Examining the role of region and elections on representation in the UN Security Council

Brian Lai & Vanessa A. Lefler

THE REVIEW OF
INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS

Editor-in-Chief
Axel Dreher

Associate Editors
Todd Sandler
Roland Vaubel
James Raymond Vreeland

Book Review Editor
Christopher Kilby

Volume 12, Number 4
December 2017

🐎 Springer

🐎 Springer

Springer

CrossMark

Examining the role of region and elections on representation in the UN Security Council

Brian Lai[1] · Vanessa A. Lefler[2]

Abstract Do United Nations Security Council (UNSC) members represent states in their geographic regions? Drawing on literature in legislative politics and regional similarities, this manuscript links classic notions of representation - descriptive and substantive - to geographic representation of UN members in the UNSC. However, we argue that the process of getting elected to the UNSC leads to the election of states that are not likely to represent their regions. Using UN General Assembly voting patterns as a proxy for preferences, two sets of analyses test 1) whether, in general, states within the same region have higher levels of General Assembly voting similarity, and 2) if UNSC members possess similar voting patterns with states in their region. The results show that while regional groupings 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.

How well do members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) represent the interests of all UN members? Specifically, do UNSC members, particularly non-permanent ones, share the same preferences and thus represent their geographic regions? These questions examine the composition and representation of an international body that has tremendous power. From its inception, the Security Council was designed to respond swiftly and act on behalf of the international community. The

---

✉ Brian Lai
Brian-lai@uiowa.edu

[1] Department of Political Science, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242, USA

[2] Middle Tennessee State University, Peck Hall Room 209, MTSU PO Box 29, Murfreesboro, TN 37132, USA

⚓ Springer

fifteen member-states assess international crises and make decisions that are binding on the remainder of the United Nations (UN). Investigating how well non-permanent members represent states from their geographic regions speaks to the authority and legitimacy of the Security Council more generally. Second, because of the UNSC's importance, reforming its membership to make the Council more representative has been a constant theme. But, the concept of representation as it applies to the Security Council is ill-defined, and it remains a question whether "equitable geographical distribution"[1] of non-permanent Security Council members (NPSCs) also composes a group that "acts on … behalf"[2] of the UN's membership.

Finally, these questions more generally examine representation in international organizations and the importance of certain geographic boundaries as the basis for identifying commonalities between states. The Security Council is not the only UN branch that appoints representatives by region: ECOSOC, the International Court of Justice, and various subcommittees also follow this model. There is often an implicit assumption that states within regions will have more in common than states in different regions. However, other state-level factors like regime type and level of economic development may also influence states' preferences.

There is currently no literature on how well non-permanent members represent their regions. Thus, to answer these research questions, we start with research in legislative politics that examines the links between descriptive representation and substantive representation, which suggest that descriptive representation improves the substantive representation of marginalized groups (Mansbridge 1999; Preuhs 2006). If geographic regions are salient political identities then selecting NPSCs to the Council according to those groupings should lead to better substantive representation of interests in Council policy.

However, the existing literature on election to the UNSC suggests that selection onto the Security Council is not random and often driven by economic and international political considerations (Dreher et al. 2014). Also, NPSCs have been found to receive higher levels of aid and preferable treatment from other international organizations, presumably for their support of permanent member resolutions in the UNSC (Dreher et al. 2009a; Dreher et al. 2009b). Drawing on this research, we theorize that countries that get elected to the UNSC may be those that do not represent their regions. This effect is driven by the costs associated with getting elected, the desire of the permanent members for getting NPSC members that are closer to their own interests elected, and influence by permanent members on elected members to favor their policies.

To evaluate the connection between descriptive and substantive representation in the Security Council, we use data on General Assembly (UNGA) voting similarity to, first, test the assumption that regional groups have a policy identity expressed through similar voting records, and second, whether UNSC members are representative of their regions. We find that states sharing regional groupings have higher levels of vote similarity,

---

[1] Article 23(1) of the United Nations Charter outlines the criteria for membership on the Council, "due regard being specially paid, 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*" (emphasis added).

[2] Article 24(1) of the United Nations Charter describes the duties of the Security Council as follows: "In order to ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations, its Members confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts *on its behalf*" (emphasis added).

indicating the political salience of regional groupings. However, regional representatives to the UNSC do not consistently have greater voting similarity with others in their regions. In other words, states that are elected to the UNSC are substantively no more representative of their regional cohorts than other elected members.

The rest of this manuscript proceeds in five parts. The first provides a discussion of the role that representation of region plays in the selection of non-permanent members to the UN Security Council. The next part presents the theory of the paper, which focuses on regional representation and how the process of getting elected could alter a UNSC non-permanent member's representation of their region. The research design and empirical results are presented in the next two sections. The last section discusses the implications of this research.

1 Importance of representation to the United Nations security council

Before we discuss the role of representation for the UN Security Council, it is important to understand how non-permanent members are elected. Non-permanent Security Council members are elected to two-year terms, with seats allocated regionally. The current regime, expanded in 1965, allocates five seats to the Africa and Asia group,[3] two each to the Latin America and Caribbean (GRULAC) and the Western European and Others (WEOG) groups, and one seat to Eastern Europe. These regional groupings determine which of their members will seek election to the UNSC. Regional groupings vary on their internal procedures for nominations with some following a norm of rotation and others allowing the nomination of any state. Once put up for election by their regional grouping, a state must receive two thirds of the votes by member states in the UNGA. If a candidate does not receive this, runoff elections occur until a state from a region receives the necessary number of votes (Dreher et al. 2014).

The UN Charter embeds concepts of representation in its description of the Security Council. Non-permanent members are elected according to "equitable geographical distribution" (Charter of the United Nations, Article 23). Article 24 adds, "Members … agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council *acts on their behalf*" (Charter of the United Nations, emphasis added).

A diverse and representative composition is also crucial to perceptions of the Security Council's credibility (Thompson 2006). This can be clearly seen in debates about UN reform where a primary concern is that the NPSCs do not reflect and represent all of the countries in the world very well. Writing in the context of permanent membership expansion, yet also applicable to NPSCs, Patrick and McDonald (2010, 7) observe, "[T]he UNSC's domination by Western countries and failure to include … members from Africa and Latin America give it dwindling authority to issue binding international decisions, particularly in settings like sub-Saharan Africa, where the majority of UN peace operations occur." The proportion of NPSC seats, especially relative to the number of members in their region, is lowest in regions that have been most affected by the UNSC's increased activity: Africa, with

---

[3] The Africa and Asia group seats are divided – three to Africa and two to Asia – and the subgroups act mostly autonomously. The groups coordinate to use one of their seats to nominate an Arab state. An Arab state is always on the council and the two regions alternate who hosts the Arab seat.

three seats, and Asia, with two seats plus China, each make up 20 % of the Council, yet 27 % of the total membership. Conversely, including the United States, Great Britain, and France, and the two non-permanent WEOG seats, Western states make up one-third of UNSC membership, while accounting for only 14 % of member-states. Thus, member-states comprising a wide range of interests – less developed states, Islamic states, and underrepresented regional groups – caution that the UN may not be able to carry out its mandate in the future without reflecting modern political realities.[4]

2 Theory

2.1 *Does regional representation produce substantive representation for regions*?

