Your Silence Speaks Volumes:

The Politics of Absence in the UN General Assembly

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June 25, 2022

Abstract

Country participation in one-state, one-vote forums like the United Nations General Assembly often reflects underlying power asymmetries and endogenous political processes. While voting alignment may be an important preference indicator, this paper contends that silence is politically significant as well. Absence can be a form of protest, disengagement, or a strategy for managing competing interests. Alternatively, absence can be forced upon a country by institutional rules that encourage disenfranchisement. We examine the politics of absences at the General Assembly, highlighting two types of nonappearance with political origins: institutional disenfranchisement and strategic absence. Drawing on new data on the United Nation's Article 19 process, which strips voting rights for nonpayment of dues, we provide evidence that nearly fifty percent of absences are tied to the General Assembly's own actions. We then build on Bailey, Strezhnev and Voeten (2017) roll-call voting data to highlight the occurrence of strategic absences, which often reflect geopolitical considerations. Taking these non-random reasons for missingness into account provides a fuller picture of how weak states engage with international institutions and highlights how silence can be a consequence of larger political processes.

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‡Several people provided invaluable contributions to, and advice for, this research. The authors would specifically like to thank Lionel Berridge, Courtney Fung, Brian Greenhill, Matthew Jenkins, Jon Pevehouse, Felicity Vabulas, and Erik Voeten, as well as Olivia Courrier, Dan Gamarnik, Jennie Kim, Miles Larson, Ilia Nikiforov, Kristina Roeher, Pinn Siraprapasiri, Lauren Tulley, and Annjulie Vester who served as research assistants for this project.

1 Introduction

In March 2014, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) held a meeting on the Russian annexation of Crimea. Russia's stealth takeover, which began with special operations troops seizing territory and ended with an illegal referendum and treaty of accession, clearly violated international law. Yet the UNGA meeting was surprisingly contentious. Russia argued that its actions reflected the principle of self-determination. Few governments seemed convinced by this argument, but the vote on a Ukraine-sponsored, Western-backed resolution condemning the referendum was split: 100 yes, 11 no, and 58 abstentions. More than 20 UN members, including Israel, Iran, and Serbia, were absent from the vote entirely.

International relations (IR) scholars typically treat UNGA absences as politically inconsequential, reflecting idiosyncratic causes and employed by unimportant states. Yet absences often have political origins. One state may be stripped of voting rights, making it ineligible to vote. Another state may strategically skip voting on a particular resolution. This latter scenario sheds new light on the UNGA Crimea resolution. In the run-up to voting, Russia's UN ambassador lobbied aggressively against the Ukranian-sponsored resolution. Many countries that sympathized with Ukraine chose to abstain or be absent due to Russian pressure. Indeed, Russia's UN Ambassador Vitaly Churkin declared the final vote a "moral victory" for Russian diplomacy,[1] with Israel's absence later described as a high point in the two countries' bilateral relationship (Krasna, 2018, 13). For the United States, in contrast, Israel's absence led to increased bilateral tensions.[2]

Under what conditions are member states absent from UNGA votes? And what do these absences reveal about the political dynamics of international organizations (IOs)? These questions have theoretical and empirical significance. For IR scholars, a rich literature

[1] Louis Charbonneau and Mirjam Donath, "U.N. General Assembly declares Crimea secession vote invalid," *Reuters*, 27 March 2014.

[2] Barak Ravid, "U.S. Officials Angry: Israel Doesn't Back Stance on Russia," *Haaretz*, available at: `https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-u-s-angry-at-israel-for-silence-on-ukraine-1.5244919`.

explores the pathways by which states influence cooperative outcomes. Powerful countries may use IOs to further their own policy objectives, leveraging informal mechanisms of control to sway key decisions (Stone, 2011). But even formal, ostensibly democratic institutional procedures may hide power politics. The General Assembly is an inclusive, one-state, one-vote forum, yet, as we highlight in this paper, it has repeatedly stripped voting rights from many of the weakest states. UNGA resolutions are symbolic and normatively powerful, yet members strategically skip certain votes. These contradictions suggest that voting outcomes hide a more complex political story.

Understanding the nature of absences is also important because empirical analyses rely on UNGA voting records as a meaningful indicator of a state's preferences (Gartzke, 1998; Signorino and Ritter, 1999) or view of the US-led liberal order (Bailey, Strezhnev and Voeten, 2017), but commonly drop cases where countries are absent. Yet if a country is absent because the UN stripped its voting rights, this absence is surely a meaningful signal about its integration into the international system. Alternatively, sometimes a single strategic absence reveals more about preferences than dozens of votes. For the US-Israeli relationship, Israel's decision to skip the UNGA vote on Crimea was one of the most significant bilateral political developments in 2014. The absence illustrated Israel's growing cooperative relationship with Russia and, perhaps also, the waning of US influence on the international stage. Similarly, other important middle power absences like Iran, Lebanon, and Morocco may suggest increasing ambivalence about the US-led international order.

Drawing on a new dataset that supplements existing UNGA roll call data, this paper examines the politics of absence at the UN General Assembly and finds that many absences are endogenous to the UN system. Previous research highlights how state absences at UNGA often correlate with a lack of state capacity and low-salience issues (Panke, 2013, 2014). We identify two new distinct reasons why states miss UNGA votes: institutional disenfranchisement and strategic absence. In the former case, the UN has stripped voting

rights from more than 50 countries since 1990. Under Article 19 of the UN Charter, the UN Committee on Contributions can recommend banning countries from voting if they fail to pay two years of dues. We collect new data on this process, finding that when the UN budget surged in the 1990s, a large number of countries found themselves in arrears and subsequently disenfranchised.

We also highlight a second type of absence–strategic absence-that occurs when a state intentionally skips out on a specific vote. We operationalize strategic absence as occurring when a state is absent from a vote on the same day that it is present for other UNGA votes. Drawing on legislative voting literature in American and Comparative Politics, we argue that strategic absence is a way for weaker states to navigate competing geopolitical pressures. We test the observable implications of this argument using UNGA roll-call voting data, and find empirical support for the idea that ties to the United States as well as preference alignment with the US affect the use of this strategy.

Our findings shed light on how power manifests in international organizations. States with large material capabilities are clearly advantaged within UNGA, but institutional procedures themselves may also suppress the rights of weak states. Interestingly, however, institutional adjustment has also occurred. Over time, the UN realized that the absence of so many weak states from the General Assembly was a problem. After prolonged negotiations, UN member states changed the dues assessment process, lowering the minimum dues in an acknowledgement of the dire situation. The General Assembly also began to advertise the exemption process more broadly–a key change, as in practice, the General Assembly and the Committee on Contributions grant all exemption requests, regardless of the quality of information received.[3] This iterative process suggests that perhaps the institutionalization of power increases transparency and makes it easier for weaker states to contest inequality. In

[3]This statement is true for our data collection period of 1990 to 2014 with one exception – in 2000, the Committee on Contributions recommended that Comoros not be granted an exemption. The General Assembly, however, subsequently over turned this decision.

contrast, our discussion of strategic absences highlights how a gap in institutional processes – such as the UNGA's failure to report countries that miss votes – opens up space for more traditional power dynamics between states.

2 The Politics of Absence

How should we interpret an actor's absence from a political venue? At a conceptual level, theorizing about absences is challenging because the category is broad and all-encompassing. Some absences are clearly exogneous, the result of traffic, a missed train, or a scheduling conflict. Yet outside of unanticipated events, absences provide insight into an actor's motivations and constraints. Among weak states, absences may reflect core institutional power imbalances. Yet regardless of power, absence can be a politically optimal strategy for states seeking to resist, manage competing interests, or disengage from low-salience debates.

2.1 Signaling Power Imbalances

Institutional rules structure the formal exercise of power in international organizations. An IO's charter and organizational guidelines set boundaries around membership, the form and content of participation, and potential responses to uncooperative behavior. This latter category includes rules about compliance monitoring and penalties, as well as guidelines for suspension, expulsion, and exit.[4] Because uncooperative behavior can take many forms and arise for many reasons, most IOs have a range of options available for addressing a state's failure to follow through on international commitments. A non-compliant state might be subject to additional monitoring or sanctions, or it may lose the right to vote.

An IO's response to non-compliance is likely to reflect the seriousness of the uncooperative behavior. In the African Union, for example, member states that fail to pay their dues may be

[4]On the conditions under which states exit from IOs, see von Borzyskowski and Vabulas (2019).

subject to three types of sanctions: cautionary, intermediate, or comprehensive. Cautionary sanctions are applied to members that do not pay 50 percent of assessed contributions within six months. In this case, member states lose the right to take the floor or contribute to meetings. After a year of arrears, a member state is suspended from being a member of a bureau, hosting any AU office, participating in electoral observation missions or human rights observation missions, and receiving key appointments. Finally, when a member state defaults for two years, states are subject to all other penalties and also lose their right to participate in meetings.[5]

Institutional disenfranchisement signals a clear power imbalance. Losing the right to vote due to uncooperative behavior may be a result of democratic procedures, but such punishment is likely to fall disproportionately on weaker states. A state's ability to meet its international commitments is tied in part to state capacity (Chayes and Chayes, 1993); when basic participation is tied to cooperative behavior, weak states will inevitably suffer the consequences. Moreover, even if non-compliance is spread equally across states, weak states are less capable of advocating for themselves to avoid institutional consequences.

Given that power imbalances affect both a state's ability to meet its commitments and its ability to avoid punishment, we argue that absences tied to institutional procedures are political in nature. Member states are aware when an IO's rules disenfranchise other member states. If this situation persists for several years, member states are either intentionally targeteing more vulnerable countries or indifferent to their general plight. In either scenario, absences are a signal of political inequity.

[5]The AU will also grant exemptions to members who demonstrate failure to pay is tied to conditions beyond their control. For more on this process, see `https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20181127/african-union-strengthens-its-sanction-regime-non-payment-dues`.

2.2 Signaling Discontent and Disengagement

When a state chooses absence rather than various forms of participation, this tactic is also politically significant. Absence may be a way of signaling discontent, a type of temporary "exit" Hirschman (1970), designed to deny an organization or a proposal legitimacy. In 1950, for example, the Soviet Union began to boycott participating in the Security Council as a way of protesting that the Republic of China (rather than the People's Republic of China) held a seat on the Council. Notably, the Soviet absence ended up having tangible consequences, as the Soviet delegation was absent from the Security Council vote authorizing military assistance to South Korea in July 1950. Absences need not be formal boycotts to carry political clout. Mexican president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's decision to skip the US-convened Summit of the Americas in June 2022, for example, sent a strong signal to the United States that a key Latin American ally was not on board with the exclusion of Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua from the Summit.

In the UN General Assembly, both powerful and weak countries have used absence in this manner. One of the most notable examples occurred in 1990, when the UN General Asssembly voted on a resolution that indirectly criticized the actions of State Parties to the Antarctic Treaty.[6] The resolution was highly controversial, and numerous State Parties to the Antartic Treaty, including the United States, the Soviet Union, France, and Australia, chose not to attend the vote – in total, 47 countries were absent. Major powers were already engaged in contentious decisions over the Arctic at the time of the General Assembly's intervention, and they chose not to legitimate the General Assembly's actions by attending or voting on the resolution.

Absences can also be more subtle political signals, designed to appease multiple sides or avoid conflict. An actor might want to shirk competing political pressures by ducking out of the spotlight. Research on absences and legislative voting finds that legislators are more likely

[6]See UNGA Resolution R/45/78A (1990).

to skip votes when they face a "competing principals" problem, where any decisive action will alienate a subset of parties (Rosas and Shomer, 2008; Rosas, Shomer and Haptonstahl, 2015). In such cases abstention or absence can be a strategic way for actors to navigate competing political forces (Brown and Goodliffe, 2017; Fiorina, 1974; Cohen and Noll, 1991; Muhlbock and Yordanova, 2017). In the run up to the 2022 Beijing Olympics, for example, the United States pressured other countries to join its diplomatic boycott of the games. While some countries joined the US in this effort, others opted not to send representatives but claimed it was for Covid-related reasons.[7]

Weak states may find absence a particularly appealing political strategy. When states face capacity constraints, they are forced to focus their resources on a small number of priority issues (Panke, 2013). Weak states are forced to make this choice not simply because they lack bureaucratic officials or knowledge; for a weak state to achieve its preferred policy, it may need to use a disproprortionate number of resources in just one area. When developing countries bring cases in the World Trade Organization, for example, their lack of legal expertise means that they are less likely to secure concessions during the consultation stage, and thus cases themselves drag on for longer than for developed countries and produce less favorable outcomes (Busch and Reinhardt, 2003). Given that weak states have few resources to spend, they may prefer to disengage with a large number of issues so as not to incur any of the political costs that come from taking a stand or picking a side.

