup>59</sup> and recent research has begun to postulate a capitalist peace instead of a democratic peace.<sup>60</sup> Similar to regime type, states at similar levels of development are likely to have similar preferences over not only economic issues that might arise, but may view international politics in general through the lens of their economic class (e.g. the classic North South divide). Three measures are used to gauge similarity in economic interests. The first attempts to directly capture similarity in development levels. It is the natural log of the absolute difference between two state's GDP/capita. So a score of 0 indicates that both states have the same level of development and increasing positive values indicate a divergence in development level. The next measure examines how open the state's economy is to trade. Open economic states should have similar preferences given their shared interest in maintaining open international markets. This is again measured as the absolute

---

<sup>55</sup> Leeds 1999; Lai and Reiter 2000.

<sup>56</sup> 1998.

<sup>57</sup> Voeten 2001; Kim and Russett 1996.

<sup>58</sup> Marshall and Jaggers 2002.

<sup>59</sup> Voeten 2000; Kim and Russett 1996.

<sup>60</sup> Gartzke 2007.

difference between the two states' openness measures. Openness is measured as a state's total trade divided by its GDP. The final economic variable is the degree of trade dependence between the two states. High levels of trade and dependence may shape the preferences of states and align their interests given their intertwined economies. Unlike the other measures, this is not measured as the absolute difference; rather it is the lower of the two state's trade dependence score. Trade dependence is total trade between the two states divided by each state's GDP. This variable is measured as the lower of the two states' value as opposed to the absolute difference because similarity is likely to be based on how dependent the two state's economies are on each other. So two states that are not dependent on each other's economies (score of 0 for both) are not likely to have similar preferences because of this lack of trade dependence. Conversely, two states that are heavily dependent on each other are likely to have aligned preferences given how important one state's economy is for the others. Data for all three variables is from Gleditsch.<sup>61</sup>

In addition to economic similarity between states, this paper also controls for security similarity. First, a variable indicating whether two states are in an alliance together is included. Allies should have similar preferences given their shared security fates. This variable is coded 1 if the Correlates of War alliance data<sup>62</sup> indicates that had any type of alliance. A second variable examines the differences in power between two states. Similar to development level, states with similar levels of power are likely to have similar preferences. A state's level of power ought to influence what it can do internationally, which in turn is likely to structure their preferences over issues. More powerful states are likely to seek greater freedom and less restrictions given their advantage in unregulated interactions while less powerful states are likely to align together to bind these more powerful states. This variable is simply the relative capability difference

---

<sup>61</sup> 2002.

<sup>62</sup> Gibler and Sarkees 2004.

between the two states in a dyad, measured as the stronger states Combined Indicator of National Capabilities (CINC) score from the COW material capabilities data<sup>63</sup> divided by the sum of the two states' CINC score, producing a score of .5 to 1, with .5 indicating parity and 1 indicating complete disparity. A third measure is based on whether two states share a common international foe. States that share a common source of conflict may share preferences either because their disagreement with the same state indicates a shared view of international politics or their shared disagreement leads them to align on issues against the common foe (e.g. enemy of my enemy). This variable is coded as the number of shared militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) as coded by the COW MID data<sup>64</sup> for the two states against a shared opponent. A fourth variable is simply whether the two states experienced a MID in the year prior to the measure of the dependent variable. Again, similar to the previous variable, a MID might indicate divergent preferences that led to the MID or the MID may cause states to diverge over an issue because of their shared security concerns about the other side. A final set of variables is to control for Cold War alignments. One variable is whether a pair of states is aligned with the US. They do not need to be aligned with each other, but they need to share an alliance with the US. For example, a dyad composed of a member of NATO and the RIO Pact would be coded as sharing the US as an ally though they are in different alliances. Also, any US alliance dyad is included as a 1 in this measure. In addition, a Soviet bloc variable is used. This measure is constructed identically to the US alliance variable. A variant of this variable uses the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance as the basis for the Eastern Bloc as opposed to shared Soviet alliance as several prominent Eastern bloc states like China and Vietnam did not have formal alliance with the Soviets.

---

<sup>63</sup> Singer 1987.

<sup>64</sup> Ghosn, Palmer, and Bremer 2004.

Because this analysis is based on cross-sectional time series data, certain statistical issues need to be addressed. The first is temporal autocorrelation within each panel. To account for this, a lagged dependent variable is included in the model. The other problem is heteroskedastic variance in the error terms across and within the panels. To address this problem, two approaches are used. The first is simply to cluster the standard errors based on the dyad and apply Huber-White standard errors. The other is to use Panel Corrected Standard errors. A third problem that is checked is the lack of a true continuous variable as the S score ranges from -1 to 1. To check that this is not biasing our results, Tobit models are analyzed.

One final issue that needs to be addressed is the nature of UNGA voting data. There is much variance in the nature of issues covered in the UNGA, ranging from political issues (e.g. condemning the use of force by a state) to membership issues (e.g. admitting new members) to administrative issues (e.g. passing the budget). Some of these votes are likely to be less useful for distinguishing the preferences of states. To address this problem, different sets of General Assembly votes are used in addition to all the votes. First, the votes are classified as close or not close votes. Votes that pass by less than a 65% majority are considered close votes and are the only ones included for determining preference similarity. The second approach is to subject code each vote and use only votes on particular issues. For this paper, three subject codes are analyzed. Analysis is done on security votes, economic votes, and votes about a government's treatment of its citizens.