The intuition from the reform debate is that NPSCs improve the Council's representativeness when they reflect the political preferences of those whom they act on behalf of: their regional groupings. Yet, what produces representation of UN-member interests remains an open question. Particularly, does this regional groupings system produce representation for its members or does some other relationship between UN members and elected Security Council delegates prevail? A framework for conceptualizing representation helps address these questions. In the classic work on political representation, *The Concept of Representation*, Pitkin (1972) states an individual represents when he or she acts for the interests and opinions of those to whom he or she is responsible. From this, Pitkin identifies various models of representation, two of which are important for this study: *descriptive representation* and *substantive representation*. *Substantive representation*, how well a representative's votes or actions align with constituents' policy preferences, is the classic representation model. Yet, representatives have multiple roles, including mirroring the characteristics, experiences, and backgrounds of their constituents (*descriptive representation*). When representatives and constituents share a politically important identity, they attempt to influence policy to align with those constituents' interests out of a sense of duty and similar preferences (Mansbridge 1999; Phillips 1998; Preuhs 2006). Thus, descriptive representation may produce substantive representation. The representative from Sierra Leone conveyed this sentiment when he pointed out that the Security Council had "devoted 70 per cent of its time dealing with issues directly and sometimes exclusively affecting the African continent," and that the inclusion of more African UNSC members would better guide the Council's actions in that region.[5]

Drawing on this literature can produce theoretical insights about whether regional representation in the UN produces substantive representation for member-states. The United Nations regional grouping system is, essentially, a descriptive criterion that divides members into units of relative geographical boundedness.[6] An important assumption of the descriptive representation literature is that the selective criterion is salient. That is, "representatives are in their own persons and lives in some sense typical of the larger class

---

[4] GA/11,169.
[5] GA/10,886.
[6] The Western European and Others Group (WEOG), which includes Western Europe, the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Turkey, and Israel, is a notable exception.

of persons whom they represent" (Mansbridge 1999, 629). In the American political context, for example, African-Americans, Latinos, and women are argued to have shared experiences that constitute sets of unique, identifiable group preferences.

Group preferences, in essence, are socially constructed and have also been observed to form among states through interdependence or repeated, strategic interactions (Lake 1997; Wendt 1994). Intergovernmental organizations, for instance, aid socialization and interest convergence among states because IGOs provide structure and ideological diversity (Bearce and Bondanella 2007). Some regional organizations also promote regional identity as one of their goals. In the ASEAN 2020 Vision statement,[7] ASEAN members aim to forge a common regional identity. Bearce and Bondanella (2007) found that IGOs had significant, independent socializing effects within regions. Geographical regions are especially likely to develop collective identities because closer proximity facilitates cooperation, socialization, and contagion of ideas (Gleditsch and Ward 2001; Väyrynen 2003). States in geographical regions frequently share languages, historical experiences, political regimes, and economic systems which, taken together, produce a unique set of interests (Hurrell 1995). For example, the statement from the delegate from Sierra Leone indicates that states in Africa may have similar international preferences given their historical legacy of Western influence.

Applied to the UN, group interests may exist by region because these groupings generally follow geographical boundaries and act as important political structures in the United Nations. The regional groupings are also a selection criterion for ECOSOC, the ICJ, and the Human Rights Council. Member-states also affirm shared interests within regional groupings, with delegations from the Eastern European, Asian, African, and GRULAC groups expressing desires for more regional inclusion.[8] From this, we should expect that the UN's regional groupings are salient to member-states' interests. This leads to the first hypothesis.

2.1.1 Hypothesis 1

Any pair of states within the same regional grouping are more likely to express similar policy preferences than a pair of states from different regional groupings.

2.2 *Do elected NPSCs actually represent the interests of their region?*

This descriptive/substantive representation framework assumes that shared preferences will translate into advocacy. In addition to sharing the interests of states in their region because of a shared history or culture due to geographic proximity, there might be a few reasons why elected NPSC would represent the interest of their regions in terms of having similar preferences over issues. First, NPSCs may be more likely to share the preferences of their regions because of the perceived need to appeal to the "median regional voter." Though most regions do not have formal nomination processes, it is often the goal to present as many nominees as seats available, a "clean slate," at the General Assembly election. Regularly practiced, clean slates avoid regional

---

[7] "ASEAN Vision 2020." 1997/12/15. *Association of Southeast Asian Nations.* <http://www.asean.org/news/item/asean-vision-2020>.
[8] GA/11,169.

divisiveness, assure that only those countries close to the regional median emerge as candidates, and increase groupings' control over NPSC elections ("Special Research Report" 2009).

Also, states seeking to be elected and re-elected to the UNSC are likely to be sensitive to their region's needs.[9] As Malone (2000) details, candidates are highly strategic in deciding when to run for a seat on the Council, and states that seek to have multiple appointments to the Security Council must demonstrate their commitment to substantive, collective interests. Specifically, 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, uncontested nominations.

However, we theorize that this type of descriptive/ geographic representation is not likely to exist between elected candidates and their regions. The "median regional voter" theory of NPSC candidate emergence does not account for limitations on regional agreement and other factors that attract states to non-permanent Security Council seats and increase their electoral prospects. Particularly, we also draw on existing research which indicates that NPSC members receive substantial increases in foreign aid and that greater candidate-state resources increase electoral success (Dreher et al. 2014; Dreher et al. 2009a, 2009b; Kuziemko and Werker 2006) to theorize that states that get elected to the UNSC are less motivated to act on behalf of their regional cohort. The electoral process and interests of major powers make it likely that those states that get elected are not going to have greater preference similarity with states in their region.

First, though there may be some tendencies for agreement, states within regions do not uniformly share the same preferences. Interstate conflict and differences in cultural identity, regime type, and development reduce regional cohesion (Bearce and Bondanella 2007) and weaken regional interest similarity. Some divergence of regional interests may even be caused by the same mechanisms argued to promote regionalization: Greater frequency of interaction may enflame disputes and increase conflict (Lake 1997). Additionally, other state characteristics may be more salient to preference formation than geographic region. A state's position on an issue may be based on its economic status, security situation, or other concerns. NPSCs may also advocate on behalf of global interests, like development, or for extra-regional blocs, like the Non-Aligned Movement.

Because states in the same region may have differing interests based on other characteristics, like development level, how members are selected to the UNSC is important for understanding whether an elected member substantively represents its region. Specifically, major power interests and the cost of getting elected lead to the election of states whose preferences are likely to be no more similar to the states in their region than states outside of their region.

Given the strong incentives of permanent UNSC members, like the US, to insure that UNSC resolutions they favor are passed, existing research has shown that states elected to the UNSC are likely to receive greater levels of multilateral and bilateral aid (Dreher et al. 2009a, 2009b; Kuziemko and Werker 2006). However, this increased aid is likely to come at the cost of favoring the interests of major powers, which generally do not coincide with the states in their regions. Major powers face a potential principal-agent

---

[9] Note that states may not run for consecutive appointments to the Security Council. Regardless, though states must wait at least one year before they attempt to run for another UNSC seat, it is reasonable to assume that past NPSC performances will inform electoral prospects.

problem in giving aid to buy support in the UN. They face imperfect ways of punishing NPSCs that receive greater aid but choose not to vote with them. However, there are two mechanisms that major powers can use to promote compliance that also explain why elected NPSC member's preferences are not more similar to states in their regions. First, these major powers may screen and promote candidates from regions that are likely to support their interests. The interests and preferences of the permanent members are likely to be different given their extremely different military and economic status compared to most countries in regions. Promoting candidates to win NPSC seats whose preferences are similar to those of permanent UNSC members can prevent compliance problems from even occurring. Major powers may identify states whose economic and military status may make them have preferences similar to their own. For example, a country like Japan is likely to have economic preferences more in line with the US than a much less developed Asian country, prompting the US to support Japan's nomination and election. Recently, a State Department cable posted on Wikileaks discusses the suitability of Iceland as a UNSC member and discusses how likely Iceland is to vote with the US as the basis of its appropriateness.[10] Another example from Wikileaks is a cable discussing the 2006 election between Venezuela and Guatemala, where the US had clear interests in Guatemala winning. In the cable, it is discussed that the US offered to help Guatemala lobby countries for votes to elect them to the UNSC.[11] These examples highlight our theoretical argument that the influence of the permanent major powers may lead to the nomination and election of NPSC members whose status and preferences are not representative of their region more generally.