3 The Politics of Absence in the General Assembly

The United Nations General Assembly has attracted scholarly interest since its first session in 1946. Unique in terms of mandate and membership, the General Assembly is, in some ways, a natural microcosm of world politics. Voeten (2012) notes that renowned scholars

[7]New Zealand, Austria, Slovenia, Sweden, and the Netherlands all claimed covid as the reason that they were not attending the Olympics. See `https://www.bbc.com/news/explainers-59644043`.

like Hayward Alker, Robert Keohane, Arend Lijphart, John Mueller, and Bruce Russett conducted early analyses of UN voting, viewing the UNGA as an arena for observing broader trends in world politics. But as the United Nations increasingly fell pray to Cold War rivalries, its relevance for international politics decreased and political scientists turned attention to other areas of inquiry (Voeten, 2012, 1).

With the end of the Cold War, member states renewed their interest in using the United Nations as a core venue for international politics (Mingst and Karns, 2000). Between 1989 and 1994, the UN Security Council authorized a total of 20 new peacekeeping operation, raising the number of peacekeepers in the field from 11,000 to 75,000.[8] Despite several notable peacekeeping failures, the UN remained an important forum and actor in international politics throughout the 1990s. This shift can be seen most directly in the UN's growing budget, which rose from 874 million in 1989 to 1.244 billion ten years later.[9] Arguably, the UN's importance increased again after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, as the United States sought to use various UN bodies to pursue the global "war on terror."

The UN's resurgence in international politics has renewed attention from political scientists. Scholars have analyzed the political dynamics of UN Security Council decision making,[10] and investigated how non-permanent Council membership affects prestige (Hurd, 2002), foreign aid (Kuziemko and Werker, 2006), economic growth (Bueno de Mesquita and Smith, 2010), IMF programs (Dreher, Sturm and Vreeland, 2009*b*), and World Bank projects (Dreher, Sturm and Vreeland, 2009*a*). Others have studied the UN by looking at the Secretariat, examining national control over bureaucratic appointments (Novosad and Werker, 2019), the pathologies of bureaucratic decision making (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004), and

[8] "Our history," *United Nations Peacekeeping*, retrieved from: `peacekeeping.un.org/en/our-history`, accessed on 25 August 2020.

[9] "UN Regular Budget Expenditures: 1971-2007," *Global Policy Forum*, retrieved from: `https://www.globalpolicy.org/un-finance/tables-and-charts-on-un-finance/un-system-budget.html`, accessed on 25 August 2020.

[10] See, for example, Voeten (2001, 2005); Johns (2007); Barnett (1997); Johnstone (2008) among many others

the processes that allow UN bureaucrats to insulate new IOs from state decision-making (Johnson, 2013, 2014). Research has highlighted the growing role of transnational actors like nongovernmental organizations and private corporations (Tallberg et al., 2013, 2014) and examined how UN decisions and institutional performance affect public opinion (Chapman and Reiter, 2004) and confidence in the UN (Dellmuth and Tallberg, 2015).

Within the UN system, the Security Council's hierarchical structure is often juxtoposed with the more equitable UN General Assembly. On paper, the General Assembly is the democratic cornerstone of the United Nations: each UN member state is granted the right to vote on a wide range of topics and issues. Because of the UNGA's vast mandate and near-universal membership, IR scholars use General Assembly roll-call voting as a proxy for state preference alignment. Since Gartzke (1998) first used this data in a study of democratic peace theory, more than 100 published articles have used UN votes to construct measures of foreign policy preferences.[11] Analyses that rely on UN-based preference measures as independent variables have found that shared foreign policy interests affect the likelihood of interstate disputes (Gartzke, 1998; Oneal and Russett, 1999; Reed et al., 2008), troop contributions to UN peacekeeping operations (Ward and Dorussen, 2016), the content of international law (Koremenos, 2016), accession to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade/World Trade Organization (Davis and Wilf, 2017), and numerous other outcomes. Analyses that rely on UN voting data as a dependent variable have examined an equally diverse set of questions, including whether socialization through IOs makes member-state interests converge (Bearce and Bondanella, 2007), how state financial capacity affects UNGA voting positions (Brazys and Panke, 2017), and whether leadership and regime changes cause shifts in foreign policy interests (Dreher and Jensen, 2013). Many more studies have included UNGA-based preference measures as control variables in quantitative analyses.

[11] Bailey, Strezhnev and Voeten (2017) finds seventy-five articles published between 1998 and 2012 that used UN voting data as a measure of preferences. In our own survey of articles published between 2013 and 2019, we find at least twenty-five additional articles that use this measure.

Yet just as the Security Council cannot be understood without taking into account power differentials across states, the General Assembly's ostensibly democratic procedures mask core underlying inequalities. Power in the General Assembly manifests in part through participation and a lack thereof. While most analyses ignore states that are absent from voting, we argue that absences themselves provide important insights into the political dynamics of the General Assembly. IWeak states have significant disadvantages that make active participation extremely difficult. Previous research has established that the organization's broad mandate creates intense capacity demands, taxing countries with tiny UN missions and limited resources (Panke, 2013, 2014). But the politics of absence run much deeper than capacity constraints. We discuss two core reasons that UNGA absences may be politically important: institutional disenfranchisement and strategic action. Expanding our understanding of the General Assembly's operations to incorporate these two types of absences provides a much more nuanced insight into this seemingly democratic and equitable international organization.

3.1 Institutional Disenfranchisement

Per the UN Charter, every UN member state is part of the General Assembly and entitled to one vote (Article 18); however, this vote is conditional upon payment of dues. Under Article 19, a Member States that is in arrears for an amount that "equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years" has no vote in the General Assembly, unless the General Assembly determines that the failure to pay is due to conditions "beyond the control of the Member."[12] In practice, the UN Secretariat assembles a list each December of countries that are in arrears, and starting in January of the following year, Member States lose their voting privileges unless they find a way to pay dues or are

[12]United Nations Charter, Chapter IV: The General Assembly. `https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/chapter-4`

granted a temporary extension of voting rights until the next Committee session.

While Article 19 has always been part of the UN Charter, its impact on voting increased significantly in the 1990s. At the end of the Cold War, states increasingly turned to the United Nations to resolve long-simmering disputes and to help with nation building. As the UN became more involved in peacekeeping,[13] and as these operations turned more complex and costly, UN member states began to owe significantly more in dues each year. Total aggregate dues increased from one billion in 1990 to a historically unprecedented four billion in 1995.[14] The UN's dramatic budget increases led many states to fall behind on dues. In 1995, the UN Secretary General reported that less than half of the UN's members had paid their dues in full, and 74 states owed more than one year's worth of dues.[15]

While many countries struggled to pay the full amount owed, the budetary impact fell disproportionately on the weakest states. A country's UN dues are calculated based on its economic share of global Gross National Product (GNP), but with a floor and a ceiling. In the 1990s, this floor was set at 0.01 percent and the ceiling was set at 25 percent.[16] A country with a GNP of more than 25 percent of the global GNP thus would still pay a ceiling rate of 25 percent of the UN budget, while a country with a GNP of less than 0.01 percent of global GNP would still be expected to pay 0.01 percent of the UN budget. This meant that in 1995, when the total cost of the UN budget plus peacekeeping operations was 4 billion USD, even the poorest countries were expected to pay annual dues of approximately 400,000 USD.

Budgetary rules were also biased against weak states in other ways. For most of the 1990s, all developing countries except those classified as "least developed" were grouped

[13]The number of UN peacekeeping missions rose from 5 in 1987 to 20 in 1995. See `https://ourworldindata.org/peacekeeping` for more details.

[14]United Nations, "Repertory of Practice of United Nations Organs Supplement No. 10 (2000-2009), 2011, available at: `https://legal.un.org/repertory/art19/english/rep_supp10_vol2_art19.pdf`.

[15]`https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/167367`.

[16]The floor and ceiling were different for the general budget and the peacekeeping budget; however, both assessment processes contribute to the overall dues that a country owes the UN.

together in a single category with budget discounts reaching "a maximum of 90 percent...and calculated on an *ad hoc* basis with complex and changing criteria" (UN Repertory 2011, p. 7). As a result, a number of rapidly growing economies that were still classified as developing contributed relatively less to the UN than small developing countries with low per capita income (UN Repetory 2011).

How did weak states push back against this disenfranchisement? Under UNGA resolution 54/237C, a member state in arrears is allowed to submit a letter requesting an exemption to the UNGA president, who will then forward the request along to the Committee on Contributions. This letter must show that a state's failure to pay is due to conditions beyond its control. To reach this standard of evidence, the member state must provide detailed economic data – a task that is, in practice, very difficult for many low-capacity states. Indeed, although the exemption procedure existed throughout the 1990s, only a handful of states ever attempted to request an exemption. It was not until 1999, when the General Assembly changed the exemption procedure and began to issue an announcement every March calling for exemptions, that more states began to take advantage of this possibility.[17]

Changes in the arrears process in 1998 also helped ensure that fewer states were eligible for Article 19 in the 2000s, but payment of dues continues to be a challenge. Figure 1 in the Appendix shows dues payment data from 2001 to 2020. Many countries delay paying their dues in full, and even as late as December, approximately 20 percent of country dues remain outstanding. Countries also continue to be subject to the Article 19 process,[18] and may not provide enough information to justify an exemption. In such cases, the UN Secretariat sometimes steps in to provide greater insight into the country's internal situation and help

[17]Resolution 54/207 (1999).

[18]In January 2022, for example, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres circulated a letter identifying eight countries that are in arrears and would lose voting rights immediately: Antigua and Barbuda, Congo, Guinea, Iran, Papua New Guinea, Sudan, Vanuatu, and Venezuela. See `https://www.voanews.com/a/iran-venezuela-and-sudan-lose-un-voting-rights-with-5-more/6394205.html` for more details.

justify an exemption request, although voting bans may still occur.[19]

3.2 Strategic Absences

If voting rules structure the exercise of power in an IO, they also provide an implicit form of resistance: opting out. Just as casting a vote of abstain is a political statement, so too may a state choose to be strategically absent from a vote for political reasons. Absence may afford political protection from a competing principals problem – by stepping out of the spotlight, ambiguity remains about a state's views and interests. In the UN General Assembly, abstention is an official category of voting that can carry political consequences; for this reason, absence may provide a preferable level of political cover.

A competing principals problem could arise in the UN General Assembly for a number of reasons. A single powerful country like the United States or Russia may oppose a widely supported resolution, and a state may not want to choose between siding with the majority and going against a superpower. The United States in particular has a history of lobbying aggressively on certain priority issues. The US government may use aid to buy votes (Dreher, Nunnenkamp and Thiele, 2008; Carter and Stone, 2015; Woo and Chung, 2018), particularly if the topic is substantively important (Dreher and Jensen, 2013).[20] Faced with US lobbying and pressure from competing interests, a country may prefer to opt out of voting entirely rather than disappoint one side.

Such competing principal situations are not just limited to resolutions important to the United States. In December 1995, for example, General Assembly resolution 50/70a responded to recent nuclear tests by France and China by urging the cessation of all nuclear testing. While none of the P5 countries supported the resolution, France and China actively

[19]RA Interview with UN official, 23 June 2022.

[20]The State Department identifies a handful of resolutions each year as priorities that "directly affected important United States interests and on which the United States lobbied extensively" (*Voting Practices in the United Nations for 2019*, 2019, 10).

lobbied against it.[21] Not only did 44 countries end up abstaining, 22 countries were absent for the vote but present for other votes on the same day[22] – including 14 countries that were present for votes immediately before and immediately after resolution.

For weak states, absence can also be a way to avoid conflict on low-priority issues. The political stakes of UNGA resolutions vary significantly. The General Assembly covers everything from high-stakes topics like the Russian invasion of Crimea to low-stakes issues like the establishment of a world happiness day.[23] Many resolutions are not controversial and adopted without votes. Given the varied importance of different resolutions, low-capacity states often prioritize issues of higher salience. Panke and Gurol (2020) find that smaller states develop various coping strategies to exert influence over the UNGA policy cycle in order to compensate for these capacity-based constraints. Even if great powers are not invested in a resolution, a state might face competing pressures from middle power coalitions. In a recent study of UNGA resolutions on the death penalty, for example, Pascoe and Bae (2020) describe how some states were deliberately absent from voting because they had close ties to both retentionist and abolitionist states and did not want to be seen as taking a position.

Of course, absence may also be a form of more overt resistance. As with citizens who opt out of voting because they perceive an election as rigged, a state may avoid participating in order to deny a resolution additional legitimacy. IOs derive legitimacy in part from maintaining fair and democratic procedures (Dellmuth, Scholte and Tallberg, 2019). Resolutions that pass with a wide vote margin are likely to be perceived as more legitimate than resolutions that pass only narrowly. Both weak states and strong states can use absence in this manner.