## 5. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Table 1 presents the results of the non-directed dyad data from 1966-1996. The five models differ on the votes used to calculate the dependent variables, which is why the number of

cases varies across models as the number of missing cases varies by which votes are used. The regional measure of descriptive representation for the non-permanent UNSC members (Joint Region) is statistically significant. Compared to dyads of states in different regions, dyads compared of states in the same region have a higher vote similarity, providing support for hypothesis 1. The substantive effect varies across models with the smallest effect for all votes, a .006 increase for a variable that ranges from -1 to 1, to close votes, with a .079 increase. This effect is relatively small substantively as it represents less than 5% of the range of the dependent variable for even the largest change. Looking at the similarity with the permanent members reveals perhaps more similarity between non-permanent members regardless of region compared to permanent members and non-permanent members. For the permanent and non-permanent variable, the coefficient is negative and statistically significant, indicating that permanent members have lower similarity with non-permanent members, compared to non-permanent members from other regions. Also, the largest effect size across all the models is more substantively relevant with a .220 difference (a little over 10% of the range of the dependent variable) for economic votes. The joint permanent member variable is significant and negative in almost all the models. Permanent members have lower voting similarity compared to non-permanent members in other regions, with economic votes, again, having the largest substantive effect of -.231. This result is not too surprising given the differences between the permanent members for the majority of the time period under study.

These results suggest two things. First, substantive representation (as measured by similarity of preferences) is better among non-permanent member than between permanent members and non-permanent members. There is a disjuncture between the similarity of votes by permanent members and everyone else, suggesting the importance of having – and perhaps,

increasing – non-permanent members on the UNSC for providing representation. This difference in similarity could be for a variety of reasons including the global interests of the permanent members that may often lead them into conflict with other states in the UN. The other implication of this finding is that states in the same region do appear to have greater levels of similarity compared to other UN dyad member pairings and thus possibly provide better substantive representation for members in their region, though the substantive difference between being in the same region and being in different regions is not large. However, these results are suggestive that descriptive representation based on region produces substantive representation and this effect is even more pronounced when compared to representation by the permanent Council members.

The results for the other measures of descriptive representation are mixed across the models. Joint Ethnicity is only positive and significant in three of the models and the effect size is very small with the largest coefficient being .018 (or about 1% of the range of the dependent variable). Joint language is negative and significant in one model and positive and significant in one model. It appears that states sharing the same language have dissimilar preferences over security issues but similar preferences over economic issues. The joint religion variable is positive and significant for two models and negative and significant for one model. Again, the effect of the variable differs depending on the set of votes analyzed. For both of these variables, the effect sizes are small with the largest being .024. One explanation for this lack of similarity and possible substantive representation based on similar identities is the variance in types of states with similar identity characteristics. Evidence of this is based on the type of votes where identity either produces similarity or differences in UN voting. For example, states with similar religions have less vote similarity on economic issues. Looking at the data, there is large

variance in levels of economic development across states with similar religions. States whose dominant religion is Christianity have GDP/capita that range in the 100s to the 10,000s of dollars. While identity may produce similar interests for groups within states, across states, the effect of similar identities on policy preferences is likely mitigated by other substantive interests.

Most of the variables that measure indicators of substantive interests (hypothesis 3) on issues that should produce similar preferences and thus representation perform as expected, though there are some surprise findings. First, the effect of regime type is not completely as expected. The polity difference variable is negative and significant as expected, while the joint democracy variable is also negative and significant, the opposite of what was expected. However, these variables have to be considered together because their values move together. First, the coefficient for the polity difference variable can be examined when joint democracy variable is 0. For non-jointly democratic dyads, going from a dyad of identical regimes to one of completely dissimilar regimes produces a change in the S score of .04 (for all votes) to .14 (for economic votes). This effect is attenuated, however, when looking at similar dyads that are also jointly democratic dyads. For all votes, going from a very democratic (10) and very autocratic (-10) state to two jointly democratic states (both scoring a 10 on the Polity scale) yields a .014 increase in voting similarity compared to the .04 increase observed when going from completely dissimilar to completely similar but not jointly democratic states (e.g. both states score -10 on the Polity scale). So, states with similar regimes are more likely to vote together, but of these similar regimes, jointly democratic regimes are less likely to do so than non-democracies. This finding may again be driven by the different priorities of democratic states, including development levels, as suggested by the large coefficient for the economic issue votes. Looking at the data, democratic states also have a tremendous range in GDP/capita, suggesting that while regime type

does influence similarity in preferences, other issues may ultimately trump the effect of similar regime institutions.

Turning to the security interest variables, there are mixed findings across these variables. First, the dyadic measure of relative capabilities is negative and significant in three models (as expected) and positive and significant in one model. For all, security, and economic votes, states at equal levels of power have higher levels of similarity, while the opposite is found for domestic votes, where those at parity are found to have less similar voting profiles. These findings highlight two common themes found so far: the issues used to examine voting matter, and within one measure of interest states are likely to vary on other dimensions of interest. For example, during the Cold War, while the US and the Soviet Union had similar levels of power, they likely had starkly different votes in the General Assembly on domestic issues such as human rights.