Second, major powers could use the threat of removing aid, both bilateral and multilateral to force states into compliance (Dreher et al. 2009a). NPSCs are likely to realize that if they want to maintain a higher level of aid for their entire two years on the UNSC, they will need to comply with the interests of the permanent major powers. Also, non-compliance could mean that they would likely not receive aid the next time they served on the UNSC. Dreher et al. (2009b) discuss how a vote against the UN resolution authorizing force against Iraq in 1990 by Yemen led to the loss of US aid and no new IMF arrangements. Thus, this theory suggests that elected NPSC may be less representative of states in their region because states which are ultimately elected to the UNSC may be those that are screened to have similar interests and may adjust their expressed preferences in order to match those of permanent major powers in order to accrue the benefits of increased aid.

In addition to the interest of the major powers, the cost of getting elected to the UNSC means that only certain states are likely to even try to be part of the UNSC. States face costs for running for the UNSC. These can range from the cost of meeting with and lobbying states within their region as well as outside of their region to increased levels of foreign aid to buy votes from states. For example, for the 2014 elections, New Zealand brought out 60 diplomats to generate support for their candidacy.[12] In the 2012 election, it was reported that Australia spent $24 million (AUD) in additional diplomatic trips and increased its foreign aid budget as well.[13] Campaigns are

---

[10] http://www.wikileaks.ch/cable/2008/09/08REYKJAVIK199.html.
[11] https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06CAIRO5383_a.html.
[12] http://tvnz.co.nz/politics-news/call-pm-release-un-security-council-lobbying-costs-5999358.
[13] http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/foreign-affairs/australia-wins-seat-on-united-nations-security-council/story-fn59nm2j-1226498971111?nk=c42483f80497c0b491f8e9cf5a325342.

also indirectly [14] associated with changes in foreign aid, increased involvement in peacekeeping operations, and resolution sponsorship (MacFarquhar 2008; Malone 2000). Turkey reportedly spent $95 million on debt forgiveness, political support, and development assistance during its 2008 campaign.[15]

For some states, the cost of campaigning may preclude them from running particularly if other states in their region are willing to invest those costs because of greater economic resources. This is especially problematic for regions that tend not to offer clean slates as competition is likely in these regions. Also, after a state gets elected, it faces additional costs of having greater responsibilities. More staff may be needed for the state to be able to adequately meet all the obligations of a UNSC member. For some countries, this increased overseas staff may be prohibitive in terms of cost. Because of these costs, the set of states that choose to run or be considered by their regions is likely to skew towards those with greater wealth and material capabilities, making them potentially less representative of their regions. This is especially likely if their level of wealth is significantly different than the average level of wealth in their region. The combined effect of major power interests and the cost of campaigning for and holding a UNSC seat should reduce the similarity of preferences between those who are elected and their respective regions.

2.2.1 Hypothesis 2

States elected to the UNSC are not likely to express similar policy preferences with states in their region than with states from different regional groupings.

3 Research design

Two different sets of empirical analyses test these hypotheses. The research designs differ based on the type of dyad-year used. The first analyses use non-directed dyad-years for all states and examines voting similarity among all pairs of states to test whether states in regional UN groupings have more similar preferences than states in different regions (hypothesis 1). The second analysis differs from the first in that it only looks at pairs of states where the first state is a Security Council member. For example, only the US, UK, France, China/Taiwan, and Russia/Soviet Union 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 as the first country in the dyad when they are elected, and some countries are never the first country in the data set. This second analysis examines the second hypothesis, whether elected NPSCs reflect the preferences of states within their home regions.[16] Both sets of analysis study the time period 1966–2007.[17]

---

[14] Direct ties between specific decisions, like increased foreign aid, reduction of barriers to trade, and extension of diplomatic relations and candidacy for the UN Security Council are generally inconclusive, especially as voting is conducted secretly. This makes confirmation of pledges exceedingly difficult (MacFarquhar 2008; Malone 2000).

[15] "Austria, Japan, and Turkey Elected to Security Council; Review of Reported Lobbying Efforts." 2008/10/21. *UN Elections Monitor*. (80). <http://www.unelections.org/?q=node/972>.

[16] Data on UN Security Council members is from the UN's website.

[17] The analyses begin in 1966 because that is the year in which the current regional allocation was implemented. The data ends in 2007 as that is when the data on National Material Capabilities used to measure the CINC score ends.

Similarity between two states' UNGA voting records is the dependent variable, measuring preference alignment and substantive representation. This is a useful measure of substantive representation for a few reasons. First, Security Council votes are often strategically motivated, and UNGA voting is more likely to express a state's true preferences because General Assembly resolutions lack binding power (Bearce and Bondanella 2007). Gartkze (1998) echoes that states are "freer to express sincere preferences in the General Assembly" (15). Bearce and Bondanella (2007) provide evidence for the face validity of this measure based on what we would expect to see for US dyads. Second, similarity, especially for the UNSC members only dyad analysis, allows us to examine whether UNSC members actually share the same preferences over issues as their constituents. While we do not know how all states would vote on UNSC matters,[18] we know how they voted on specific issues in the General Assembly, and, more importantly, we also know how other, non-members voted. Finally, this measure directly tests substantive representation by linking preferences over issues among all UN members with Council members' preferences. Most measures of substantive representation study legislative behavior unique to a particular identity (e.g., whether female legislators vote more for bills about women than male legislators). Our approach 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 UNGA voting similarity does not measure whether substantive representation is carried out in the Security Council, it allows us to determine at a more basic level 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.

Signorino and Ritter's (1999) S score measures voting similarity over a UN session, which is applied to a particular year. The S score has been used in other research on UNGA votes (Bearce and Bondanella 2007; Lai and Morey 2006) and is the same measure produced by Gartzke and Jo (2002).[19] The S score 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's vote.[20]

The primary independent variables measure descriptive representation and is whether the two states are in the same UN geographic region.[21] As discussed earlier, the UN uses a regional grouping system as the basis for UNSC elections as well as elections to other UN bodies like the Human Rights Council. States are grouped into the African Group, Asia-Pacific Group, Eastern Europe Group, Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC), and the Western European and Others Group (WEOG). We use one more additional group, the Arab group. While the members of this group are split into the Asia-Pacific and Africa Group, they are granted one seat in the UNSC, which

---

[18] Nor do we know how UNSC members would vote on all UNSC matters, since not all of these come to a vote.

[19] See Signorino and Ritter (1999) for more information on how the S score is calculated.

[20] Following Signorino and Ritter (1999), No's are coded 1, Abstains are coded 2 and Yes is a 3 for each state's vote. Absences are coded as missing.

[21] Data on grouping membership is from the UN website.

alternates from the two groups they belong to. These regional groupings are important because they often influence and control who gets nominated for these positions and are the basis for UN representation. Regional groups generally match the geographic grouping of states with a few exceptions. Eastern and Western Europe are divided on primarily Cold War lines in the UN. Also, advanced industrial democracies (except the Asian ones; e.g., Israel, Australia, Canada, etc.) are with the Western European and Other Group (WEOG). We also distinguish the Permanent UNSC members (the P5 – US, UK, France, Russia/Soviet Union, China/Taiwan[22]) from non-P5 states. From these regional groupings and UN membership categories, we produce four exclusive dichotomous variables for pairs of states: 1) both same region, both non-P5; 2) P5 member and any non-P5 state; 3) both states P5 members; 4) each different regions, both non-P5. This last variable is the excluded category in all the empirical models.

In the UNSC only dyad models, the first state is a UNSC member, which can be one of two types: P5 and non-permanent members. Thus for these models, there are 5 dyadic pairs: 1) NPSC–non-P5 same region; 2) P5 and any non-P5; 3) both P5; 4) NPSC–non-P5, different regions; 5) NPSC–P5. Similar to the other model, the NPSC-non-P5 from different regions (type 4 dyads) are the excluded group.