[21]Miranda, C. 14 December 1995. "Duress Swung Nuclear Vote in UN, Says Evans." *Courier Mail*.

[22]Strategically absent states: Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Azerbaijan, Burkina Faso, Grenada, Antigua and Barbuda, Iran, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Lao PDR, Honduras, and Vanuatu

[23]In 2012, the General Assembly proclaimed the 20th of March as the International Day of Happiness.

3.3 Hypotheses

Based on the arguments above, we develop several hypotheses about the political underpinnings of absences at UNGA. We begin with the logic of institutional disenfrachisement. Because Article 19 of the UN Charter stipulates that countries in arrears lose the right to vote in the UN General Assembly, we expect that a country's Article 19 eligibility will be strongly correlated with missed votes in UNGA. Even if a country works out a payment plan or finds a way to pay its dues, Article 19 eligibility is an indicator that the country is struggling to fulfill its obligations to the UN and is unlikely to have the resources to actively engage with most resolutions.

- *Hypothesis 1: Countries are more likely to be absent from UNGA if they are subject to the Article 19 process.*

We also develop hypotheses about the conditions under which states are likely to choose absence as a political strategy. We expect that strategic absences will depend upon the political stakes of an UNGA resolution. Powerful countries are deeply invested in only a handful of resolutions, but are likely to lobby extensively on these issues. Previous research has suggested that the United States in particular may offer aid in exchange for votes (Dreher, Nunnenkamp and Thiele, 2008; Carter and Stone, 2015; Woo and Chung, 2018), particularly if the topic is substantively important (Dreher and Jensen, 2013). Yet vote buying is not the only viable influence strategies for powerful countries. When the US lobbies other countries in the General Assembly, it is not looking to influence the voting outcome – nearly all important resolutions pass – but rather to "appear less isolated and to purchase legitimacy on key foreign policy issues" (Carter and Stone, 2015, 2). One way to do this is to encourage countries to skip voting entirely. In an interview, one State Department official reported "I believe all the P5 quietly encourage this (strategic absence) as a way for small countries to stay out of definitive voting columns when there are countervailing political forces. We

generally count it as a 'win' when our advice is accepted."[24]

We expect that strategic absence is a particularly appealing strategy for non-US allies looking to navigate competing political tensions. Such countries have more freedom of manuverability in UNGA, and therefore if they vote in alignment with the United States, they are likely to pay higher political costs for this action. In contrast, all UNGA members know when the US is lobbying aggressively on resolutions and there is likely to be some expectation that US allies will vote with (or at least avoid contradicting) US preferences.[25]

- *Hypothesis 2: If a resolution is important to the United States, non-US allies are more likely to be strategically absent than US allies.*

Countries may also be more inclined to skip voting if they are torn between two opposing sides. UNGA resolutions can have many different types of competing political coalitions: former colonies may be aligned against colonial powers, nuclear weapons states may oppose non-nuclear weapons states, and great powers may oppose each other. We expect that some of these latter cases where the US and Russia oppose each other are particularly likely to be tense political situations that encourage absence. Not all resolutions, however, will create such tension. Indeed, between 1990 and 2014, the US and Russia voted opposite each other on 775 resolutions – 43 percent of the total roll-call resolutions during this period. Given the prevalence of opposition, it is unlikely to be a meaningful indicator independent of other factors.

We expect instead that the impact of a US-Russia competing principles situation will depend on a country's foreign policy preferences. Countries in the ideological middle should be more likely to skip out on voting than countries at either end of the spectrum. This will create a kind of parabolic relationship between preferences and competing principles situations.

[24]Interview by Bridget Coggins, 7 January 2021.

[25]US allies might also share similar preferences to the United States; we explore this possibility in our robustness checks.

- *Hypothesis 3: Countries with preferences equidistant from the US and Russia will be more likely to be strategically absent from voting when the US and Russia are opposed than countries with preferencess similar to Russia or similar to the United States.*

4 Missing Out on UNGA

The General Assembly's core work occurs between late September and December each year. Over the course of a session, delegates negotiate and debate resolutions on a wide range of topics – the 2019-2020 session included everything from Russia's annexation of Crimea to creating an international day for universal access to information. The UNGA typically begins adopting resolutions in October, and about a quarter are adopted without a roll call vote (Hage and Hug, 2013). Most votes occur in December, with a smattering of other resolutions voted on throughout the rest of the year.

Given the UNGA's concentrated timeline, the high percentage of state absences (around 10%) may seem puzzling: why would so many countries miss votes? This descriptive section provides evidence that at least two types of absences have clear political origins. First, countries subject to the UN's Article 19 process miss a large number of votes. In examining the set of countries that miss more than fifty percent of votes in a given year, Article 19 status correlates with nearly half of these absences. Second, a large number of countries rely on strategic absence, at least sometimes, and such absences are much more common weaker countries.

4.1 Patterns of Missingness

We examine country absences from UNGA between 1990 and 2014, drawing on the Bailey, Strezhnev and Voeten (2017) UNGA roll-call voting dataset (hereafter "BSV data"). This data record every instance of voting within the General Assembly according to the following

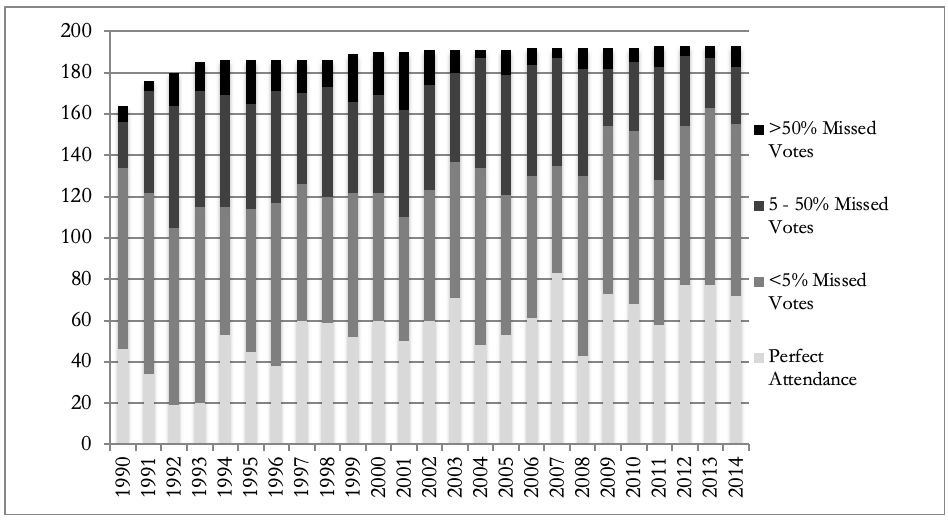

Figure 1: *Missed UNGA Roll-Call Votes Across Time* - The stacked bar plot shows annual absence data aggregated by country across time. Countries with perfect attendance (light grey) missed no votes in a given year.

rule: 1 - yes, 2 - abstain, 3 - no, 8 - absent, or 9 - not a member. We begin by examining this data in aggregate form, creating a single annual measure of the total number and percentage of absences in a given year.[26]

Absences are common across UNGA sessions. While about a quarter of all countries in any given year have perfect attendance for roll call votes, the majority of states miss at least a few and sometimes a sizable percentage of votes. Figure 1 shows these patterns, revealing that every year, a portion of countries miss more than 50 percent of the UNGA votes. In our dataset, 63 unique countries fall into this category, missing at least 50 percent or more of UNGA votes in at least one calendar year. In an organization with fewer than 200 member states, that is a substantial number.

While the majority of countries have relatively strong attendance, the largest category is the group that misses a handful of votes (less than 5 percent). Indeed, there are 802 instances in the dataset of a country missing a single vote in a given year. While some of

[26]For the purposes of our analysis, we drop all non-member countries because they are not eligible to vote in UNGA.

these absences are likely due to exogenous factors, the high volume of single misses provides support for the idea of strategic absences in the General Assembly.

Our new data on the UN's Article 19 process provide additional insight into chronically absent countries. Our data come primarily from Committee on Contributions reports, supplemented with documents from the General Assembly. We code each country's Article 19 status at the start of the calendar year, as well as whether the country requested and was granted an exemption. Between 1990 and 2014, 54 countries were identified in Article 19 reports as facing voting bans, and nearly twice this number were eligible for bans at some point in time during the calendar year.[27] The majority of countries were eligible for more than a single year, with countries like the Central African Republic, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, and Somalia spending nearly the entire post-Cold War period in arrears and eligible for sanctions.

Despite such long-term eligibility, Article 19 bans vary significantly across time. Figure 2 shows the number of countries that are eligible for Article 19 sanctions in a given year, separated by whether they are banned from voting at some point (orange, top of bar plot) or not banned (turquoise, bottom of bar plot). The number of eligible countries increased significantly throughout the 1990s, but began to decline in the early 2000s after changes to the budgetary assessment process. The UN also increasingly granted exemptions to countries beginning in this period.

We turn next to examining patterns of strategic absence. We conceptualize strategic absences as occurring when a country skips out on a vote due to the politics surrounding the resolution. As a proxy for when absences are strategic as opposed to random, we use data on the precise date of all UN General Assembly resolutions,[28] and code an absence as

[27]Some countries were eligible as of January but paid sufficient dues to be removed from arrears before the Committee on Contributions met in June.

[28]Because our coding strategy depends on accurate information on about the specific dates of votes, an RA checked the Voeten et al. resolution dates against the UNGA database and inserted the correct date as necessary.

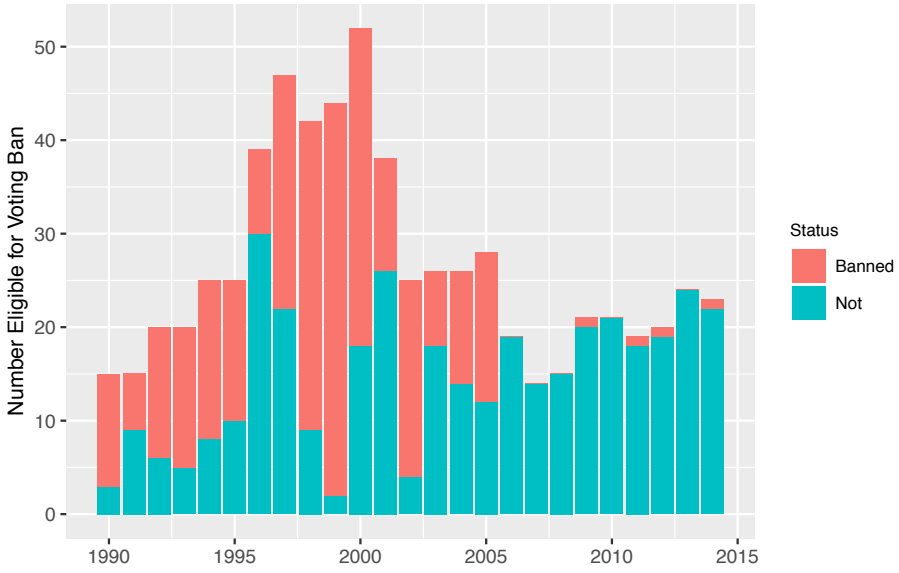

Figure 2: *Non-Payment of Dues and UNGA Absences* - The stacked bar plot shows the annual number of countries that were eligible for disenfranchisement based on non-payment of dues. Banned countries are those that lost voting rights at some point during the year.

strategic when a country is absent for a vote on the same day that it is present for a vote on a separate resolution. Approximately 3 percent of country-resolution observations are coded as strategic absences.[29]

The number of strategic absences per resolution varies significantly, as seen in Figure 3, but shows no significant time trend. One notable exception is the cluster of outliers in the early 1990s for the resolutions related to Antarctic Treaty. A second outlier occurs in 2003, when 57 countries are strategically absent for the adoption of an International Atomic Energy Agency report. In this latter case, nearly all the absent countries are small, low-capacity countries. Our subsequent results are robust to excluding these outliers.

Nearly all countries in the data set engage in a strategic absence at one point in time. For many powerful countries, strategic absences are the only votes that they miss. China, for

[29] Additional information on this coding as well as an investigation of concept validity is available in the appendix.