The alliances variable performs as expected. The coefficient is positive and significant. Allies are more likely to have similar voting records in the UN and thus should be better representatives of each other in the UNSC than non-allies. This is not a surprising finding and the effect sizes are comparable to the region variables with the smallest effect being .016 for all votes and the largest .068 for economic votes. The odd finding is looking at the results for the Joint US and Joint Soviet allies variables. With the exception of close votes, states that are allied with the US are likely to have dissimilar voting records with each other. The expected effect exists for close votes, suggesting that American allies may share similar preferences for more controversial UN policies. However, the heterogeneity in US allies may also account for this finding. American allies in the developing world (i.e. the Rio pact members) may have different preferences from their more developed world counterparts (e.g. NATO). Allies of the Soviet Union only appear to have similar voting records on close votes and domestic votes. For the

other vote types, the variable is not significant. The joint CMEA variable (not presented) produces the same results.

The similarity of threat variables, again, produced mixed findings. Whether two states experienced a militarized dispute is only significant for close and domestic votes. The other threat variable, the number of shared militarized disputes against a third state is generally in the opposite of the expected direction. For close votes, it is positive and significant, but it is negative for all other vote types. Dyads with high numbers of MIDs against a third state have higher voting similarity on close votes but lower similarity on other types of votes. One factor that may be influencing this variable is the fairly rare occurrences of MIDs; so most of the values of this variable are 0 with major power dyads accounting for a large portion of these cases. As demonstrated by the permanent UNSC member variables (who happen to also be the major powers for the period covered until 1992), major powers are likely to have lower similarity scores with each other and other UN members.

As for the economic measures of interest, the results are generally what were expected. The difference in GDP/capita variable is negative and significant. Dyads of differing development levels have dissimilar voting records. The traditional North-South cleavage appears to have an effect on voting similarity and thus on representation, suggesting that states may be better represented by states within their own economic grouping. The effect of this variable going from 2 standard deviations below to above the mean is modest, with a small effect of .03 and a large effect of about .17, depending on the model. Similarly, the level of dyadic trade dependence is correctly signed and significant in two models. Dyads marked by higher levels of mutual trade dependence have higher voting similarities. The effect size is small given that dyad trade dependence is generally small. Moving from two standard deviations below to above yields

a change of about .021 for the close votes model (the one with the largest coefficient), though shifting this estimation to the maximum value of trade dependence (which is absurdly in the tails of the distribution) yields an effect size of .88 (or almost 50% of the range of the variable).

The other economic interest variable, economic openness, is significant but in the opposite of the expected direction. It is positive, indicating that the greater the difference in economic openness, the greater the level of similarity in UNGA voting. One explanation may be that the inclusion of the difference in GDP/capita variable is capturing the effect of this variable. Running the models without the difference in the logged GDP/capita confirms this argument; the openness variable becomes negative and significant. This suggests that, controlling for similarity in development levels, states with different levels of openness have more similar voting records. The effect size of this variable is small – going from two standard deviations below to two above the mean yields a maximum change of .017 across all the models. Accounting for whether both states in a dyad have a similar level of development, differences in openness produces a small increase in voting. Finally, as expected, the lagged dependent variable is significant and positive with a fairly large effect across all the models. The results for the panel corrected standard errors and tobit models are essentially the same. The R squared of all the models is high, though this is likely due to the inclusion of the lagged dependent variable.

Table 2 presents the results of the directed dyad models where the first state is a UN Security Council member between 1966 and 1996. Unlike the data used for Table 1, the set of cases is much smaller as these are not all pairs of states but only pairings between a Security Council member (for the years it was on the Council) and all other states. Looking at the descriptive representation variables, there is one difference. The effect of joint region for non-permanent members is only positive and significant in one model, close votes. So while, states in

regions generally have higher similarity and thus are likely to be better representatives of each others' substantive interests, this does not appear to be the case for those non-permanent members who are actually voted into office. They appear to only have higher degrees of similarity for close votes, though the effect is small at .042 (or about 2.5% of the range of the dependent variable). One explanation for this finding could be the politics involved in getting a state onto the Security Council, which often involves permanent member influence.<sup>65</sup> Thus, those states that do make it on the UNSC, may actually be those that are less likely to substantively represent their regions because of their acceptability to permanent Council members. Thus, while hypothesis 1 was generally supported, support for hypothesis 2 was only found for close votes

As expected from the previous findings, permanent members are likely to have lower levels of similarity with each other compared to non-permanent members from different regions. This vote difference is potentially large for economic votes where the difference is around .18 (or a little under 10% of the range of the dependent variable). Finally, similar to the previous findings, the permanent-five, with the exception of close votes, have lower levels of similarity with non-permanent members compared to non-permanent states from different regions. The general result is that permanent members tend to be dissimilar in terms of voting with each other and with non-permanent members, suggesting they are not necessarily the best representatives of these states. However, amongst non-permanent members, being from the same region only increases the level of similarity in voting and presumably representation in one of the five models, suggesting that having a state from the same region in the UN Security Council may not increase a Member's representation in that body.

The identity variables are again mixed in their level of significance across models. The effect of descriptive representation by identity factors does not appear to translate consistently

---

<sup>65</sup> Malone 2000.

into substantive representation. The closest finding is for shared language where Security Council members have more similarities with states of the same dominant language.

As for the substantive interest variables, the regime variables (Polity Difference and Joint Democracy) produce the same findings as the all dyad model in Table 1. The effect of relative capability is, again, mixed across models, while the alliance variable is positive and significant across all models, though with a very modest effect size. The effect of the US and Soviet ally variables are similar to the results in Table 1, though which votes produce greater similarity varies. Similar to the previous findings, the joint threat variables have mixed results. A MID between the two states in a dyad still has a generally negative and statistically significant effect on similarity. Finally, the economic interest variables all perform the same as in the all dyad models of Table 1, though the trade dependence measure is now consistently significant in all models.