A series of control variables are also added to account for factors that might influence similarity in UNGA voting. Each of these factors has been theorized to influence preference similarity between states.

3.1 Other sources of descriptive representation

Beyond region as a source of shared interest, there could be other forms of shared identity that could form the basis of similar preferences across states. Similar to Huntington's Clash of Civilizations (1993), preferences could be driven by identity characteristics. Just as identity groups within a state are likely to share similar preferences, identity characteristics may lead states to express similar interests in UNGA voting. We include three sets of identity characteristics: religion, ethnicity, and language. Each is a dichotomous variable constructed based on data from Ellingsen (2000) that indicates whether a pair's largest groups are of the same religion, ethnicity, or linguistic group.[23]

3.2 Regime type

Existing research has examined whether states with similar regimes are more likely to have similar voting patterns in the UNGA (Lai and Morey 2006; Bearce and Bondanella 2007; Carter and Stone 2015).[24] This complements existing work in international relations (Gartkze 1998) that suggests that democracies should have similar interests, which should be expressed in UNGA voting patterns. To account

---

[22] 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 to 1971. China is coded as a UNSC member from 1972 to 1996.

[23] The Ellingsen data extends until 1994, we use the last year of data for the 1995–2007 time period. We also run additional models where we use specific pairings of groups like Jointly Islamic, Jointly Muslim. These results are reported in the online Appendix. The online appendix is available on this journal's webpage. They do not change the results of our region variables.

[24] Lai and Morey and Carter and Stone are looking at how regime type conditions the effect of aid.

for the effect of shared regime type, we use two variables. The first is a simple measure of joint democracy, which is 1 if both states have a Polity IV (Marshall and Jaggers 2002) score of 6 or greater and 0 otherwise. The second examines how far apart the two states are on the Polity scale, measured as the absolute value of the difference between the states' scores with 0 indicating identical scores and 20 indicating maximum difference. States with similar political systems are more likely to ally (Lai and Reiter 2000) and have similar UNGA voting patterns (Bearce and Bondanella 2007) and democracies are also more likely to vote together in the UNGA (Kim and Russett 1996; Voeten 2001).

3.3 Economic influences

Wealthier states tend to vote together in the UNGA (Kim and Russett 1996; Voeten 2001) and recent work postulates a capitalist peace instead of a democratic peace (Gartzke 2007). Like regime type, states at similar levels of development are likely to have similar preferences not only over economic issues, but may view international politics in general through the lens of their economic class (e.g., the classic North-South divide). Two measures gauge similarity in economic interests. The first attempts to directly capture development level similarity using the natural log of the absolute difference between two states' GDP per capita. Zero indicates that both states have the same level of development and increasing positive values indicate divergence in development. The other economic variable is the degree of trade dependence between the two states. High levels of trade and dependence may shape states' preferences and align their interests given their intertwined economies. Trade dependence is total trade between the two states divided by each state's GDP and is coded for the lower of the two states' trade dependence scores. This variable is measured as the lower of the two states' values as opposed to the absolute difference because similarity is likely to be based on how dependent the two states' economies are on each other. Data for both variables are from Gleditsch (2002). Similar measures have been used in existing studies of UNGA voting patterns (Lai and Morey 2006; Bearce and Bondanella 2007).

3.4 Security factors

UNGA voting similarity is also likely to be driven by shared security interests. States facing the same threats are likely to have similar interests and express those in their UNGA votes. First, allies should have similar preferences and UNGA votes given their shared security fates (Lai and Morey 2006; Bearce and Bondanella 2007); we code a dyad 1 if the two states shared any type of alliance in the Correlates of War alliance data (Gibler and Sarkees 2004). A second variable examines differences in power between the states. A state's level of power influences what it can do internationally, which in turn structures its preferences over issues. More powerful states are likely to seek greater freedom and fewer restrictions given their advantage in unregulated interactions while less powerful states are likely to align against these more powerful states. We measure relative power as the relative capability difference between the two states in a dyad, with the stronger state's Composite Indicator of National Capabilities (CINC) score from the COW material capabilities data (Singer 1987) divided by the sum of the two states' CINC scores. This produces a score of .5 to 1, with .5 indicating parity and 1 indicating

complete disparity.[25] We additionally include whether the two states experienced a militarized interstate dispute (MID) (Ghosn et al. 2004) against one another in the year prior to the measure of the dependent variable. A MID might indicate divergent preferences that led to the conflict or the MID may cause the divergence in preferences.

3.5 Cold war blocs

A final set of variables control for Cold War alignments and the potential for bloc voting. During the Cold War, the US and Soviet led blocs are likely to have voted with one another because of their disputes against each other. We measure this with a variable which is whether a pair of states is aligned in any way with the US – though not necessarily with one another. For example, a dyad composed of a member of NATO and the Rio Pact would be coded as sharing a US ally though they are in different alliances. A Soviet bloc variable, constructed analogously to the US alliance variable, is also used. A variant of this variable uses the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance for the Eastern Bloc as opposed to shared Soviet alliance as several prominent states, like China and Vietnam, did not have formal alliance with the Soviets.

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, the models include a lagged dependent variable. The other problem is heteroskedastic variance in the error terms across and within the panels. Two methods address this problem. The first clusters the standard errors based on the dyad and applies Huber-White standard errors. The other uses Panel Corrected Standard errors. A third analysis uses Tobit models to check the lack of true continuity on the S score, which ranges from -1 to 1.

Finally, there are a wide range of issues covered in UNGA voting, which include political issues (e.g., condemning the use of force), membership issues (e.g., admitting new members), and administrative issues (e.g., passing the budget). Some votes are likely to be less useful for distinguishing states' preferences because everyone agrees on them or they are over a very specific issue. To address the concern that looking at all UNGA votes includes non-competitive and uninformative votes, different sets of votes are also analyzed. First, votes are classified as close or not close. Votes that pass by less than a 65 % majority are considered close votes (Jenkins 1999; Cox and Poole 2002; Snyder and Groseclose 2000).[26] A new dependent variable is created which is the S score between states only on close votes. Second, we examine votes on three particular issues: security, economics, and governments' treatment of their citizens.[27] These issues, unlike administrative issues, are likely to better correlate with the type of preferences that states might want out of UNSC representatives. Again, we create three new sets of S scores for all states based on these votes.

---

[25] We also tried the log of the stronger divided by the weaker and the sign and significance of this and all the other variables are the same. Lai and Morey and Bearce and Bondanella use similar measures.

[26] We also test other thresholds of 60 % and 70 %. The results for our hypothesized variables do not change. These results are presented in the online Appendix.

[27] The type of vote is coded by reading the summary of each vote and classifying them according to their subject matter.

4 Empirical results

4.1 Similarity between all dyads

Table 1 presents the results of models that include the geographic representation variables and the lagged, dependent variable for the all dyads data. It then adds the different sets of control variables one at a time and the last model has all the variables. Models that include different sets of UNGA votes are included in the Online Appendix Table 1.[28] The joint region coefficient tests whether non-P5 states in the same region have higher preference similarity than non-P5 states of different regions. The results of this coefficient in all of the models do not reject the first hypothesis that states in the same region are likely to have greater preference similarity and thus provide better substantive representation compared to permanent UNSC members and states from other regions. The substantive effect in Table 1 varies greatly across models, with the smallest effect in the model with all the control variables, with only a .009 increase in the S score (which ranges from −1 to 1). Since the range of the dependent variable is 2 units, a .009 increase corresponds to just a .45 % increase.[29] The effect is larger for different types of votes, with the largest effect being .09 or a 4.5 % increase for Close Votes.[30] Another interesting finding is the similarity between jointly P5 pairs and P5–non-P5 pairs. In both cases, preference similarity is lower compared to non-P5 dyads of different regions. Permanent members are less similar than each other and other countries in terms of their voting in the UNGA. The effect size is also substantively significant. P5 and non-permanent members have about a .044 less similarity and P5 members have roughly a .056 lower level of similarity with each other for all votes in Model 7 (and again substantially higher for different vote types). This latter coefficient translates to about a 2.8 % change across the range of the dependent variable.