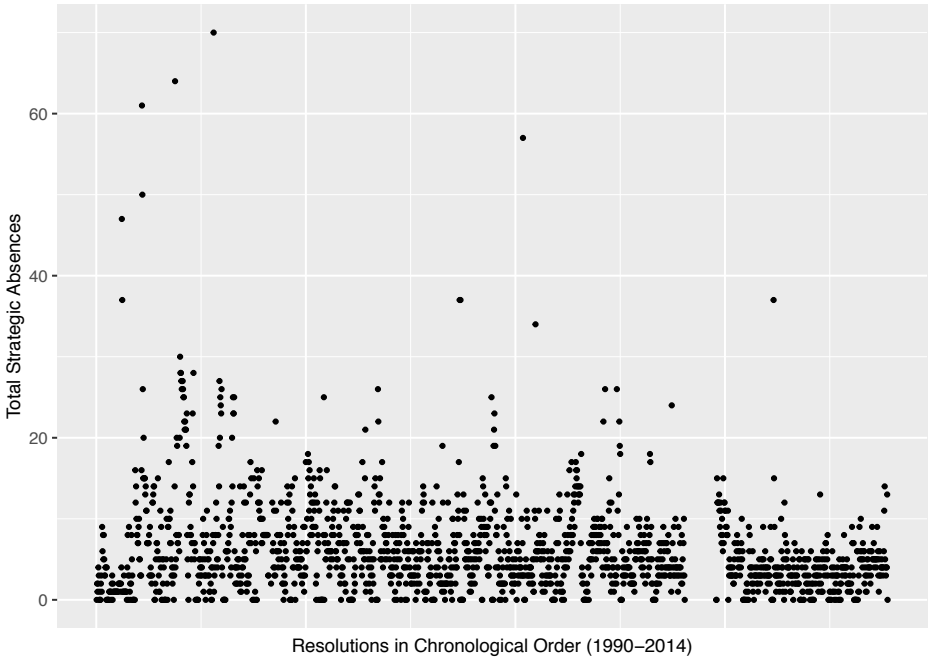

Figure 3: *Strategic Absences Per Resolution Across Time* - The scatterplot shows the number of countries strategically absent from each UNGA resolution between 1990 and 2014.

example, missed only one vote per year between 2002 and 2007. In four of these years, China was absent on resolutions related to nuclear weapons and material, and disarmament. Indeed, in 2002 and 2003, China missed voting on nearly identical resolutions on the reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons, despite being present to vote on other resolutions on the same days.[30] These resolutions were clearly controversial for nuclear weapons states: in 2002, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States were the sole "no" votes (with Russia abstaining) and in 2003, all four nuclear powers voted against the resolution.

Although all states apear to use strategic absences to some degree, the tactic is significantly more common among weak states. Previous research indicates that UNGA absences often correlate with government capacity (Panke, 2010, 2013). Figure 2 in the Appendix

[30]The resolutions were A/RES/57/58 (2002), "Reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons" and A/RES/58/50 (2003), "Reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons."

examines this relationship, separating out US allies and non-US allies as such states may face different voting incentives. Nearly all countries have strategic absences, but the total number varies significantly across states. In general, non-US allies and lower capacity states are more likely to rely on this strategy in the General Assembly.

5 Analysis of Institutional Disenfranchisement

We assess hypothesis 1 through regression analyses examining how key political variables correlate with state absences from UNGA between 1990 and 2014. Our primary data source is the BSV data on roll-call votes. Our first analysis examines the relationship between Article 19 status and absences. Because our Article 19 data is annual, rather than at the resolution level, we do not expect it to correlate perfectly with UNGA absences – some countries negotiate payment plans, others are granted exemptions, and some eventually pay off their dues. Instead, we examine whether Article 19 eligibility is more strongly associated with UNGA absences than other likely predictors.

Our key dependent variable for the Article 19 analysis is Absence, a dichotomous indicator of whether a country is absent from an UNGA roll-call vote. We use the BSV data, which includes information on absences, to create this variable. The unit of analysis is country-vote, where each observation reflects whether a country is present or absent for a specific vote in a given session.

Our primary explanatory variable of interest is Article 19 Eligbility, which indicates whether a country is eligible for Article 19 sanctions in a given year. We compare the size of this effect to a multitude of other possible explanations for non-voting in UNGA. Conflict and internal strife are likely to interfere with a country's ability and desire to devote resources to the UN General Assembly. We include Civil War, which is drawn from the Correlates of War dataset and is a dichtomous indicator of whether a country is experiencing a civil

war in a given year. We also include Civil War (Last Decade), which is a dichotomous indicator of whether a country has experienced a civil war any time in the last ten years; this accounts for the possibility that war may have long-term negative effects on government capacity. Additional conflict-related variables are Successful Coup and Attempted Coup, both drawn from the Center for Systemic Peace's Coup d'Etat dataset. Finally, we account for whether a country experiences some kind of domestic crisis with the variable Domestic Crisis, which indicates whether a country faces an internal conflict, war, or natural disaster in a given year. We create this variable based on our own data collection, assembled from international news and media reports.

Additional controls account for government capacity. We include GDP and GDP Per Capita, both drawn from the World Bank, as previous research has found that absences are more likely among lower capacity states (Panke, 2013). A country's own experience with democracy may also provide it with important experience that translates into a higher capacity for voting; to account for this possibility, we include Democracy (Polity IV), which is drawn from the Polity IV project and ranges from -10 (most autocratic) to 10 (most democratic).

The remaining controls account for geopolitics. Research has also shown that the United States may engage in vote buying in the General Assembly (Dreher, Nunnenkamp and Thiele, 2008; Carter and Stone, 2015; Woo and Chung, 2018), so we include US Ally, which indicates whether a country is a US ally in a given year. Colonial ties may also influence a country's willingness and ability to vote; former colonial powers may be more likely to provide capacity assistance to their former colonies. To account for this possibility, we include Former Colony.

We test hypothesis 1 through two different empirical approaches. We begin with a pooled logistic regression to examine how Article 19 eligibility affects the general probability of absences. To account for interdependence in this pooled sample, we cluster standard errors

by country and resolution, and include a cubic polynomial of time (Carter and Signorino, 2010). A second set of mixed-effects logistic regression models help account for the possibility that certain omitted country-specific factors might affect the probability of being absent from UNGA. More specifically, by including country random effects, the mixed-effects approach allows for the possibility that the relationship between Article 19 eligiblity and absence is conditional upon each country's individual baseline probability of absence. In these mixed-effects models, a cubic polynomial of time causes convergence problems, and so instead, we include the variable Procedure Change, which is a dichotomous indicator of whether an observation occurs after 1998. This variable helps account for the UNGA's change to dues assessment procedures in 1998.

5.1 Results: Article 19 Eligibility and Absence

The results provide strong support for the relationship between Article 19 eligibility and absences. Table 1 displays the results of a pooled logistic regression model with standard errors clustered at the country and resolution level. To increase interpretability, coefficients are shown as marginal effects. Across all four specifications, Article 19 eligibility is the strongest predictor of UNGA absences. When setting all other variables at their means, Article 19 eligibility increases the probability of absence by 0.06.

Mixed effects logit models provide further support for the hypothesis (see Table 2 in the Appendix). Across all specifications, Article 19 eligibility has a consistently positive and significant association with absence at UNGA, even when controlling for country-specific variables. Figure 4 displays the log odds and 95 percent confidence intervals of the three variables that are consistently positive and significant: Article 19 eligibility (solid circle), civil war (open circle), and domestic crisis (open diamond). When a country fails to pay its dues and becomes eligible for the Article 19 process, this change has nearly the same impact on voting as a civil war, and a much larger impact than other types of domestic crises.

	Dependent variable:			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Article 19 Eligibility	0.195***	0.184***	0.0557***	0.061***
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.0181)	(0.0187)
Civil War		0.009	0.0069	0.0013
		(0.0191)	(0.0138)	(0.0108)
Civil War (Last Decade)		0.0192	0.0194	0.0146
		(0.0203)	(0.157)	(0.0122)
Domestic Crisis		0.0536***	0.0323	0.0345
		(0.0380)	(0.0259)	(0.0291)
Attempted Coup		0.0113	−0.0055	−0.0036
		(0.121)	(0.0.008)	(0.0069)
Successful Coup		−0394*	−0.0352 **	−0.0292**
		(0.0177)	(0.0101)	(0.0089)
GDP (log)			−0.0212***	−0.013***
			(0.003)	(0.0032)
GDP Per Capita (log)			−0.0066*	−0.0085
			(0.0051)	(0.0055)
US Ally			−0.0149	−0.0106
			(0.0125)	(0.0093)
Former Colony			0.232	0.0179
			(0.196)	(0.265)
Democracy (Polity IV)				−0.002***
				(0.0009)
Time	−0.002***	−0.002***	0.0003	0.0006
	(0.0006)	(0.0006)	(0.0005)	(0.0005)
Number of Observations	354733	354733	334271	290828
AIC	221223.9	219038.4	181528.66	140751.45
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 1: *Effect of Article 19 on UNGA Absences (Pooled Logistic Regression) - Table displays the marginal effects of all variables on the probability of absence for the average observation. Standard errors clustered at the country and resolution level.*

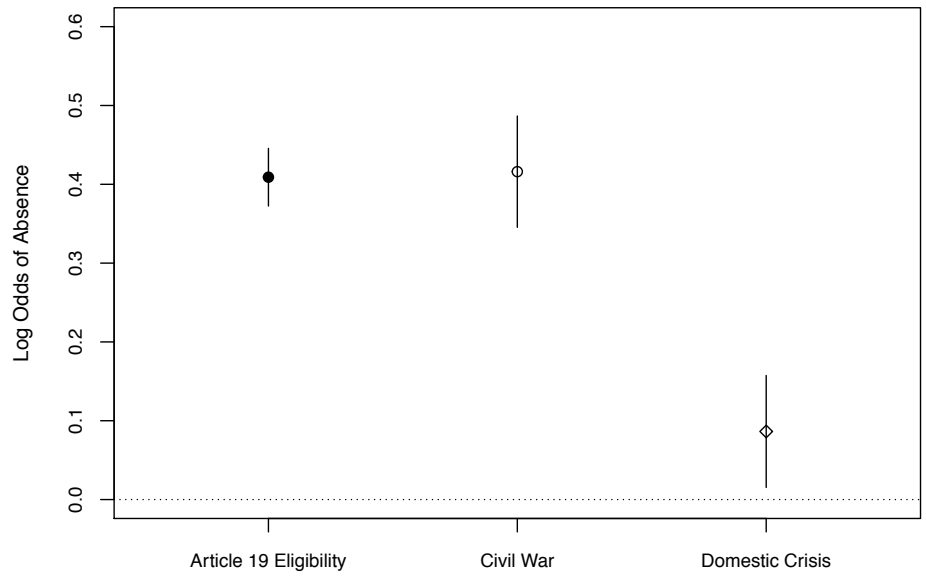

Figure 4: *Political Determinants of Absences* - The figure shows log odds and 95 percent confidence intervals of a mixed-effects logistic regression where country is included as a random effect. Log odds coefficients indicate the effect of a one-unit change (moving from 0 to 1) on the log odds of absence. Estimates come from Model 3, Table 2 in the Appendix.

6 Analysis of Strategic Absence

We assess our hypotheses about strategic absences through a pooled logistic regression examining how political concerns affect the probability that a country is strategically absent from an UNGA vote. Our primary data source is the BSV data on roll-call voting, which we use to create Strategic Absence, a dichotomous indicator of whether a country is absent on the same day that it is also present for another vote.

Hypothesis 2 stipulates that when a resolution is important to the United States, non-US allies should be more likely than US allies to be strategically absent from voting. We use the BSV variable Important Vote, which indicates whether the US State Department has identified a vote as particularly important in its annual report *Voting Practices in the United Nations*. We interact this variable with the variable US Ally, which is drawn from

the Correlates of War project and indicates whether the US has signed a formal defense pact with a country in a given year. Robustness tests probe an interaction with important votes and US foreign aid obligations.

Hypothesis 3 suggests that states facing a US-Russia competing principals problem will be more likely to opt for strategic absences, but that this effect will depend on foreign policy preferences. Drawing on the BSV data, we construct the variable US-Russia Opposed, which is equal to 1 if the US and Russia vote against each other (yes-no) on a given resolution and 0 otherwise. To proxy foreign policy preferences, we use BSV ideal point estimates on the distance between each country and the US, and each country and Russia.[31] We then create a new continuous variable Distance by substracting the country's distance from the US from the country's distance from Russia. This new variable ranges from -3.8 to 2.7 (mean: -2.1), where the highest negative number indicates a country has similar preferences to Russia and very different preferences from the United States, and conversely, a high positive number indicates similarity to the US and difference from Russia. We lag all ideal point values by one year to prevent simultaneity.

We account for several important geopolitical and state-specific factors that may affect the probability of strategic absence. We include controls for alliances with both major powers. US Ally is a dichotomous indicator of whether a country has a formal alliance with the United States in a given year, while Russia Ally accounts for whether a country has a formal alliance with Russia in a given year. Both variables are drawn from the Correlates of War dataset.