## 6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The goal of this paper was to determine whether descriptive representation at the international level produced substantive representation within executive style councils of international organizations. While other research has examined whether substantive interests are represented in general assemblies of international organizations, like the European Parliament,<sup>66</sup> this paper looks at whether there is representation when states elect representatives to a powerful decision-making body with limited membership. The UN Security Council further differs from similarly-designed executive bodies, such as the World Bank and the IMF, in that its prescriptions for representation carry through to other committees of the organizations. Our results suggest that regional as opposed to identity-based descriptive representation has some

---

<sup>66</sup> McElroy 2006; Marsh and Norris 1997.

potential to provide substantive representation, but this does not appear to consistently be the case for those regional members that have actually been part of the UN Security Council. For those states voted on the Security Council, their similarity in voting preferences in the UNGA with other states in their region is conditioned by the types of votes, a similar finding for the identity measures of descriptive representation, suggesting that substantive representation may occur for some issues but not others based on different forms of descriptive representation.

While the effect of being in the same region was limited and conditional, it does appear that any non-permanent member of the UNSC is a better representative than a permanent member. Permanent members not only have lower voting similarity records with non-permanent members, they also have lower voting records with each other. This suggests that reforms that call for adding more UNSC members based on region would increase representation of the preferences of the membership at large relative to that of the existing permanent members, but not necessarily for states in the region of the new UNSC members. Also, reforms that call for more permanent members need to consider whether the lack of representation by permanent members is because the current five are also major powers or whether being a permanent member shifts the preferences of states. Integration of minority representatives into the leadership of elected bodies has been demonstrated elsewhere to improve the representation of minority issues, but these findings reveal that the most integrated members are less aligned with other UN members. Regardless, it is not clear that adding new permanent members ought to be along regional lines in order to boost representation. Adding India may not increase representation for Asian states compared to representation for African states. Rather, states ought to think about representation more along substantive divisions, with economic development being one of the most consistent sources of difference. So would newly developed states really

represent poorer states within their region or would their substantive interests align them with developed states in other regions? The results of this research suggest the latter is likely. The results of the economic similarity variables demonstrate that states with similar economic interests have higher levels of voting together across all types of votes in the UN. This suggests that substantive representation is more practicable on economic lines than regional grouping.

If expansion is to occur along regional lines, we use our data to examine how existing permanent members represent their respective regions, how a proposed group of permanent members would do, and which regions have higher levels of voting similarity.<sup>67</sup> First, we re-analyze the models in Tables 1 and 2 by substituting a joint region variable for each region in place of the one joint region variable. The identified regions are based on the previously discussed UN voting regions. Since the six region variables are a disaggregation of the joint region variable, the difference between the non-directed and directed dyadic models is the same. In the non-directed dyadic models, almost all the states in a same region have higher voting similarity, regardless of region. Eastern Europe and Africa are the only two regions where dyads in these regions have lower voting similarity than those in different regions. This effect is only present when looking at economic votes. Conversely, in the directed dyadic models, no set of dyads in any region has consistently higher levels of voting similarity across the different vote types. Again, the differences across the two sets of cases are based on the selection of states to serve as non-permanent UNSC members. Across all dyads in Asia and the Middle East, there are greater levels of voting similarity compared to dyads of mixed regions. However, for dyads composed of Asian non-permanent Security Council members and other Asian states, for all votes, there is actually lower voting similarity and no significant difference for the other vote categories. For Middle Eastern non-permanent Council members, similarity is only higher for

---

<sup>67</sup> The tables for these results are part of the Supplemental Appendix posted at [www](http://www).

close votes and is actually lower for security votes. The Western Europe region is the only region that generally shows a consistently higher level of voting similarity between non-permanent UNSC members and other states in that region. These results reinforce the previous finding that while in general, states in the same region have higher voting similarity, the effect is different when comparing which states actually elected the UNSC. If past non-permanent UNSC members are an indicator of which states are likely to be considered for permanent membership, representation of a region based on vote similarity is likely to only happen for Western European states and the Americas, though the results are not significant across all the models.

Next, we look at how well the current permanent members represent their respective regions. Compared to dyads of non-permanent members and states from a different region, the US always has a lower voting similarity with states in their respective region, the Americas.<sup>68</sup> The effect is quite large, with the lowest value being .09 and the highest being .48 or almost a quarter of the range of the dependent variable. Russia, the UK and France have lower voting similarities with states in their respective regions except for close votes, where they have a higher voting similarity than non-permanent members and states from a different region. Finally, China's voting similarity with other Asian states is no different than the similarity between a non-permanent member and a state from a different region.<sup>69</sup> These results suggest that Western Europe and Eastern Europe are well represented by their permanent members for close votes. However, they are not well represented for any other kind of vote. Also, the Americas and Asia are not represented by their permanent members. In the Americas case, the US has a lower voting similarity compared to non-permanent members from other regions.

---

<sup>68</sup> Technically the US is not in the Americas region but we use the Americas for the US given the US special relationship with the region. Also, if we put the US with the Western Europe group, that group would have 3 representatives and only 3 regions would be represented.