These results suggest two things. First, interest convergence (as measured by preference similarity) is better among non-permanent members 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 even increasing NPSCs for providing better representation. This difference in similarity could be for a variety of reasons including the permanent members' global interests that may lead them into conflict with other UN members (Voeten 2004).

The second implication of these findings is that regional descriptive representation is salient, as evidenced by states in the same region having greater levels of similarity compared to other UN member pairings. Though the substantive effect is small, these results suggest a basis for substantive representation from regional descriptive representation. This effect is even more pronounced when compared to representation by the permanent Council members. The observed lack of substantive representation by permanent members, however, raises questions about the substantive benefit of another reform ambition: adding new permanent, regional members. This question will be explored later in this paper.

---

[28] The number of cases varies across models because the number of missing cases varies with different vote types.

[29] This is calculated by taking the coefficient and dividing by the range of the DV (2). So in for Model 7, .009/2 = .0045 or .45 % of the range of the DV.

[30] Close Votes are Reported in the Online Appendix, Table 1.

Table 1 Non-Directed Dyadic Analysis of UNGA Voting Similarity, 1966–2007

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
	Base	Descrip	Regime	Econ	Power	CW	Full
Lag DV	0.877***	0.880***	0.870***	0.864***	0.876***	0.876***	0.861***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Joint Region	0.019***	0.018***	0.017***	0.014***	0.017***	0.022***	0.009***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Joint P5	−0.056***	−0.056***	−0.052***	−0.057***	−0.060***	−0.052***	−0.056***
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.013)
P5- Non P5	−0.044***	−0.043***	−0.045***	−0.045***	−0.044***	−0.043***	−0.044***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Jt Language		0.004***					−0.001
		(0.001)					(0.001)
Jt Religion		−0.003***					0.001
		(0.000)					(0.001)
Jt Ethnicity		0.009***					−0.000
		(0.001)					(0.002)
JtDemocracy			−0.027***				−0.019***
			(0.001)				(0.001)
Polity Diff			−0.002***				−0.002***
			(0.000)				(0.000)
GDP/capDiff				−0.008***			−0.007***
				(0.000)			(0.000)
LowTradDep				0.284***			0.364***
				(0.085)			(0.094)

Table 1 (continued)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Rel Capab					-0.013^{***}		-0.004^{*}
					(0.002)		(0.002)
Allies					0.007^{***}		0.014^{***}
					(0.001)		(0.001)
MID					0.003		0.000
					(0.007)		(0.007)
Joint US Ally						-0.013^{***}	-0.012^{***}
						(0.001)	(0.001)
Jt Soviet Ally						0.015^{***}	-0.000
						(0.004)	(0.003)
Constant	0.083^{***}	0.082^{***}	0.111^{***}	0.163^{***}	0.095^{***}	0.085^{***}	0.171^{***}
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.003)
Adj R-squared	0.792	0.798	0.810	0.800	0.792	0.793	0.814
N	502,891	498,150	391,618	455,508	502,891	502,891	372,133
F	94,759	58,873	60,823	62,875	59,756	65,250	28,101

Clustered robust standard errors are in Parentheses

$^{*}P < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$

The results for the other measures of descriptive representation are mixed across the models. All three measures: *Joint Ethnicity, Joint Language, and Joint Religion* show mixed findings in Table 1 and for the models using different vote types. Across these three variables, they are never consistently positive and significant as expected. For all of these variables, the effect sizes are small with the largest being .45 % of the range of the dependent variable in Tables 1 and 3.5 % in the table in the Online Appendix. One explanation for this lack of policy cohesion based on cultural identity is the variance across states with similar identity characteristics. For example, states with similar religions have less similarity on economic issues. Looking deeper, there is great variance in levels of economic development across states with similar religions. The GDP per capita of states whose dominant religion is Christianity ranges between 100 s and 10,000 s 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 other shared characteristics have mixed findings. First, the effect of regime type is not completely as expected. The *Polity Difference* variable is negative and significant, but the *Joint Democracy* variable is also negative and significant – the opposite of what was expected.[31] States with similar regimes are more likely to vote together, but jointly democratic regimes are less likely to do so than non-democracies. This finding may be driven by the different priorities of democratic states, including development levels – as suggested by the large coefficient for the economic issue votes. For instance, democratic states have a tremendous range in GDP/capita, suggesting that while regime type influences preference similarity, other issues may trump this shared characteristic. To test this, we interact *Joint Democracy* with *Development Difference*. This model yields some support for our interpretation. Two democracies at the same development level are not different than other pairs of states in terms of their preference similarity. However, as the difference in the development level increases, jointly democratic dyads have less preference similarity than other pairs of states.[32] Also, the correlation between joint democracy and political similarity could be influencing the Joint Democracy finding. Similar regime types have higher levels of voting similarity and within that set, jointly democratic ones have lower levels of voting similarity. When we run models without political similarity, the effect of joint democracy is positive and significant or null for all but the All Votes and Economic Votes models.[33] This finding reinforces the earlier interpretation about other issues driving voting differences across democracies.

Among the security interest variables, there are also mixed findings. First, the dyadic measure of *Relative Capabilities* is negative (as expected) and significant in model 5 but not in the Full model (Model 7). It also changes signs across different vote types. This finding highlights two themes in the analysis: the issues used to examine voting matter and factors related to substantive interests vary within issue areas. For example, during the Cold War, while the US and the Soviet Union had similar levels of power compared to other US or Soviet dyads, they likely had starkly different votes in the General Assembly on domestic issues such as human rights. The *Alliances* variable

---

[31] These two variables have a correlation of 0.35.
[32] See Appendix Table 8 and Appendix Figure 1.
[33] These results are in Appendix Table 9.

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. As for the *MID* variable, a MID between two states reduces similarity, though this effect is not consistently significant.

The findings for the *Joint US* and *Joint Soviet* allies variables are the opposite of what was expected. States that are allied with the US tend to have dissimilar voting records with each other. Heterogeneity in US allies may also account for this finding. American allies in the developing world (e.g., Rio Pact members) may have different preferences from their more developed-world counterparts (e.g., NATO). We run a model where we include a variable for whether states in a dyad are both members of NATO and find that NATO members have statistically significant preference similarity, providing some evidence for our interpretation of the initial findings. The sign for the Allies of the Soviet Union variable is positive but it is not consistently significant. The joint CMEA variable (Appendix Table 6) produces the same results.

In contrast, the results on the economic development indicators are generally as 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 at least partially explain voting similarity, suggesting that states may be better represented by states within their own economic grouping. The effect of this variable going from two standard deviations below to above the mean is modest, with a small effect of 1.5 % of the range of the dependent variable and a larger effect of about 8.5 %, depending on the model. Also as expected, dyads marked by higher levels of mutual trade dependence have higher voting similarities. The effect size is small given that trade dependence is generally small.

Last, 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 (Appendix Table 6). The R-squared of all the models is high, though this is likely due to the inclusion of the lagged dependent variable.[34]

This first set of models does not reject hypothesis 1 that states in the same region are likely to have greater preference similarity than states in other regions. To check if this relationship is potentially driven by other factors, we control for a variety of factors, including whether dyads including Israel and the US-Israel dyad is driving this result. We also look at whether foreign aid is influencing regional preference similarity[35] and finally whether membership in different international organizations is influencing the results in Tables 1 and 2.[36] Adding all of these variables does not change the core result that states in the same region have greater preference similarity than those in other regions.