Literature on legislative voting suggests that legislators are more likely to cast votes on closely contested bills (Cohen and Noll, 1991; Noury, 2004; Kromer, 2005), so we include Vote Margin, which represents the ratio of majority votes to minority votes (i.e., if a resolution passes, then the variable is yes votes divided by no votes). If a resolution passes

[31]For more information on how these ideal points are calculated, see Bailey, Strezhnev and Voeten (2017).

with no opposing votes, this variable simply reflects the number of yes votes. In the dataset, VOTE MARGIN has a minimum value of 1 (reflecting equal numbers of yeas and nays), a median value of 9, and a maximum value of 186. We also include ABSTENTIONS, which indicates the number of countries that vote "abstain" on a particular resolution, as abstention may be the most feasible alternative to strategic absence. Because the distribution of both variables is highly skewed, we log them in all regressions. We also include other resolution-specific content controls, drawing on the Bailey, Strezhnev and Voeten (2017) category data.

Additional country-specific factors may act as potential confounders. In addition to state preferences, which we proxy with ideal point estimates, we include GDP and GDP PER CAPITA, drawn from the World Bank WDI dataset, as less developed countries may be more likely to miss UNGA votes due to financial or logistical difficulties. A country's level of democracy may also affect its commitment to democratic procedures like voting; to account for this factor, we include DEMOCRACY (POLITY IV), which is drawn from the Polity IV project and ranges from -10 (most autocratic) to 10 (most democratic). All country-level variables are lagged by one year.

We test our hypotheses first with a pooled logistic regression model, clustering standard errors at the resolution and country level and including a cubic polynomial of time (Carter and Signorino, 2010) to account for any time trend in the data. Additional analyses in the Appendix include logistic regression models with country-fixed effects (conditional logistic regression) and mixed effects regression where country is included as a random effect. We also probe the effect of US-China opposition on strategic absence, finding no significant relationship between US-China opposition and absence (see Appendix).

6.1 Results: Geopolitics and Strategic Absence

The results suggest strategic absences are, on average, linked to the geopolitical context surrounding a resolution. Pooled logistic regressions testing hypothesis 2 provide evidence

that non-US allies view strategic absence as a viable strategy for managing the complex geopolitics surrounding resolutions important to the United States. Across all specifications (see Table 4 in the Appendix), non-US allies are more likely to be strategically absent when a vote is important to the United States. Interestingly, the results suggest that for important votes, US allies are significantly *less likely* to be absent. This finding aligns with the idea that US allies and non-US allies may demonstrate solidarity with the United States in different ways.

To put these differential effects in context, Figure 5 examines four variable associated with an increase in the probability of a strategic absence: important vote (blue circle), preference similarity to the US (red diamond), the number of abstaining states (green square), and votes on the Middle East (yellow triangle). Because the effect of an important vote varies for US allies and non-US allies, we calculate predicted probabilities separately for these two groups. The figure indicates that votes important to the US are associated with a 0.005 increase in the probability of strategic absence for non-US allies, while they are associated with a similarly-sized decrease for US allies. The substantively small size of these effects is tied to the sample population: the UNGA votes on many non-controversial resolutions each year, while only a handful of resolutions are politically significant.

Additional evidence supports the idea that the United States encourages strategic absence on important votes. Conditional logit and mixed-effects logistic regressions, both of which account for country-specific factors that might affect the probability of strategic absence, support a different relationship for important votes and strategic absences for US and non-US allies (see Tables 5 and 6 in the Appendix). We also interact US foreign aid obligations (lagged) with the important vote indicator, and find that US foreign aid allocations above 5 million are associated with a positive and statistically significant increase in the probability of strategic absence. Figure 6 shows this relationship.

Turning to hypothesis 3, our findings are more mixed. We theorized that the impact

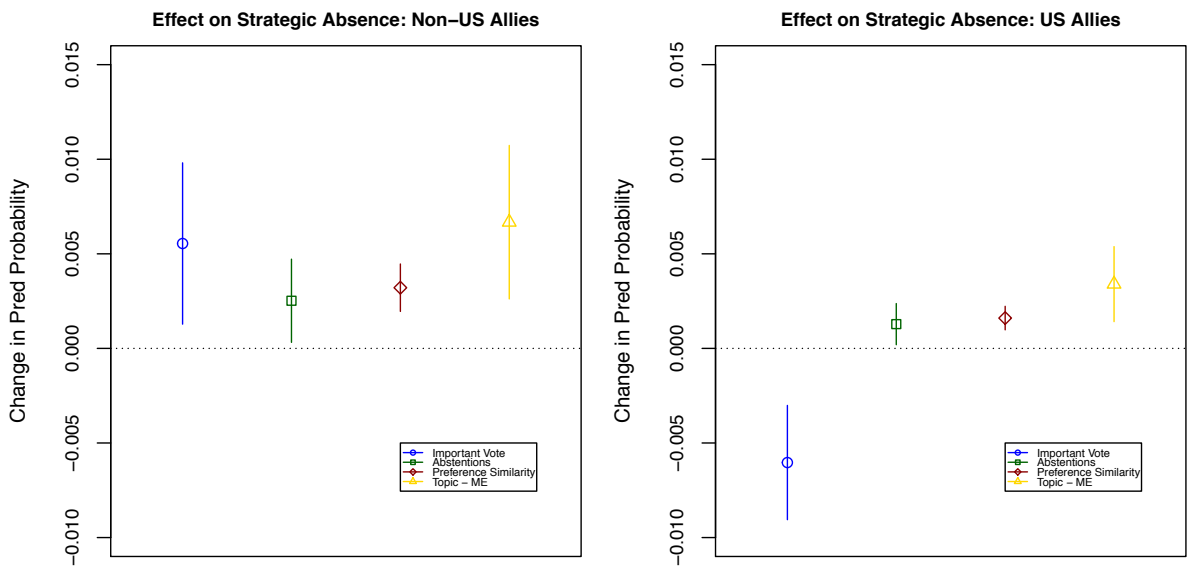

Figure 5: *Determinants of Strategic Absences* - The figure shows point estimates and 95 percent confidence intervals for the change in predicted probability of a strategic absence. Estimates calculated based on moving from 0 to 1 for dichotomous variables (Important Vote, Middle East) and the mean to one standard deviation above for continuous variables (Abstentions, Preference Similarity to US). Model includes additional controls Voting Margin, US-Russia Opposed, as well as topic controls (Human Rights, Nuclear, Economic Coercion, and Disarmament) and a cubic time polynomial. Confidence intervals calculated using a Monte Carlo simulation.

of a US-Russia competing principles situation would depend on state preferences, where countries in the ideological center were most likely to be strategically absent. Our results suggest that the effect of Russia-US opposition depends on preference similarity, but the interaction is quite different for countries ideologically similar to Russia and those close to the United States. When countries are ideologically close to Russia, they are less likely to be strategically absent when the US and Russia are on opposite sides of a resolution. In contrast, when countries are ideologically neutral or closer to the United States, they are more likely to skip out on voting if the US and Russia are opposed. Figure 7 shows this relationship.

The United States' relative ideological isolation may explain why countries that share

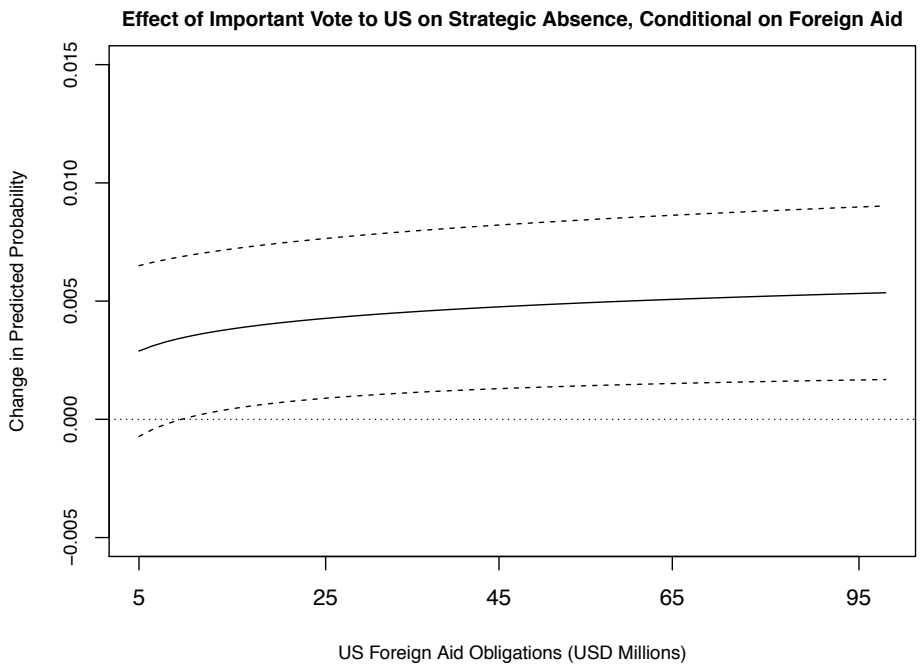

Figure 6: *Effect of Important Vote on Strategic Absence, Conditional on Foreign Aid*- The figure shows the marginal effect and 95 percent confident interval of a US important vote on strategic absence, conditional on US foreign aid obligations in the previous year. Models include additional controls for US alliance, voting margin, abstentions, ideal point estimates, GDP, GDP per capita, Polity IV score, as well as Voeten et al. topic controls (Middle East, Human Rights, Nuclear, Economic Coercion, and Disarmament) and a cubic time polynomial. Confidence intervals calculated using a Monte Carlo simulation.

preferences more similar to the United States are also more likely to skip out on votes when the US and Russia are opposed to each other. Since 1990, the United States has voted against more than 50 percent of UNGA resolutions; as a result, the United States is often isolated or in a small voting coalition. Countries that generally share US preferences may find it politically costly to overtly vote alongside the United States, and may prefer instead to 'opt out' of voting.

6.2 Extensions and Additional Insights

To provide greater clarity into the determinants of strategic absence, we investigate how geopolitics interacts with resolution content. Because the BSV issue areas are broad and

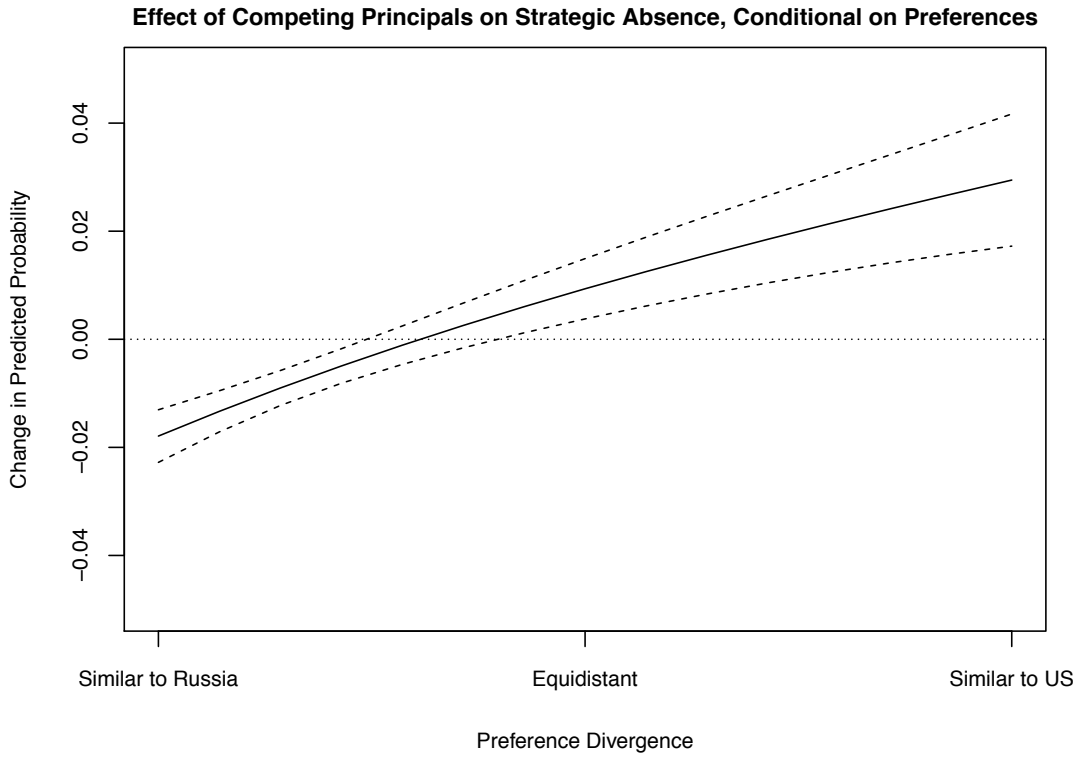

Figure 7: *Determinants of Strategic Absences* - The figure shows point estimates and 95 percent confidence intervals for the change in predicted probability of a strategic absence. Estimates calculated based on moving from 0 to 1 for US-Russia Opposed. Models include additional controls (see Appendix, Table 7) and a cubic time polynomial. Confidence intervals calculated using a Monte Carlo simulation.

include many different sub-issues, we collect new micro-level data on the content of resolutions. We assign resolutions to more fine-grained categories that include topics like Palestinian refugees, missiles, and economic sanctions.[32] A logistic regression replicates earlier analyses with category-fixed effects, using "Administrative" resolutions as a baseline. The results (available in Table 8 in the Appendix) provide further confirmation that strategic absence is closely tied to geopolitics.