<sup>69</sup> We also include Taiwan for the few years it is on the UNSC in the early part of our data. They generally have lower voting similarity with other Asian states.

To examine the potential effect of expanding the number of permanent UNSC members, we re-run the directed dyadic models, looking at how Japan, Brazil, and India – countries that have campaigned vigorously for permanent seats – would do at representing their respective regions. Japan fares the worst. It has a lower level of voting similarity with Asian states compared to dyads of non-permanent members and states from different regions for all vote types. Brazil and India do a little better, with India doing a bit better than Brazil. For all votes and security votes, Brazil and India have lower voting similarities than states in their regions compared to non-permanent members and states from different regions. However, for economic votes, both have higher voting similarities with states in their region and India has a higher voting similarity for close votes as well. For these three states seeking permanent membership, it is not clear that they are necessarily more representative of states in their regions than a non-permanent member in a different region. This is clearly the case for Japan. For Brazil, it only better represents the economic interests of other states in the Americas, while India has closer substantive representation for economic and close votes. The alignment of India and Brazil with their respective regions for economic votes makes sense since both have had ties to the Non-Aligned Movement and have at one point in time been considered a developing country, with India still having a relatively lower GDP/capita.

Finally, we consider how the five permanent members and these three candidates for permanent membership would be as at-large representatives of all members (surrogate representation). The results are very similar to those for their own regions. The US, UK, France, Russia, and Japan have lower voting similarities with all other states compared to non-permanent Security Council members and states from other regions. China has a higher voting similarity for close votes and economic votes, again reflecting its economic status during the period of this

analysis. However, it has a lower voting similarity for security and domestic votes. The results for Brazil and India are very similar to the previously reported regional results.

Our analysis suggests that reforming the United Nations Security Council on the basis of more equitable representation might be better served if representation is based on other conceptions than descriptive representation by region. Whether it is adding more non-permanent members for under-represented regions or permanent members to represent specific regions, it is unclear that these regional representatives have the same substantive interests of their constituents. While states within regions tend to have higher levels of voting similarity with each other than with states outside of their region, the level of similarity is small and states that are elected to the UN Security Council often are not any more similar in UN General Assembly voting to states in their own regions than states in other regions. This suggests that states elected to the UN Security Council start with preferences that are not any closer to the preferences of states in their own region and depending on the region, may even have lower levels of preference similarity. This lack of strong preference similarity between representatives and their region suggest that states within a region may not be having their interests or preferences represented in the UN Security Council.

An alternative approach might be to think about adding new Security Council members along status lines in the international system. As discussed in the results section, how close two states are in their development level and regime type is a consistent predictor of shared preferences as measured by similarity in UNGA voting, regardless of the type of votes. These, then, are two different ways to think about breaking up states into groups for the purposes of electing representatives. Whether it is development level or regime type, representatives would have greater preference similarity to their constituents and thus would presumably represent their

substantive interests better. This however would be a substantial departure from the traditional way of allocating seats on the Security Council. One way to address this problem would be to use this approach for new seats. New elected seats could be based on GDP/capita. One concern might be that an elected seat for a low income country might not reflect the other requirement of contribution to peace and security. However, there are candidates in the low income set of countries that meet these qualifications. For example, in 2009, Nigeria was in the bottom quartile of states in terms of GDP/capita but contributed in the top 50% of states in terms of percentage contribution to the overall UN budget and regularly contributes to UN Peacekeeping missions. Similarly, Ethiopia whose 2009 GDP/capita classifies it below the average GDP/capita for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) is a large contributor to UN Peacekeeping Missions.<sup>70</sup>

Beyond reform proposals, these results suggest that states in the United Nations may want to more closely scrutinize their regional representative to insure that their substantive interests match their own. Again, this could be problematic given the diversity in states and resources needed to run for the UN Security Council. In less diverse regions, like the Western Europe and other developed countries region, there is high similarity between elected non-permanent members and states in that region. However, for almost every other region, the diversity in states means that elected non-permanent members often have, at best, no greater preference similarity with states in their region than with states outside of their region. This might mean that regions with more than one seat may want to divide their seats amongst sub-groups composed of states with similar economic or political interests. One concern with basing reform of the UNSC on substantive representation is that it may produce greater gridlock in decision-making. Representation of diverse interests may increase the difficulty in finding

---

<sup>70</sup> Data for GDP/Capita is from the World Development Indicators. The data is 2000 US\$. Data for UN Contributions and Peacekeeping are from the UN Website.

solutions that would meet the minimum number of votes needed to pass. However, as Thompson suggests, such heterogeneity of preferences may actually increase the legitimacy of the decisions it able to make.<sup>71</sup>

Finally, this research suggests that preference similarity amongst states may not be based on regional identities. While states in regions share a common geographic space and often share borders and waterways, this does not automatically translate into common interests and preferences. Rather, similarity in preferences may be based more on where states fall on economic and political issues, suggesting that state preferences and possibly identities are, as constructivists suggest, fluid over time. As the internal characteristics of states change, their preferences are likely to change as well. At a minimum, this research suggests that shared interests can fluctuate over time based on changes to a state's status. Similar to Bearce and Bondanella,<sup>72</sup> future research might consider what other factors might impact shared preferences over time. Finally, this research suggests that the idea of representation at the international level is perhaps more complicated than at the domestic level. Competing interests within states potentially produce shifting preferences and thus potentially dramatic differences in who is an ideal representative for a state. States also have preferences over multiple issues that may not align easily within one grouping. Even grouping states based on development level, as is traditional in the World Bank, ignores the vast differences in regime type, security policies, and even rivalries that may exist between states, producing representation on multiple vote types but potentially complicating politics within the group. Thus, if executive bodies of universal (or broad inclusion) international organizations want to be representative bodies, it is important to consider whether their system of representation truly represents the diverse interests of states.