4.2 Security council members and non-members preference similarity

Table 2 presents the results of the UNSC only models with control variables added in blocs and then altogether. Unlike the data used for Table 1, the number of cases is

---

[34] Appendix Table 2 lists the R squared for Table 1 Model 7 with no lagged dependent variable and it is substantially smaller.
[35] Data for foreign aid comes from the OECD.
[36] We look at joint membership in the G77, ASEAN, EU, NATO, NAM, GATT/WTO, OAS. OECD, OSCE, and OAU. Both of these tables are in the Online Appendix (Table 19).

smaller as these are only pairings between a Security Council member (for the years it was on the Council) and all other states. The results differ from those in Table 1. *Joint Region* for NPSCs is positive and significant in 6 of the 7 models. It is not significant in the Full Model and the effect size is very small in Model 4, with the Economic variables. Also, looking at different vote types,[37] the joint region variable is not significant for the economic, security, or domestic votes. While co-regional states generally have higher similarity, it does not appear to be the case that states elected to the Security Council have more similar preferences with states in their own regions compared to NPSCs and states from different regions once you control for other factors that also influence preference similarity. It seems that economic factors are primarily influencing this outcome. The effect size is also smaller than in the previous table. The politics and capital involved in becoming elected to the Security Council, rather than possible local externalities or appeals to the regional median, appear to explain this finding. Thus, those states that make it on the UNSC may actually not substantively represent their regions. Thus, hypothesis 2 was not generally rejected.

Again, permanent members have lower levels of similarity with each other compared to NPSCs and states from different regions. P5 members share less in common with other states, compared to non-permanent states from different regions. The general result across all the tables suggests that P5 members are not necessarily the best representatives for other states. The effect of the control variables is fairly similar to those in Table 1.

One exception is *relative capabilities* which is now more uniformly significant in the predicted direction. The *Allies* variable is no longer consistently significant and is only significant for other vote types but not all votes. We also tested whether these results varied from the Cold War (66–90) and post Cold War periods (91–07). The results for the region variables are unchanged though there are some differences for the control variables.[38]

We presented two theoretical arguments to motivate hypothesis 2, elected states have different preferences than others in their region because of the cost of getting elected and states change their preferences while on the UNSC because of pressure from the permanent members. The results from Table 2 do not distinguish between these explanations. To probe whether both causal mechanisms are empirically supported, we conduct some additional analyses. These models are meant to provide some empirical plausibility to these mechanisms and are not meant as definitive tests. Future work should more fully and rigorously analyze these mechanisms.

To examine whether states that get elected are different than states that are not elected because of the cost of running, we compare the similarity score of three pairs of states: both have been on the UNSC, one has been on the UNSC, neither has ever served on the UNSC. If the preferences of those elected to the UNSC are different than those that are not elected, we should expect to see more similarity in the both UNSC and the both not elected compared with the mixed group. We only look at a dyad-year where neither member of the dyad is currently serving on the UNSC and exclude any dyad with a permanent SC member. This removes the potential effect of states changing their behavior when they are on the UNSC, the other causal mechanism. Also, we run

---

[37] Appendix Table 17.
[38] Appendix Table 20.

Table 2 UNSC members-Other State Dyads, 1967–2007

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
	Base	Descrip	Regime	Econ	Power	CW	Full
Lag DV	0.918***	0.917***	0.902***	0.897***	0.917***	0.917***	0.888***
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)
Joint Region	0.014***	0.015***	0.009***	0.004*	0.015***	0.017***	0.001
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Joint P5	−0.038***	−0.038***	−0.036***	−0.041***	−0.039***	−0.035***	−0.040***
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
P5- Non P5	−0.031***	−0.031***	−0.034***	−0.032***	−0.027***	−0.030***	−0.031***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
NPSC-P5	−0.020***	−0.020***	−0.022***	−0.023***	−0.018***	−0.019***	−0.020***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Jt Language		0.012***					0.010**
		(0.003)					(0.004)
Jt Religion		−0.006***					−0.002
		(0.001)					(0.002)
Jt Ethnicity		−0.012**					−0.016***
		(0.004)					(0.005)
JtDemocracy			−0.034***				−0.023***
			(0.002)				(0.002)
PolityDiff			−0.003***				−0.003***
			(0.000)				(0.000)
GDP/cap Diff				−0.013***			−0.009***
				(0.001)			(0.001)

Table 2 (continued)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
LowTradeDepd				0.275			0.390*
				(0.150)			(0.178)
Relative Capab					-0.030***		-0.032***
					(0.005)		(0.005)
Allies					-0.004		0.002
					(0.003)		(0.003)
MID					-0.003		-0.003
					(0.013)		(0.014)
Joint US Ally						-0.011***	-0.011***
						(0.002)	(0.002)
Jt Soviet Ally						0.022***	0.002
						(0.006)	(0.007)
Constant	0.058***	0.061***	0.103***	0.178***	0.083***	0.060***	0.212***
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.008)
Adj R-squared	0.882	0.883	0.891	0.883	0.882	0.882	0.892
N	59,495	59,239	52,368	57,676	59,495	59,495	51,621
F	29,468	18,804	21,814	20,950	19,265	21,080	9705

Clustered robust standard errors are in Parentheses

*$P < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

our models only on states in the same region. This is to look at whether within a region, states that are elected are different than states that are not.[39]

We find some empirical support for this argument. For all and close vote types, a dyad of states that have both served has greater similarity than a dyad of one that has served and that has not, which this mechanism expects. However, this variable falls out of a traditional .05 level of statistical significance in one model. Also, the variable for neither has served is negative and significant, which is not expected as dyads of those that have never served have less similarity than dyads of a state that has served and one that has not. Finally, this effect varies by whether the states are in or outside of their region.

To examine the second explanation, that states change their votes after they get elected to the UNSC, we examine only states that have been elected to the UNSC. We create a dyadic dataset where the first state is a non-permanent UNSC member measured at three time points: 1) year before they served; 2) year one of their term; 3) year two of their term. Each of these three time points are used as independent variables. The second state is all states currently not serving on the UNSC. We exclude states serving on the UNSC to try and isolate the change of not serving to serving for the first state by not including UNSC members as their dyadic pair. This mechanism expects that the similarity score for years one and two on the UNSC should be lower than the year before. The sample is restricted to just states within the same region. We also include the other variables in the previously reported models.

The results of these analyses generally support this mechanism.[40] For both All and Close votes, states in year one of their UNSC terms have lower voting similarity than in the year before they served. These results provide some evidence that once elected, states alter their voting patterns to conform to the desires of major powers who might be providing them with additional bilateral and multilateral aid (Dreher et al. 2009a).[41] However, this effect is not significant in year two. The coefficients are still negative but their sizes are substantially smaller, making them no longer statistically significant, relative to the standard errors which did not change.

4.3 Differences by region and reform proposals

Drawing on these results, we use our data to examine which regions have the greatest cohesion, how well existing permanent members represent their regions, and how a proposed group of permanent members would do. First, we re-analyze the models in Tables 1 and 2 by substituting a joint region variable of each region in place of the one joint region variable.[42] Since the six region variables are a disaggregation of the joint region variable, the difference between the all dyad and UNSC only models is the same as in Tables 1 and 2. In the all dyad models for All Votes, all the states in a same region have higher voting similarity, similar to the findings in Table 1.[43]

---

[39] See Appendix Table 10 and 10b. 10b runs the models on states in different regions to see if there is any difference and there is not.

[40] Results are in Online Appendix Table 11.

[41] Results for both of these additional analyses are available upon request.

[42] The identified regions are based on the previously discussed UN voting regions.

[43] See Online Appendix Table 12.