Figure 8 plots the shift in probability of strategic absence for the resolution categories that have positive, significant associations across all model specifications.[33] These six categories

[32]Details on our coding scheme are available in the appendix.

[33]We omit "Environment" from the plot because it is a significant outlier that encompasses primarily resolutions related to Antartica passed in the early 1990s. Full plot available in Appendix.

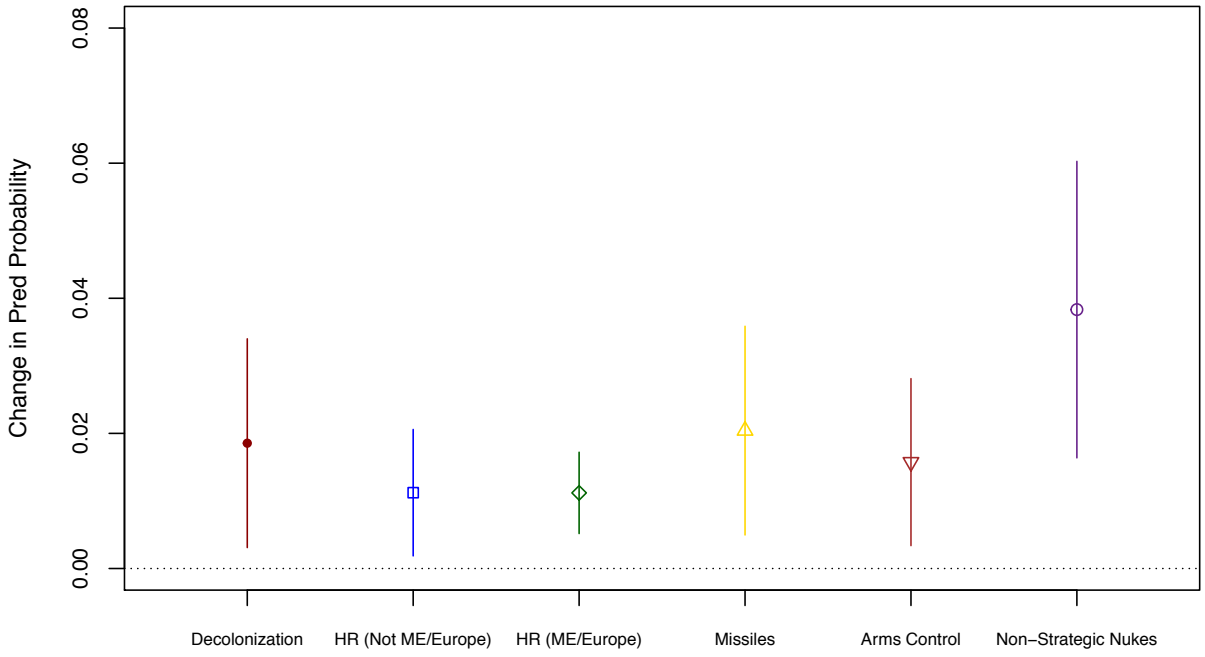

Figure 8: *Content of Resolutions and Strategic Absences* - The figure shows point estimates and 95 percent confidence intervals for the change in predicted probability of a strategic absence (see Table 8 in the Appendix). Estimates calculated based on moving from 0 to 1 for each category. Confidence intervals calculated using a Monte Carlo simulation.

are decolonization (solid red circle), human rights condemnations of specific countries in the Middle East and Europe (green diamond) and in other regions (blue square), missiles (yellow triangle), arms control (red upside down triangle), and non-strategic nuclear weapons (open purple circle). Even with the full set of geopolitical and country-level controls, certain types of resolutions are much more likely to be associated with strategic absence. All of these categories are politically contentious topics where countries may wish to avoid alienating a subset of UN members.

Our argument that strategic absences have political determinants has implications for how UN voting data map on to state preferences. If strategic absences are a different way for countries to align themselves with the United States, then perhaps the United States has

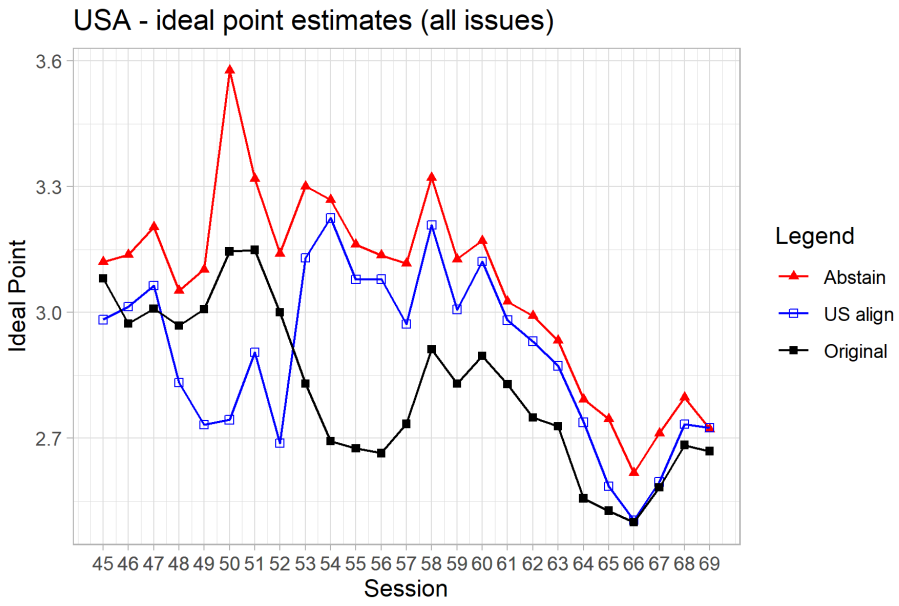

Figure 9: *Strategic Absences and US Ideal Point* - The figure uses the Bailey, Strezhnev and Voeten (2017) technique for calculating state preferences with UNGA voting data. The black line with solid squares replicates the 2017 analysis, and thus excludes all absences from ideal point estimation. The red line with triangles treats strategic absences as abstentions when calculating ideal point measures. The blue line with open squares treats strategic absences as votes in alignment with the United States when calculating ideal point measures.

more ideological allies than might otherwise appear in the data. Even if strategic absences are similar to abstentions, this conceptualization would shift how we calculate ideal point measures. To demonstrate this point, we re-estimate Bailey, Strezhnev and Voeten (2017) ideal point estimates for 1990-2014 under two alternative scenarios. First, we calculate ideal point measures under the assumption that all strategic absences are abstentions. Second, we calculate ideal point measures under the assumption that strategic absences are actually indications of voting alignment with the United States. Figure 9 shows how ideal point estimates for the United States would shift under these scenarios, compared to the original Bailey, Strezhnev and Voeten (2017) estimation.

7 Conclusion

The UN General Assembly is a unique institution. It has a near-universal membership and horizontal voting structure, and it covers a wide range of topics and issues. For these reasons, it offers important insights into states' foreign policy preferences. But just as voting patterns can reveal preference similarity between countries, a country's absence at a specific roll-call vote or for an entire UN session is also a political signal. As Albert Hirschman pointed out fifty years ago, exit and voice are both ways to express discontent with the *status quo* (Hirschman, 1970). Given that 10 percent of data on UN voting denotes absences rather than votes, analyzing "exits" helps illuminate how state preferences manifest in the UN General Assembly.

How should scholars conceptualize missed opportunities to vote? We argue that many absences are political signals about how power manifests in international organizations. In the General Assembly, institutional disenfranchisement is responsible for many countries missing votes during the 1990s and early 2000s. Countries could not afford to pay their dues when the UN budget expanded during this period, and the UN was slow to recitify this process. With new data on the Article 19 process, we show that being eligible for a UN voting ban correlates with an increased probability of absence, with estimates ranging from 0.06 to 0.2. This effect is larger than even a one standard deviation change in GDP.

We also demonstrate that some absences are strategic in nature. Under some conditions, countries facing diplomatic pressure from the United States or subject to competing principles situations are likely to opt for skipping out rather than showing up to vote. Non-US allies are more likely to skip a vote if the resolution is important to the United States, and countries with preferences most similar to the United States are more likely to opt for absence when the US and Russia oppose each other. Moreover, our new micro-level data on resolution content suggests that strategic action is particularly likely on resolutions with controversial

or high-stakes topics like human rights, missiles, and non-strategic nuclear weapons.

Our analysis has important consequences for international relations scholarship. From an empirical perspective, many scholars rely on UNGA voting data to proxy state preferences but exclude absences from the dataset. We show, however, that absences are often political in nature, and therefore should be included in ideal point calculations or at least accounted for in empirical analyses. If the UN is responsible for disenfranchising numerous weak states, then excluding these countries from ideal point calculations hides this story and ignores its potential implications. A country that spends years unable to vote in the UN General Assembly may be less likely to engage in the future, even once voting rights are returned. Voting requires some belief in one's own political efficacy. When a country is repeatedly denied the right to vote, its attitude toward the entire procedure may change.

Strategic absences too have empirical significance. If a country intentionally skips a vote on a day that it votes on other resolutions, its absence is an informative signal about its preferences. Even treating these nonappearances as a form of abstention alters ideal point estimates, which are used to proxy state preferences.

Understanding the politics of absence also has implications for IR theory. Power manifests in international organizations in varied ways. For weaker states, silence may provide political cover to avoid geopolitical pressure. For stronger states, silence may help manage complicated diplomatic issues. Accounting for these dynamics reveals new insights into cooperation in the modern era.

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Appendix for "Your Silence Speaks Volumes: The Politics of Absence in the UN General Assembly"

This version: 24 June 2022

1 Article 19 Background

Monthly statistical information concerning the number of Member States which paid in full:																			
	Number of Member States																		
As at month end	**2020**	**2019**	**2018**	**2017**	**2016**	**2015**	**2014**	**2013**	**2012**	**2011**	**2010**	**2009**	**2008**	**2007**	**2006**	**2005**	**2004**	**2003**	**2002**	**2001**
January	35	34	35	25	25	25	20	23	26	25	26	21	36	31	41	34	32	40	42	39
February	62	69	62	49	42	50	45	42	48	47	53	44	61	50	59	51	46	56	50	54
March	77	79	73	73	62	67	61	56	69	67	66	55	77	65	72	62	59	69	63	64
April	87	89	88	92	79	84	79	76	89	83	73	76	81	75	83	71	75	76	70	69
May	92	102	102	102	85	94	93	90	96	97	86	81	90	79	87	76	82	86	79	85
June	101	105	107	110	93	102	102	103	108	108	93	94	98	85	94	88	89	91	82	92
July	107	109	114	116	98	108	109	113	111	111	101	100	105	90	101	97	92	97	88	101
August	112	116	125	124	105	115	114	122	114	118	107	106	116	97	104	110	99	101	95	112
September	124	127	141	134	126	128	124	134	128	131	119	115	124	112	113	125	106	109	104	122
October	131	134	146	137	134	138	131	137	134	137	125	126	129	123	117	130	111	120	112	126
November	135	138	149	143	138	139	135	140	135	137	130	128	132	130	122	130	118	123	115	130
December	144	146	152	145	145	142	144	146	143	143	138	136	146	140	139	140	121	127	117	135

Figure 1: *Data on payment of contributions* - The chart shows monthly statistical information on UN member states that have paid their dues in full.