---

<sup>71</sup> 2006.

<sup>72</sup> Bearce and Bondanella 2007.

Table 1: Non-Directed Dyadic Analysis of UNGA Vote Similarity, 1966-1996

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 5	Model 6
	DV= All Votes	DV= Close Votes	DV= Security Votes	DV= Econ Votes	DV= Domestic Votes
Joint Region	.006*** (.002)	.079*** (.004)	.015*** (.001)	.016*** (.003)	.020*** (.002)
Joint P5	-.046*** (.011)	-.075+ (.041)	-.083** (.026)	-.231*** (.061)	-.083** (.032)
P5-NonP5	-.045*** (.002)	-.046*** (.006)	-.095*** (.003)	-.220*** (.008)	-.095*** (.004)
Joint Language	-.001 (.001)	-.008 (.007)	-.009*** (.002)	.024*** (.006)	-.003 (.003)
Joint Relig	.001+ (.001)	.018*** (.003)	.002 (.001)	-.016*** (.002)	.007*** (.001)
Joint Ethnic	.003* (.001)	.018* (.008)	.007** (.001)	.000 (.007)	.005 (.003)
Joint Democ	-.023*** (.001)	-.012** (.004)	-.036*** (.002)	-.113*** (.004)	-.062*** (.002)
Polity Diff	-.002*** (.000)	-.004*** (.000)	-.003*** (.000)	-.007*** (.000)	-.005*** (.000)
Relative Capab	-.003+ (.002)	.005 (.008)	-.016*** (.003)	-.020** (.007)	.020*** (.004)
Allies	.016*** (.001)	.043*** (.006)	.042*** (.002)	.068*** (.006)	.034*** (.003)
LN(GDP/cap Diff)	-.005*** (.000)	-.017*** (.001)	-.011*** (.000)	-.033*** (.001)	-.017*** (.000)
Open Diff	.002*** (.001)	.003 (.003)	.009*** (.001)	.008** (.003)	.015*** (.001)
Trade Dependence	.165+ (.086)	4.15*** (.906)	.144 (.146)	-.392 (.463)	1.21*** (.293)
Shared MID	-.004*** (.001)	.009** (.003)	-.005*** (.001)	-.015*** (.003)	-.008*** (.002)
MID	-.012+ (.007)	-.063** (.023)	-.011 (.010)	-.034+ (.019)	-.048*** (.012)
Joint US Ally	-.011*** (.001)	.026*** (.004)	-.021*** (.002)	-.065*** (.005)	-.010*** (.002)
Joint Sov Ally	.001 (.004)	.133*** (.019)	.013 (.009)	.012 (.018)	.025** (.009)

Lag DV	.855*** (.002)	.563*** (.003)	.712*** (.003)	.410*** (.003)	.685*** (.003)
Constant	.167*** (.002)	.225*** (.010)	.316*** (.005)	.806*** (.010)	.352*** (.006)
	N=253302 F= 29639.8*** R2=.83	N=180882 F=4177.2*** R2=.36	N=252206 F=8979.2*** R2=.64	N=204551 F=2133.9*** R2=.40	N=237333 F=6939.9*** R2=.59

Robust Std Errors, clustered by dyad are in parentheses.

+p<.1, \* p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.011 All tests are two-tailed

Table 2: Directed Dyadic Analysis of UN Security Council Member to all other states,  
1966-1996

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 5	Model 6
	DV= All Votes	DV= Close Votes	DV= Security Votes	DV= Econ Votes	DV= Domestic Votes
Joint Region	-.002 (.002)	.047*** (.011)	-.003 (.004)	-.016+ (.009)	-.003 (.005)
Joint P5	-.036*** (.007)	-.037+ (.022)	-.080*** (.014)	-.188*** (.036)	-.086*** (.015)
P5-NonP5	-.031*** (.002)	-.008 (.007)	-.084*** (.004)	-.176*** (.008)	-.080*** (.004)
NonP5-P5	-.015** (.005)	.027 (.020)	-.070*** (.008)	-.159*** (.020)	-.066*** (.011)
Joint Language	.007* (.004)	.034* (.017)	.011+ (.006)	.095*** (.015)	.020* (.008)
Joint Relig	.000 (.001)	.035*** (.007)	-.006* (.003)	-.041*** (.007)	.001 (.004)
Joint Ethnic	-.011* (.005)	-.023 (.021)	-.025*** (.007)	-.055** (.019)	-.013 (.009)
Joint Democ	-.035*** (.003)	.010 (.011)	-.069*** (.004)	-.129*** (.011)	-.088*** (.006)
Polity Diff	-.003*** (.003)	-.006*** (.001)	-.006*** (.000)	-.012*** (.001)	-.008*** (.000)
Relative Capab	-.036*** (.005)	.009 (.023)	-.026** (.009)	-.086*** (.021)	.002 (.012)
Allies	.014*** (.003)	.069*** (.011)	.037*** (.005)	.005 (.015)	.025*** (.007)
LN(GDP/cap Diff)	-.010*** (.001)	-.033*** (.002)	-.021*** (.001)	-.059*** (.002)	-.027*** (.001)
Open Diff	.000 (.002)	.025** (.008)	.014*** (.003)	.003 (.010)	.008+ (.004)
Trade Dependence	.403* (.199)	4.63*** (.772)	1.03*** (.284)	2.96*** (.928)	1.45*** (.353)
Shared MID	-.002* (.001)	.005 (.005)	.002 (.002)	-.014** (.005)	.006* (.003)
MID	-.010 (.015)	-.116*** (.036)	-.016 (.022)	-.107** (.041)	-.058** (.021)