Table 3 presents the results for the UNSC only models. In these models, no set of dyads in any region has consistently higher levels of voting similarity across the different votes. Asian non-permanent Security Council members and other Asian states have a lower voting similarity for All, Security and economic votes, a greater similarity for Close votes, and no significant difference for the domestic vote categories. Western Europe is the only region that shows a consistently higher level of voting similarity between non-permanent UNSC members and other states in that region. This result also fits with the earlier logic that differences are likely to be more pronounced in regions with greater economic differences. Also, 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 states that are actually elected. They also appear to be unaffected by differences in nomination procedures across groupings.[44] If past non-permanent UNSC members are an indicator of which states are likely to be considered for permanent membership, regional representation is likely to occur within the WEOG, the most competitive region, though the results are not significant across all the models.

Next, we look at how well the current permanent members represent their respective regions. We take the models from Table 2 (UNSC members only) and break apart the P5–non-P5 variable into each P5 member and their respective region and another variable, P5–non-P5 different regions.[45] Compared to dyads of NPSCs and states from different regions, the US has a lower voting similarity with states in their respective region, the Western European and Others Group, for all but Close Votes. For these votes, the US has a higher voting similarity. If GRULAC is used as the US region, the US always has a lower voting similarity. Russia/Soviet Union has a lower voting similarity for all vote types with Eastern Europe. The UK and France have lower voting similarities or no difference in similarity with states in their respective regions, except for Close Votes, where they have higher voting similarity than NPSC/different region dyads. Finally, China's voting similarity with other Asian states is similarly mixed, greater for close, less for security and domestic votes, and no different for All and Economic votes.[46] These results suggest that Asia, Western Europe and Eastern Europe are well represented by their permanent members for Close Votes, but not for any other issue.

To examine the potential effect of expanding the number of permanent UNSC members, we re-run the UNSC models, exploring how Japan, Brazil, and India – permanent seat contenders – represent their respective regions. The basis for adding these three states has very little to do with representation and instead focuses on their economic power. However, similar to looking at how well the current P5 represent their regions, it is important to see if these three states would do any better. These results are listed in Table 4.[47] Japan fares the worst. It has a lower level of voting similarity with

---

[44] Each grouping determines its own rules for nomination. While rule-taking norms exist, most regions allow states to run for UNSC seats whenever they choose. Notable exceptions include Africa, which rotates nominations by subregion, GRULAC, which rotates between Latin American and Caribbean nations, and the African and Asian groups' agreement to nominate an occasional Arab "swing" seat.

[45] See Appendix Table 18.

[46] 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.

[47] We again do not include the control variables as they are the same as what is reported in Table 2. For this model, we treat the UN Security Council as having 8 permanent members since 1965 (the current permanent plus Brazil, India, and Japan).

Table 3 UNSC members Dyads by region, 1967–2007

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	All Votes	Close	Security	Economic	Domestic
Asia	−0.015*	0.101***	−0.026***	−0.045**	−0.012
	(0.006)	(0.026)	(0.008)	(0.017)	(0.008)
Americas	0.017***	−0.116***	0.010	0.163***	0.025**
	(0.005)	(0.026)	(0.008)	(0.018)	(0.009)
WE	0.037***	0.108***	0.056***	0.000	0.059***
	(0.006)	(0.016)	(0.012)	(0.017)	(0.009)
EE	0.010	0.190***	0.032**	−0.019	0.031*
	(0.011)	(0.028)	(0.012)	(0.028)	(0.013)
Africa	−0.016***	0.088***	−0.019***	−0.070***	−0.022**
	(0.003)	(0.016)	(0.006)	(0.010)	(0.008)
ME	0.007	0.089**	−0.005	0.003	0.025*
	(0.005)	(0.029)	(0.010)	(0.024)	(0.010)
Constant	0.217***	0.309***	0.472***	1.141***	0.448***
	(0.008)	(0.029)	(0.014)	(0.028)	(0.016)
Ad Rsquared	0.892	0.457	0.708	0.513	0.723
N	51,621	30,280	44,998	32,941	41,412
F	7910	1039	2073	643.4	3746

Clustered robust standard errors are in Parentheses

$*P < .05$, $** p < .01$, $*** p < .001$

Asian states compared to NPSC/different region dyads for all vote types, except Close Votes. This might be a reason it is opposed by some states in its own region. Brazil and India do a little better. Each country has a higher similarity with states in their region compared to NPSC/different region dyads for one model. Both have higher similarity on economic votes, with the effect being quite large for Brazil, with a 13 % increase over the range of the dependent variable. India's and Brazil's alignment with their respective regions for economic votes makes sense since both have had ties to the non-aligned movement and previously were considered developing countries, with India still having a relatively lower GDP/capita. However, each has a lower level of similarity on security votes with countries in their region. So while Brazil and India add some degree of representation for the Americas and Asia, it is limited to a few specific areas and not one that the UNSC primarily addresses, security concerns.

5 Discussion and conclusions

This paper looks at whether geographic representation produces substantive representation in the UNSC with a specific focus on elected non-permanent members. Examining the effect of geographic groupings of states on their preference similarity, our results suggest that states in the same region do tend to have greater preference similarity, but this does not appear to consistently be the case for those states that have

actually been elected as UNSC members. While being in the same region may create some policy similarity, these empirical results do not rule out the theory that the cost of campaigning and being a UNSC member and the interests of major powers leads those that are elected to not be representative of the preferences of states in their region.

While the effect of being in the same region is limited and conditional, we find 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 adding more UNSC members based on region would improve substantive representation relative to that supplied by the existing permanent members, but not necessarily for states in the same region as 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 P5 are also major powers or whether being a permanent member shifts states' preferences. Incorporation of minorities into leadership in legislatures has been demonstrated to improve representation of minority issues (Preuhs 2006), but our findings reveal that the most integrated members are less aligned with other UN members. Adding Brazil, India, and Japan as permanent members because of their economic capabilities may not necessarily promote greater representation of their regions as only Brazil and India showed greater preference similarity for economic votes.

Our analysis suggests that representation for a state in the UN Security Council by an elected, non-permanent member as measured by preference similarity is marginal if the basis of representation is regional geography. Substantive similarities like the shared development level of states are likely to produce a greater degree of similarity. This suggests that attempts to reform the UNSC to achieve more equitable representation might be better served if representation is based on factors other than descriptive, regional representation. Whether adding more non-permanent members for under-represented regions or incorporating new permanent members, it is unclear that regional representatives have the same substantive interests as their constituents. While states within regions tend to be more cohesive with each other than with states outside of their region, the level of similarity is small, and states that are elected to the Security Council often are not any more similar in General Assembly voting to states in their own regions than states in other regions. This suggests that states elected to the Security Council start with preferences that are not especially close 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 regions suggests that states in regional groupings may not be substantively well-represented in the Security Council.