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Country	**Years in Arrears**	**Requested Exemptions**	**Granted Exemptions**
Afghanistan	2002	0	0
Angola	1994	0	0
Benin	1992, 2004	0	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1997-99	1	1
Burkina Faso	1993-94	0	0
Burundi	1995-2004	5	4
Cambodia	1991-93, 98-99	1	1
Cabo Verde	1998, 2000, 2004	0	0
Central African Republic	1991-2014	12	12
Chad	1991-98, 2000, 02, 04-05, 09	0	0
Comoros	1993-2014	18	17
Congo	1991, 97-2000	0	0
DRC	1999, 2003	1	0
Djibouti	2000, 03	0	0
Dominican Republic	1990-96	1	0
Dominica	1997-2000	0	0
Ecuador	2000	0	0
Equatorial Guinea	1990-99	0	0
Gambia	1991-2000	0	0
Georgia	1998-2005	7	7
Grenada	1997-2000	0	0
Guatemala	1990-1996	0	0
Guinea	1999-2001	0	0
Guinea-Bissau	1993-2014	13	12
Haiti	1992, 1994, 2000	0	0
Honduras	1998	0	0
Iraq	1995-2005	3	1
Kenya	1992	0	0
Kyrgyzstan	1997-2003	1	1
Liberia	1990-2011	8	8
Madagascar	2000	0	0
Malawi	2004	0	0
Mali	1992-96	0	0
Mauritania	1992, 94-96, 99, 2000, 02, 04	0	0
Moldova	1997-2005	7	6
Mongolia	1999	0	0
Nicaragua	1990, 99	0	0
Niger	1992-93, 95, 98-2006	3	3
Rwanda	1997, 99, 2000	0	0
Saint Lucia	2000	0	0
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	2000	0	0
Sao Tome and Principe	1990-2014	12	12
Seychelles	1997-2002	0	0
Sierra Leone	1990-1996, 99-2000	0	0
Soloman Islands	1994	0	0
Somalia	1993-2014	13	12
South Africa	1990-1994	0	0
Tajikistan	1997-2008	11	9
Togo	1997-2000	0	0
Turkmenistan	1999-2000	0	0
Uzbekistan	2001-2002	0	0
Vanuatu	1998-2003	0	0
Yemen	1994, 2000, 12, 14	0	0
Yugoslavia	1993-	1	0

Table 1: Countries Subject to Article 19 (1990-2014)

2 Details on Strategic Absence

Our concept of strategic absence implies that a country is choosing to skip a specific vote due to the politics surrounding the proposed resolution. To identify such instances, we began by collecting data on the specific date each resolution was passed. This data is included in the **?** roll-call voting data, but upon examination, we determined that many resolution dates in the dataset were the date that the UN published information about the resolution rather than the date of the vote. RAs collected new data on the precise date of the resolution, resulting in the recoding of resolution date for 905 resolutions between 1990 and 2014. We then created a binary indicator of whether a country was absent for a vote on a date that it was present for voting on other resolutions.

Our proxy for strategic absence has some limitations. First, we do not pick up cases where a country is chooses this strategy to avoid voting on a day where the UN only discusses one resolution. This event is most likely to occur when the UNGA votes on a resolution during the spring, as is often the case for special sessions. Our measure thus omits some of these "most likely" cases for strategic absence. Second, we cannot distinguish between cases where exogenous factors cause a delegation to miss a vote and where a skipped vote is intentional. For this reason, we collect new data on the content of resolutions to confirm that strategic absences are more common on topics that are typically thought of as controversial.

We also investigate the valdiity of our coding by looking at the content of every resolution that has more than 20 strategic absences. We are still collecting data on this but a subset of these resolutions are included in Appendix Table 2.

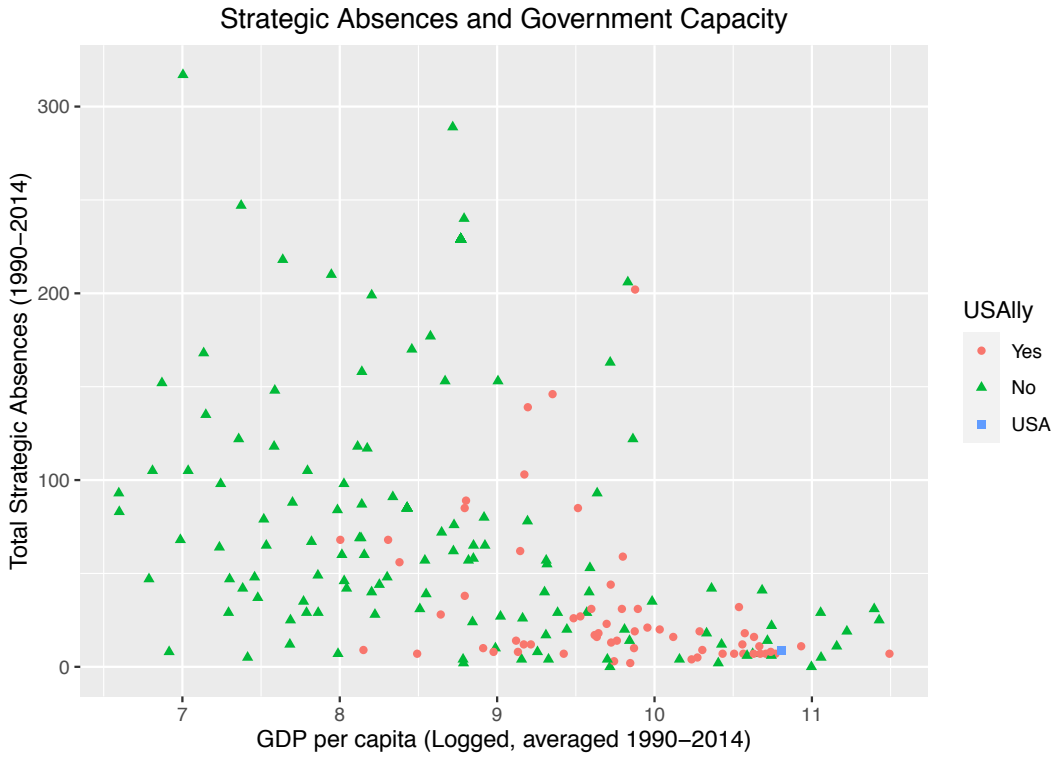

Figure 2: *Government Capacity and Cumulative Strategic Absences* - The scatterplot shows the correlation between a country's government capacity (proxied with GDP per capita, averaged across full time period) and cumulative strategic absences. Red circles are US allies, green triangles are non-US allies, and the blue square represents the United States.

3 Details on New Category Data

To assemble more fine-grained data on the geopolitics of absences, a team of RAs collected information on the content of all resolutions between 1990 and 2014, and created more narrowly defined categories. A list of categories with brief explanations is provided below. We highlight that these categories are a first-cut at coding content data, and will be refined in subsequent iterations.

- Administrative - budget, adoption of reports, peacekeeping review, etc.
- Cold War Arms Negotiations - US/USSR arms race, negotiations

- Conventional Disarmament - disarmament not related to nuclear weapons
- Decolonization - decolonization, independence
- Disarmament and Development - link between disarmament and development
- Economic Coercion - embargos (often about Cuba), excludes Iran and North Korea
- Economic Development - development status of specific countries, regions (excludes resolutions that discuss rights)
- Elections - election verification
- Environment - environment preservation/sustainability, Antartica resolutions
- Globalization - effect of gobalization on human rights, development
- Human Rights - Middle East and Europe - resolutions related to human rights in specific countries in these regions (excludes Israel)
- Human Rights - Non-Middle East/Europe - resolutions condemning human rights in countries not in ME/Europe
- Human Rights - General - general discussions of human rights, no specific countries or discussion of violence
- IAEA - IAEA reports, includes North Korea
- Israel - Territory
- Israel - Condemnations/Demands - specific condemnations of Israel's conduct or specific demands of Israel
- Israel - Human Rights - Israel actions that concern human rights but not legality
- Israel - Occupied Territory Issues - state of occupied territories (excludes resolutions mentioning human rights or focusing on Jerusalem)
- Jerusalem - Jerusalem resolutions
- Middle East Peace - general discussions of peacde in Middle East (negotiations, conferences)
- Miscellaneous - unusual topics including World Television Day, medical research, entrepreneurship, etc.
- Missiles - ballistic missiles, relevant treaties

- NSG Territories - Non-self-governing territories (general status, economic interests, specific territories)
- Non-Nuclear Arms Use/Control - use and control of non-nuclear arms (excludes disarmament)
- Non-Nuclear Weapon States - non-nuclear weapon states security
- Non-Strategic Nuclear Use - non-strategic nuclear weapons, production, use
- Nuclear Disarmament - general nuclear disarmament
- Nuclear Proliferation ME - nuclear proliferation in the Middle East
- NPT - NPT reviews, obligations
- Nuclear Tests - bans on nuclear tests, condemnations of nuclear tests
- Nuclear Threat - threat/danger of nuclear weapons use
- Nuclear-Weapon Free Areas - nuclear-weapon-free zones
- Nuclear Weapons Use - use of nuclear weapons, relevant international treaties
- Nuclear Zero - elimination of nuclear weapons
- Oceans - zones of peace, UNCLOS, oil slick in Lebanon
- Outer space - treaties, arms race, negotiations
- Palestine General - Assistance to Palestine
- Palestinian Rights - Palestinian human rights, general sovereignty rights, excludes resolutions mentioning Israeli activities
- Palestinian Refugees - protection, right of return, resettlement, UNRWA
- Palestinian Sovereignty - Palestinian right to self-determination
- Promoting Democracy - role of UN, regional orgs, international order
- Racism and Discrimination - elimination of racism, relevant treaties
- Right to Development - development as human right
- Science - science and technology
- Self Determination - right of countries to self-determination
- Small Arms Transfer - transfer of small arms legally or illegally

- South Africa - condemnations of Apartheid
- Sudan - assistance to Sudan
- UN Interim Force in Lebanon - UNFIL financing
- Violence/Coercion - condemnation of specific types of violence, mercenaries

	Dependent variable: Absence		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Article 19 Eligibility	0.559***	0.532***	0.409***
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.019)
Procedure Change	−0.463***	−0.422***	−0.141***
	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.018)
Civil War		0.461***	0.416***
		(0.030)	(0.036)
Crisis		0.307***	0.086**
		(0.030)	(0.036)
Attempted Coup		−0.138***	−0.171***
		(0.030)	(0.032)
Successful Coup		−0.554***	−0.510***
		(0.059)	(0.064)
GDP (log)			−0.467***
			(0.035)
GDP Per Capita (log)			0.019
			(0.047)
Observations	354,733	354,733	311,953
Log Likelihood	−87,462.570	−87,230.440	−74,776.770
Akaike Inf. Crit.	174,933.100	174,476.900	149,573.500
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	174,976.300	174,563.100	149,680.100
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table 2: *Effect of Article 19 Eligibility on Absence - Mixed Effects Logistic Regression* - The table shows the results of a mixed effects logistic regression that examines the relationship between Article 19 eligibility and absence while including country random effects. Coefficients are log odd ratios.

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Date	**Resolution Number**	**New Topic**	**Description**
1992 - 11 December	R/47/65	UNCLOS	Universal participation in UNCLOS
1993 - 20 December	R/48/145	ME/Europe - HR	Critique of Iran for human rights violations
1993 - 20 December	R/38/147	HR Non ME/Europe	Critique of Sudan for human rights violations
1995 - 12 December	R/50/70a	Nuclear Testing	Urges cessation of all nuclear testing
1999 - 1 December	R/54/37	Jerusalem	Illegality of Israeli laws/jurisdiction on Jerusalem
2001 - 21 December	R/56/214a	Lebanon	Israel should abide by UN resolutions re: Lebanon
2003 - 23 December	R/58/240	UNCLOS	States should become parties to UNCLOS

Table 3: Select UNGA resolutions with more than 20 strategic absences

	Dependent variable: Strategic Absence					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
US Ally	−0.721***	−0.721***	−0.677***	−0.677**	−0.017	−0.017
	(0.044)	(0.199)	(0.043)	(0.218)	(0.053)	(0.211)
Important Vote	0.187***	0.187*	0.151**	0.151	0.169**	0.169*
	(0.055)	(0.077)	(0.058)	(0.079)	(0.064)	(0.084)
US Ally * Important Vote	−0.504***	−0.504***	−0.532***	−0.532***	−0.504***	−0.504*
	(0.087)	(0.151)	(0.089)	(0.152)	(0.112)	(0.235)
Vote Margin	−0.257***	−0.257***	−0.244***	−0.244**	−0.249***	−0.249**
	(0.057)	(0.074)	(0.060)	(0.077)	(0.068)	(0.085)
Abstentions	0.072**	0.072*	0.058*	0.058	0.099***	0.099*
	(0.023)	(0.032)	(0.024)	(0.031)	(0.028)	(0.039)
Middle East	0.181**	0.181	0.179***	0.179	0.377***	0.377***
	(0.057)	(0.100)	(0.053)	(0.102)	(0.058)	(0.111)
Human Rights	−0.122*	−0.122	−0.088	−0.088	−0.254***	−0.254*
	(0.061)	(0.090)	(0.061)	(0.090)	(0.071)	(0.104)
Arms Control/Disarmament	0.065	0.065	0.010	0.010	0.093	0.093
	(0.060)	(0.078)	(0.063)	(0.081)	(0.072)	(0.096)
Economic Coercion	−0.282**	−0.282**	−0.207*	−0.207*	−0.234*	−0.234*
	(0.090)	(0.101)	(0.088)	(0.098)	(0.101)	(0.115)
Nuclear	−0.293***	−0.293***	−0.330***	−0.330***	−0.429***	−0.429***
	(0.057)	(0.083)	(0.059)	(0.086)	(0.070)	(0.104)
US-Russia Opposed			−0.305***	−0.305***	−0.325***	−0.325***
			(0.053)	(0.073)	(0.060)	(0.080)
Distance from US			0.109***	0.109	−0.019	−0.019
			(0.023)	(0.110)	(0.038)	(0.136)
Distancde from Russia			−0.108***	−0.108	−0.357***	−0.357***
			(0.030)	(0.110)	(0.040)	(0.087)
GDP (log)					−0.180***	−0.180***
					(0.017)	(0.038)
GDP Per Capita (log)					−0.281***	−0.281**
					(0.017)	(0.090)
Democracy (Polity IV)					−0.054***	−0.054**
					(0.003)	(0.018)
Time	−0.032***	−0.032***	−0.028***	−0.028***	−0.026***	−0.026**
	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.003)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.008)
SE Clustered by Country	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SE Clustered by RCID	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Note:						*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 4: *Gepolitical Determinants of Strategic Absence - Pooled Logistic Regression* - The table shows the results of a pooled logistic regression estimating the effect of ties to the United States, conditional on a resolution being important to the United States, on the probability of strategic absence.