Joint US Ally	-.017*** (.003)	.026** (.010)	-.006+ (.004)	-.054*** (.010)	.014** (.005)
Joint Sov Ally	-.001 (.006)	.087** (.031)	.035*** (.009)	.088*** (.028)	.004 (.017)
Lag DV	.860*** (.004)	.578*** (.006)	.719*** (.005)	.430*** (.008)	.721*** (.006)
Constant	.246*** (.008)	.320*** (.027)	.437*** (.013)	1.16*** (.028)	.462*** (.017)
	N=36978 F=8869.3*** R2=.88	N=27185 F=1032.62*** R2=.43	N=36911 F=5366.8*** R2=.75	N=30499 F=764.6*** R2=.50	N=34501 F=3454.5*** R2=.71

Robust Std Errors, clustered by dyad are in parentheses.

+p<.1, \* p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.011 All tests are two-tailed

## Works Cited

- Agam, Hasmy. 1999. Equitable Geographic Representation in the Twenty-First Century. In *What is Equitable Geographic Representation in the Twenty-First Century: Report of a Seminar Held by the International Peace Academy and the United Nations University*, 40-50. Ramesh Thakur, ed. New York, NY: United Nations University.
- Bearce, David H., and Stacy Bondanella. 2007. Intergovernmental Organizations, Socialization, and Member-State Interest Convergence. *International Organization* **61** (04): 703-733.
- Blum, Yehuda Z. 1992. Russia Takes Over the Soviet Union's Seat at the United Nations. *European Journal of International Law* **3**: 354-361.
- Bourantonis, Dimitris. 1998. Reform of the Security Council and the Non-Aligned Movement. *International Peacekeeping* **5** (1): 89-109.
- Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce, and Alastair Smith. 2010. The Pernicious Consequences of UN Security Council Membership. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* **54** (5): 667-686.
- Caron, David D. 1993. The Legitimacy of the Collective Authority of the Security Council. *The American Journal of International Law* **87** (4): 552-588.
- Chapter V: The Security Council. *Charter of the United Nations*. Available from <<http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter5.shtml>>.
- Cogan, Jacob Katz. 2009. Representation and Power in International Organization: The Operational Constitution and Its Critics. *The American Journal of International Law* **103** (2): 209-263.
- Daws, Sam. 1997. Seeking Seats, Votes, and Vetoes. *The World Today* (October): 256-259.
- Daws, Sam. 1999. The Origins and Development of UN Electoral Groups. In *What is Equitable Geographic Representation in the Twenty-First Century: Report of a Seminar Held by the International Peace Academy and the United Nations University*, 11-29. Ramesh Thakur, ed. New York, NY: United Nations University.
- Diehl, Paul F., Jennifer Reifschneider, and Paul R. Hensel. 1996. United Nations Intervention and Recurring Conflict. *International Organization* **50** (04): 683-700.
- Drifte, Reinhard. 1998. Japan's Quest for a Permanent Seat on the Security Council. *Asia-Pacific Review* **5** (2): 87-109.

- Ellingsen, Tanja. 2000. Colorful Community or Ethnic Witches' Brew?: Multiethnicity and Domestic Conflict during and after the Cold War. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* **44** (2): 228-249.
- Fassbender, Bardo. 2004. Pressure for Security Council Reform. In *The UN Security Council: From the Cold War to the 21st Century*, 341-356. David Malone, ed. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Forman, Shepard, and Andrew Greene. 2004. Collaborating with Regional Organizations. In *The UN Security Council: From the Cold War to the 21st Century*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Gartzke, Erik. 1998. Kant We All Just get Along? Opportunity, Willingness, and the Origins of the Democratic Peace. *American Journal of Political Science* **42** (1): 1-27.
- Gartzke, Erik. 2007. The Capitalist Peace. *American Journal of Political Science* **51** (1): 166-191.
- Ghosn, Faten, Glenn Palmer, and Stuart Bremer. 2004. The MID3 Data Set, 1993-2001: Procedures, Coding Rules, and Description. *Conflict Management and Peace Science* **21**: 133-154.
- Gibler, Douglas M., and Meredith Sarkees. 2004. Measuring Alliances: The Correlates of War Formal Interstate Alliance Data Set, 1816-2000. *Journal of Peace Research* **41** (2): 211-222.
- Gleditsch, Kristian S. 2002. Expanded Trade and GDP Data. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* **46** (5): 712-724.
- Hurd, Ian. 2002. Legitimacy, Power, and the Symbolic Life of the UN Security Council. *Global Governance* **8**: 35-51.
- Hurd, Ian. 2008. Myths of Membership: The Politics of Legitimation in UN Security Council Reform. *Global Governance* **14**: 199-217.
1989. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development Articles of Agreement. Available from <<http://go.worldbank.org/BAEZH92NH0>>.
- Kim, Soo Yeon, and Bruce Russett. 1996. The New Politics of Voting Alignments in the United Nations General Assembly. *International Organization* **50** (04): 629-652.
- Kuziemko, Ilyana, and Eric Werker. 2006. How Much Is a Seat on the Security Council Worth? Foreign Aid and Bribery at the United Nations. *Journal of Political Economy* **114** (5): 905-930.