An alternative approach might be to add new UNSC members according to economic status. We observe that how close two states are in their development level is a consistent predictor of shared preferences as measured by UNGA vote similarity, regardless of the type of votes. Representatives based on development level would have greater preference similarity to their constituents and would presumably represent their substantive interests better. This, however, would be a substantial departure from the traditional seat allocation in the Council. One way to address this problem would be

Table 4 UNSC Dyads of Current and Proposed Permanent UNSC members, 1966–2007

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	All Votes	Close	Security	Economic	Domestic
Japan- Asia	−0.067***	−0.044	−0.095***	−0.092***	−0.051**
	(0.012)	(0.044)	(0.013)	(0.022)	(0.016)
India- Asia	−0.030***	0.017	−0.045**	0.075**	−0.017
	(0.007)	(0.047)	(0.014)	(0.029)	(0.013)
Brazil- Americas	−0.004	−0.207***	−0.066***	0.259***	0.015
	(0.007)	(0.052)	(0.015)	(0.023)	(0.018)
US WEOG	−0.059***	0.123***	−0.131***	−0.282***	−0.067***
	(0.006)	(0.022)	(0.012)	(0.026)	(0.011)
UK WEOG	−0.013**	0.125***	−0.057***	−0.098***	−0.023**
	(0.005)	(0.019)	(0.010)	(0.025)	(0.008)
France WEOG	−0.004	0.099***	−0.065***	−0.024	0.008
	(0.005)	(0.020)	(0.010)	(0.025)	(0.008)
Russia WEOG	−0.025***	−0.119***	−0.037***	−0.097**	−0.077***
	(0.004)	(0.035)	(0.009)	(0.030)	(0.012)
China Asia	−0.002	0.122***	−0.031***	−0.005	−0.023*
	(0.004)	(0.029)	(0.010)	(0.022)	(0.011)
Taiwan Asia	−0.016	−0.011	−0.071**	−0.076	−0.117
	(0.020)	(0.042)	(0.022)	(0.063)	(0.076)
Constant	0.198***	0.285***	0.435***	1.109***	0.411***
	(0.007)	(0.030)	(0.014)	(0.027)	(0.015)
Adjusted R-squared	0.892	0.458	0.710	0.508	0.723
N	51,621	30,280	44,998	32,941	41,412
F	6820	888.6	1885	564.8	3117

Clustered robust standard errors are in Parentheses

*$P < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

to use this approach for newly created seats. One concern might be that an elected seat for a less developed country might not reflect the other requirement of contribution to peace and security. However, there are candidates among LDCs 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 classified it below the average GDP/capita for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) is also a large contributor to UN peacekeeping missions.[48]

Beyond reform, these results suggest that states in the United Nations may want to more closely scrutinize their regional representatives to insure that representatives' substantive interests match their own. In less diverse regions, like the WEOG region,

---

[48] Data for GDP/Capita is from the World Bank Development Indicators. The data is $950 in 2005 US$. Data for UN Contributions and Peacekeeping are from the UN website.

there is high similarity between elected non-permanent members and other, co-regional states. For almost every other region, the 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, as done among African members.

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. 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, or 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.

References

Bearce, D. H., & Bondanella, S. (2007). Intergovernmental organizations, socialization, and member-state interest convergence. *International Organization, 61*(04), 703–733.

Carter, D., & Stone, R. (2015). *Democracy and multilateralism: the case of vote buying in the UN general assembly.* International: Organization.

Cox, G. W., & Poole, K. T. (2002). On measuring partisanship in roll-call voting: the U.S. house of representatives, 1877-1999. *American Journal of Political Science, 46*, 477–489.

Dreher, A., Sturm, J.-E., & Vreeland, J. (2009a). Development aid and international politics: does membership on the UN Security Council influence World Bank decisions? *Journal of Development Economics., 88*, 1–18.

Dreher, A., Sturm, J.-E., & Vreeland, J. R. (2009b). Global horse trading: IMF loans for votes in the United Nations Security Council. *European Economic Review, 53*(7), 742–757.

Dreher, A., Gould, M., Rablen, M. D., & Vreeland, J. R. (2014). The determinants of election to the United Nations Security Council. *Public Choice, 158*, 51–83.

Ellingsen, T. (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.

Gartkze, E. (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, E. (2007). The capitalist peace. *American Journal of Political Science, 51*(1), 166–191.

Gartzke, Erik and Dong-Joon Jo. 2002. "United Nations General Assembly Voting, 1946–1996. Version 3.0. http://pages.ucsd.edu/~egartzke/htmlpages/data.html

Ghosn, F., Palmer, G., & Bremer, S. (2004). The MID3 data set, 1993-2001: procedures, coding rules, and description. *Conflict Management and Peace Science, 21*, 133–154.

Gibler, D. M., & Sarkees, M. (2004). Measuring alliances: the correlates of war formal interstate alliance data set, 1816-2000. *Journal of Peace Research, 41*(2), 211–222.

Gleditsch, K. S. (2002). Expanded trade and GDP data. *Journal of Conflict Resolution, 46*(5), 712–724.

Gleditsch, K. S., & Ward, M. D. (2001). Measuring space: a minimum-distance database and applications to international studies. *Journal of Peace Research, 38*(6), 739–758.

Hurrell, A. (1995). Explaining the resurgence of regionalism in world politics. *Review of International Studies, 21*(4), 331–358.

Jenkins, J. A. (1999). Examining the bonding effects of party: a comparative analysis of roll-call voting in the U.S. and confederate houses. *American Journal of Political Science, 43*, 1144–1165.

Kim, S. Y., & Russett, B. (1996). The new politics of voting alignments in the United Nations general assembly. *International Organization, 50*(04), 629–652.

Kuziemko, I., & Werker, E. (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, B., & Morey, D. S. (2006). Impact of regime type on the influence of U.S. foreign aid. *Foreign Policy Analysis, 2*(4), 385–404.

Lai, B., & Reiter, D. (2000). Democracy, political similarity, and international alliances, 1816-1992. *Journal of Conflict Resolution, 44*(2), 203–227.

Lake, D. A. (1997). Regional security complexes: systems approach. In D. A. Lake & P. M. Morgan (Eds.), *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World*. State College, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.

MacFarquhar, Neil. 2008/10/11. "A U.N. Charm Offensive Topped Off by Dessert." *The New York Times*, A16. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/12/world/12nations.html?_r=1&ref=world&oref=slogin>.

Malone, D. M. (2000). Eyes on the prize: the quest for nonpermanent seats on the UN security council. *Global Governance, 6*, 3–23.

Mansbridge, J. (1999). Should blacks represent blacks and women represent women? A contingent 'yes'. *Journal of Politics, 61*(3), 628–657.

Marshall, Monty G., and Keith Jaggers. 2002. *Polity IV Project*: *Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions*, *1800–2002*. College Park, MD: Center for International Development and Conflict Management, University of Maryland. <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/polity/index.htm>.

Patrick, S. M., & McDonald, K. C. (2010). Security enlargement and U.S. interests. *Council on Foreign Relations, Special Report No., 59*, 1–56.

Phillips, A. (1998). *The politics of presence*. Oxford University Press US.

Pitkin, H. F. (1972). *The concept of representation*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

Preuhs, R. 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.

Signorino, C. S., & Ritter, J. M. (1999). Tau-b or nor tau-b: measuring the similarity of foreign policy positions. *International Studies Quarterly, 43*(1), 115–144.

Singer, J. D. (1987). Reconstructing the correlates of war dataset on material capabilities of states, 1816-1985. *International Interactions, 14*, 115–132.

Snyder, J. M., & Groseclose, T. (2000). Estimating party influence in congressional roll call voting. *American Journal of Political Science., 44*(2), 193–211.

"Special Research Report No. 1: UN Security Council Elections 2009." 2009. Security Council Report. New York, NY: Security council report. <www.securitycouncilreport.org/special-research-report/lookup-c-glKWLeMTIsG-b-5488243.php>.

Third Meeting on Security Council Reform Looks at Regional Representation. 2009/04/02. *Center for UN Reform Education*. <www.centerforunreform.org/node/395>.

Thompson, A. (2006). Coercion through IOs: the security council and the logic of information transmission. *International Organization, 60*(01), 1–34.

Väyrynen, R. (2003). Regionalism: old and new. *International Studies Review, 5*(1), 25–51.

Voeten, E. (2001). Outside options and the logic of security council action. *American Political Science Review, 95*(04), 845–858.

Voeten, E. (2004). Resisting the lonely superpower: responses of states in the United Nations to U.S. dominance. *The Journal of Politics, 66*(03), 729–754.

Wendt, A. (1994). Collective identity formation and the international state. *American Political Science Review, 88*(2), 384–396.