	Dependent variable: Strategic Absence					
	US Allies	Non-Allies	US Allies	Non=Allies	US Allies	Non-Allies
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
importantvote	−0.249***	0.166***	−0.304***	0.126***	−0.302**	0.146***
	(0.073)	(0.028)	(0.074)	(0.028)	(0.100)	(0.034)
log.margin	−0.445***	−0.202***	−0.429***	−0.193***	−0.547***	−0.195***
	(0.064)	(0.027)	(0.064)	(0.027)	(0.082)	(0.032)
log.abstain	0.015	0.081***	−0.011	0.068***	−0.006	0.104***
	(0.023)	(0.010)	(0.023)	(0.010)	(0.032)	(0.013)
me	0.640***	0.071**	0.681***	0.053*	0.637***	0.308***
	(0.052)	(0.025)	(0.053)	(0.025)	(0.072)	(0.030)
hr	−0.304***	−0.082**	−0.266***	−0.047	−0.413***	−0.208***
	(0.065)	(0.028)	(0.066)	(0.028)	(0.090)	(0.035)
di	−0.063	0.083**	−0.139	0.036	−0.258*	0.129***
	(0.073)	(0.030)	(0.074)	(0.031)	(0.105)	(0.037)
ec	−0.320**	−0.266***	−0.242*	−0.196***	−0.484**	−0.190***
	(0.104)	(0.042)	(0.105)	(0.043)	(0.153)	(0.052)
nu	−0.330***	−0.271***	−0.327***	−0.305***	−0.504***	−0.385***
	(0.087)	(0.035)	(0.087)	(0.036)	(0.130)	(0.043)
usru.ind			−0.395***	−0.254***	−0.265***	−0.296***
			(0.055)	(0.025)	(0.079)	(0.030)
lag.idpt.us			0.360***	−0.142***	−0.200	0.004
			(0.105)	(0.030)	(0.155)	(0.048)
lag.idpt.ru			−0.082	0.109***	0.132	−0.173***
			(0.062)	(0.021)	(0.088)	(0.036)
log(lag.gdppc_k)					0.629	−0.660***
					(0.801)	(0.172)
log(lag.gdp_k)					−0.386	0.672***
					(0.789)	(0.175)
Polity_lag					−0.034	−0.003
					(0.018)	(0.005)
time	−0.059***	−0.033***	−0.056***	−0.033***	−0.074***	−0.051***
	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.016)	(0.005)
Observations	101,431	246,678	101,136	236,556	77,646	180,934
Note:						*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 5: *Geopolitical Determinants of Strategic Absence - Conditional Logit* - The table shows the results of a conditional logistic regression with country fixed effects estimating how geopolitics affects absence. Because US ally status varies little across time, we estimate models separately for US allies (1, 3, and 5) and non-US allies (2, 4, and 6).

	Dependent variable: Strategic Absence					
	US Allies	Non-Allies	US Allies	Non=Allies	US Allies	Non-Allies
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Important Vote	−0.223***	0.210***	−0.339***	0.143***	−0.287***	0.080**
	(0.076)	(0.029)	(0.078)	(0.030)	(0.079)	(0.033)
Vote Margin (Log)	−0.554***	−0.268***	−0.523***	−0.252***	−0.468***	−0.279***
	(0.061)	(0.027)	(0.062)	(0.028)	(0.066)	(0.030)
Number of Abstentions (Log)	0.027	0.094***	−0.024	0.070***	−0.010	0.080***
	(0.023)	(0.010)	(0.024)	(0.011)	(0.025)	(0.012)
Middle East	0.780***	0.115***	0.834***	0.098***	0.853***	0.191***
	(0.055)	(0.026)	(0.055)	(0.027)	(0.057)	(0.029)
Human Rights	−0.561***	−0.219***	−0.452***	−0.144***	−0.339***	−0.132***
	(0.066)	(0.028)	(0.068)	(0.030)	(0.069)	(0.032)
Di	−0.124	0.049	−0.232***	−0.010	−0.116	0.055
	(0.076)	(0.031)	(0.076)	(0.032)	(0.079)	(0.035)
Economic Coercion	−0.429***	−0.373***	−0.287***	−0.264***	−0.258**	−0.218***
	(0.107)	(0.043)	(0.109)	(0.045)	(0.112)	(0.048)
Nuclear	−0.395***	−0.335***	−0.391***	−0.367***	−0.432***	−0.399***
	(0.090)	(0.036)	(0.090)	(0.037)	(0.096)	(0.041)
US-Russia Opposed			−0.575***	−0.340***	−0.422***	−0.258***
			(0.057)	(0.026)	(0.061)	(0.028)
Pref Similarity - Russia			0.396***	0.002	0.072	−0.065**
			(0.092)	(0.030)	(0.106)	(0.033)
Pref Similarity - US			0.246***	0.231***	0.066	0.026
			(0.062)	(0.023)	(0.070)	(0.027)
GDP (log)					−0.340***	−0.408***
					(0.072)	(0.048)
GDP Per Capita (log)					−0.973***	−0.079
					(0.167)	(0.066)
Observations	101,431	250,276	101,136	240,154	94,341	208,145
Log Likelihood	−7,694.832	−35,894.440	−7,581.397	−34,096.690	−6,948.963	−29,069.890
Akaike Inf. Crit.	15,409.670	71,808.870	15,188.790	68,219.390	13,927.930	58,169.790
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	15,504.940	71,913.180	15,312.610	68,354.440	14,069.750	58,323.480
Note:						*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 6: *Determinants of Strategic Absence - Mixed Effects Logistic Regression (US Allies vs. Non-US Allies)*

	Dependent variable: Strategic Absence					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
US-Russia Opposed	0.422***	0.422**	0.422***	0.422**	0.355***	0.355**
	(0.116)	(0.195)	(0.116)	(0.195)	(0.111)	(0.156)
Distance (Prefs)	−0.309***	−0.309***	−0.309***	−0.309***	−0.189***	−0.189**
	(0.036)	(0.103)	(0.036)	(0.103)	(0.035)	(0.079)
US-Russia Opposed * Distance	0.307***	0.307***	0.307***	0.307***	0.263***	0.263***
	(0.047)	(0.083)	(0.047)	(0.083)	(0.043)	(0.064)
Vote Margin (Log)	−0.234***	−0.234***	−0.234***	−0.234***	−0.275***	−0.275***
	(0.058)	(0.076)	(0.058)	(0.076)	(0.062)	(0.079)
Number of Abstentions (Log)	0.063***	0.063**	0.063***	0.063**	0.064**	0.064*
	(0.024)	(0.032)	(0.024)	(0.032)	(0.026)	(0.034)
US Ally	−0.737***	−0.737***	−0.737***	−0.737***	−0.238***	−0.238
	(0.040)	(0.211)	(0.040)	(0.211)	(0.043)	(0.182)
Russian Ally	0.489***	0.489	0.489***	0.489	0.640***	0.640*
	(0.043)	(0.320)	(0.043)	(0.320)	(0.047)	(0.330)
Middle East	0.187***	0.187*	0.187***	0.187*	0.282***	0.282***
	(0.053)	(0.102)	(0.053)	(0.102)	(0.055)	(0.105)
Human Rights	−0.067	−0.067	−0.067	−0.067	−0.102	−0.102
	(0.061)	(0.092)	(0.061)	(0.092)	(0.064)	(0.098)
Di	0.030	0.030	0.030	0.030	0.053	0.053
	(0.062)	(0.080)	(0.062)	(0.080)	(0.065)	(0.084)
Economic Coercion	−0.193**	−0.193*	−0.193**	−0.193*	−0.178*	−0.178*
	(0.090)	(0.100)	(0.090)	(0.100)	(0.092)	(0.104)
Nuclear	−0.334***	−0.334***	−0.334***	−0.334***	−0.363***	−0.363***
	(0.059)	(0.086)	(0.059)	(0.086)	(0.064)	(0.089)
GDP (log)					−0.249***	−0.249***
					(0.013)	(0.045)
GDP Per Capita (log)					−0.223***	−0.223***
					(0.014)	(0.086)
Time	−0.038***	−0.038***	−0.038***	−0.038***	−0.023***	−0.023***
	(0.003)	(0.007)	(0.003)	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.007)
SE Clustered by Country	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SE Clustered by RCID	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Note:						*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 7: *Competing Principals, Preferences, and Strategic Absence - Pooled Logistic Regression* - The table shows the results of a pooled logistic regression estimating the effect of the US and Russia being on opposite sides of a resolution, conditional on the similarity of a country's preferences to the United States or Russia. Standard errors clustered by country (all models) and resolution (models 2, 4, and 6).

	Dependent variable:		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
US Ally	-0.724^{***}	-0.681^{**}	-0.015
	(0.200)	(0.219)	(0.211)
Important Vote	0.165	0.138	0.166
	(0.085)	(0.085)	(0.095)
Vote Margin (log)	-0.255^{**}	-0.258^{**}	-0.237^{**}
	(0.078)	(0.079)	(0.092)
Number of Abstain (log)	0.061	0.053	0.086
	(0.034)	(0.033)	(0.045)
US-Russia Opposed		-0.265^{***}	-0.237^{***}
		(0.068)	(0.072)
Distance - US		0.104	-0.029
		(0.111)	(0.136)
Distance - Russia		-0.098	-0.345^{***}
		(0.112)	(0.088)
GDP (log)			-0.180^{***}
			(0.038)
GDPPC (log)			-0.283^{**}
			(0.091)
Polity IV			-0.055^{**}
			(0.018)
newcatCondemnations/Demands of Israel	0.600	0.198	0.652
	(0.307)	(0.329)	(0.333)
newcatConventional Disarmament	0.337	0.556	0.447
	(0.238)	(0.307)	(0.285)
newcatDecolonization	0.723^{**}	0.747^{**}	0.908^{**}
	(0.247)	(0.250)	(0.293)
newcatEnvironment	1.307^{***}	1.362^{***}	1.334^{**}
	(0.348)	(0.376)	(0.416)
newcatHuman Rights Non Middle East/ Europe	0.573^{*}	0.594^{**}	0.559^{*}
	(0.235)	(0.225)	(0.271)
newcatIsrael Human Rights	0.354	0.307	0.748^{**}
	(0.244)	(0.286)	(0.284)
newcatIsrael Occupied Territories Issues	0.412	0.230	0.691^{**}
	(0.212)	(0.263)	(0.241)
newcatJerusalem	0.571^{*}	0.509	0.979^{***}
	(0.253)	(0.303)	(0.274)
newcatME/Europe - Human Rights	0.458^{*}	0.454^{*}	0.538^{*}
	(0.218)	(0.215)	(0.260)
newcatMissiles	0.654^{**}	0.939^{***}	0.863^{**}
	(0.248)	(0.269)	(0.294)
newcatNon-Nuclear Arms Use and Control	0.624	0.789	0.838^{*}
	(0.334)	(0.440)	(0.421)
newcatNon-Strategic Nuclear Use	1.003^{**}	1.396^{*}	1.296^{**}
	(0.350)	(0.591)	(0.428)
newcatNuclear Proliferation Middle East	0.175	0.692^{*}	0.518^{*}
	(0.228)	(0.351)	(0.249)
newcatPalestinian Refugees	0.502^{*}	0.293	0.791^{**}
	(0.223)	(0.272)	(0.248)
newcatPalestinian Rights	0.338	0.159	0.497
	(0.238)	(0.285)	(0.279)
USally_lag:importantvote	-0.505^{***}	-0.534^{***}	-0.509^{*}
	(0.151)	(0.152)	(0.235)
Note:			*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 8: *Geopolitical Determinants of Strategic Absence - Resolution Content* - The table shows the results of a pooled logistic regression estimating how geopolitical factors and resolution content affect the probability of strategic absence. Standard errors clustered at the resolution and country level.