- Lai, Brian, and Daniel S. Morey. 2006. Impact of Regime Type on the Influence of U.S. Foreign Aid. *Foreign Policy Analysis* **2** (4): 385-404.
- Lai, Brian, and Dan Reiter. 2000. Democracy, Political Similarity, and International Alliances, 1816-1992. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* **44** (2): 203 -227.
- Leeds, Brett Ashley. 1999. Domestic Political Institutions, Credible Commitments, and International Cooperation. *American Journal of Political Science* **43** (4): 979-1002.
- Malik, J. Mohan. 2003. Security Council Reform: China Signals Its Veto. *World Policy Journal* (Spring): 19-29.
- Malone, David M. 2000. Eyes on the Prize: The Quest for Nonpermanent Seats on the UN Security Council. *Global Governance* **6**: 3-23.
- Marsh, Michael, and Pippa Norris. 1997. Political Representation in the European Parliament. *European Journal of Political Research* **32** (2): 153-164.
- Marshall, Monty G., and Keith Jagers. 2002. Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2002. College Park, MD: Center for International Development and Conflict Management, University of Maryland. Available from <<http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/polity/index.htm>>.
- Martin and Pigott. 1993. Conference Report: The Role and Composition of the Security Council. In *Report of a Vantage Conference*. Muscatine, IA: The Stanley Foundation.
- McElroy, Gail. 2006. Committee Representation in the European Parliament. *European Union Politics* **7** (1): 5 -29.
- Meier, Kenneth J., Eric Gonzalez Juenke, Robert D. Wrinkle, and J. L. Polinard. 2005. Structural Choices and Representational Biases: The Post-Election Color of Representation. *American Journal of Political Science* **49** (4): 758-768.
- Owens, Chris T. 2005. Black Substantive Representation in State Legislatures from 1971-1994. *Social Science Quarterly* **86** (4): 779-791.
- Pantoja, Adrian D., and Gary M. Segura. 2003. Does Ethnicity Matter? Descriptive Representation in Legislatures and Political Alienation Among Latinos. *Social Science Quarterly* **84** (2): 441-460.
- Pitkin, Hanna Fenichel. 1972. *The concept of representation*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

- Prantl, Jochen. 2005. Informal Groups of States and the UN Security Council. *International Organization* **59** (03): 559-592.
- Preuhs, Robert R. 2006. The Conditional Effects of Minority Descriptive Representation: Black Legislators and Policy Influence in the American States. *The Journal of Politics* **68** (03): 585-599.
- Report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council. 2009. New York, NY: United Nations.
- Restoration of the lawful rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations. 1971. GA/26/2758.
- Russett, Bruce, Barry O'Neill, and James Sutterlin. 1996. Breaking the Security Council Restructuring Logjam. *Global Governance* **2**: 65-80.
- Schreuer, Christoph. 1995. Regionalism v. Universalism. *European Journal of International Law* **6**: 477-499.
- Signorino, Curtis S., and Jeffrey M. Ritter. 1999. Tau-b or Nor Tau-b: Measuring the Similarity of Foreign Policy Positions. *International Studies Quarterly* **43** (1): 115-144.
- Singer, J. David. 1987. Reconstructing the Correlates of War Dataset on Material Capabilities of States, 1816-1985. *International Interactions* **14**: 115-132.
- Thompson, Alexander. 2006. Coercion Through IOs: The Security Council and the Logic of Information Transmission. *International Organization* **60** (01): 1-34.
- UN Security Council Elections 2009. 2009. Special Research Report. *Security Council Report*. New York, NY: Security Council Report. Available from <[http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/site/c.glKWLeMTIsG/b.5488243/k.5A83/UN\\_Security\\_Council\\_Elections\\_2009.htm#issues](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/site/c.glKWLeMTIsG/b.5488243/k.5A83/UN_Security_Council_Elections_2009.htm#issues)>.
- Voeten, Erik. 2000. Clashes in the Assembly. *International Organization* **54** (02): 185-215.
- Voeten, Erik. 2001. Outside Options and the Logic of Security Council Action. *American Political Science Review* **95** (04): 845-858.
- Voeten, Erik. 2004. Resisting the Lonely Superpower: Responses of States in the United Nations to U.S. Dominance. *The Journal of Politics* **66** (03): 729-754.
- Voeten, Erik. 2005. The Political Origins of the UN Security Council's Ability to Legitimize the Use of Force. *International Organization* **59** (03): 527-557.

Voeten, Erik. 2007. Why no UN Security Council Reform? Lessons for and from Institutional Theory. In *Multilateralism and Security Institutions in an Era of Globalization*, 288-305. Dimitris Bourantonis, Kostas Infantis and Panayotis Tsakonas, eds. New York, NY: Routledge.

Wallensteen, Peter. 1994. Representing the World: A Security Council for the 21st Century. *Security Dialogue* **24** (1): 63-75.

Woods, Ngaire. 2001. Making the IMF and the World Bank more Accountable. *International Affairs* **77** (1): 83-100.