Understanding Vote Switching in the UN

Kathleen Heraty

Christopher Kilby†

Villanova University

Abstract

This paper explores why countries amend their positions in United Nations General Assembly roll-call votes after the outcome is determined. The previous literature has focused on countries' strategic considerations when casting their ballot at the UN. This includes the decision to vote, to abstain, or to be absent, as well as to change positions over time when there is repeated voting on the same issue. However, since the mid-1950s member states have had an additional option: to amend their vote after the fact by informing the Secretariat how the delegation had intended to vote. Such amended votes are noted in the official meeting records of the United Nations but have no impact on the outcome of the roll call. Using all UNGA roll-call votes between January 1, 1960, and September 6, 2024 (the end of Regular Session 78)—over a million individual votes—this paper explores the decision to amend a vote. We consider a range of possible reasons for vote switching, from correcting errors to strategic motives.

JEL codes: D72; F53

Key words: Strategic Voting; United Nations

† Corresponding Author: chkilby@yahoo.com

1. Introduction

The United Nation General Assembly (UNGA) provides a forum for member states to interact in a variety of ways and for a range of purposes. UNGA debates often result in decisions about draft resolutions, with decisions made by consensus, by non-recorded vote, and by roll-call vote. When a measure is brought to a vote, member states have a number of options. They can vote in favor or against. They can abstain from voting. Finally, they might not vote. Not voting may be a choice or in some cases it may be accidental, due to limited resources, or because the delegate lacks instructions from their government (Voeten 2013, 55). In addition, since 1954 delegates have also had the option to amend their vote after the outcome of the roll call is determined by informing the Secretariat how they had intended to vote (Fjelstul et al. 2025). Such amended votes are noted in the official meeting records of the United Nations but have no impact on the outcome of the roll call.[1]

Why might delegates and the governments they represent amend votes when these changes cannot impact on the UNGA decision? There are a number of possible reasons. A delegate might have voted (or failed to vote) in error and wishes the record to reflect the original instructions from their government. In this case, the decision maker is the delegate and the audience is their government. Alternatively, the decision-maker could be the government. The ministry may have failed to provide instructions or may have made an error and wishes to correct the record for their domestic audience. The audience could be external, for example a voting bloc at the UN; the government might wish to signal to the bloc an error rather than an intentional rift or snub.[2] Finally, the original vote may not have been an error at all but rather part of a plan to change the record after the fact. This could be viewed as a strategy to avoid conflict with or to curry favor from a great power.

Debates within the UN about how to deal with voting errors or missed votes have explored a range of possibilities but most proposed modifications have raised issues of potential abuse via strategic behavior. For example, pursuant to modifying voting practices under Article 21 to allow countries a second chance to vote if they missed the first roll call, the majority opinion was that this could lead to abuses, such as intentionally missing the first vote in order to join the winning side or to see if one's vote would be consequential (United Nations 1955, 216-217).[3]

To investigate whether such changes reflect errors or strategic behavior, we use all UNGA resolution-related roll-call votes between January 1, 1960, and September 6, 2024 (the end of Regular Session 78)—7,137 decisions with over a million individual votes—to explore the decision to amend a vote. Since the most frequent change is to indicate a position when the country initially failed to vote, we also examine the factors associated with such absences.

More detail on what we do. List of what comes next.

[1] Amended votes have no impact on the official outcome even if they would change the overall balance (United Nations 1955, 218).
[2] Perhaps the most famous case of a government (the United States) announcing an error in voting is from the vote on United Nations Security Council Resolution S/13827 in 1980 condemning Israeli settlements in occupied territory. See Time Magazine (1980) for details.
[3] This would be relevant, for example, if votes are traded for favors.

2. Background

Many factors drive voting in the United Nations General Assembly. On some issues, some member states have clear and sometimes intense preferences even though resolutions are non-binding. In other cases, the country itself has little directly at stake but is part of a voting bloc and some members of that bloc do have clear interests at stake (U.S. State Department 1984) or the bloc may specifically avoid taking positions on issues that would generate internal divisions (Voeten 2013).[4] Such voting blocs can be identified by geography, interests or prior voting patterns (Russett 1966). Voting blocs can also drive the UNGA agenda (Bailey and Voeten 2018).

UNGA roll-call votes are frequently used by researchers to gauge geopolitical relations between countries, to understand foreign policy decisions, and to track preference similarity regarding geopolitical issues. It is clear why UNGA data are valuable for understanding how states behave. One factor consistently highlighted in the literature is the influence of powerful countries, with the United States often at the center. Wang (1999), Dreher et al. (2008) and Carter and Stone (2015) provide evidence of the U.S. buying UNGA votes with bilateral aid. Alexander and Rooney (2019) demonstrate this for UNSC votes while Dreher and Sturm (2012) examine UNGA vote buying via World Bank and IMF funding.

Since 1983, U.S. law has required the State Department to identify key votes (more recently termed important votes) each year and for USAID to consider countries records on these votes in bilateral aid allocation decisions (Democracy and Materialism). This linkage of voting records and aid creates a clear incentive for poorer member states: vote with the U.S. on important issues and potentially receive additional aid or favorable treatment, or vote against and risk losing existing U.S. financial support. These incentives tend to target smaller, aid-dependent countries, making UNGA voting a strategic decision rather than purely an expression of policy preferences, at least for key votes (Dreher and Jensen 2013). On average, countries are more likely to vote with the U.S. on key decisions than on non-key ones, suggesting that external influence does play a role in voting decisions.

The UNGA voting literature has also considered vote shifts in the context of similar votes being repeated over time across UNGA sessions. Leadership change is an important factor in explaining shifts in UNGA voting patterns, particularly on high-salience key votes identified by the United States. Dreher and Jensen (2013) find that countries often increase their alignment with the U.S. on key votes following a change in leadership. This pattern supports McGillivray and Smith's (2004, 2008) leader-specific punishment model, which suggests that when a leader deviates from voting in line with U.S. preferences, the U.S. may punish the leader, and, by extension, the country, until that leader is replaced. New leaders, wanting to restore foreign aid and improve treatment in international financial institutions, often quickly signal alignment with U.S. positions. This realignment is strongest on key votes (Dreher and Jensen 2013), where U.S. carrots and sticks are most effective, and is much weaker on non-key votes, which are less influenced by external pressure and more reflective of national policy preferences.

However, the impact of leadership turnover extends beyond the U.S.–UNGA key vote dynamic. Mattes et al. (2015) examine how changes in the societal groups that support leaders influence foreign policy, including UNGA voting behavior. Significant foreign policy shifts are most likely

[4] Examining a different UN forum, Hug and Lukács (2013) present evidence of state preferences dominating over bloc membership.

when new leaders depend on a different societal base than their predecessors. In nondemocratic regimes, where support often comes from narrow groups such as military or economic elites, leadership transitions can result in sharp shifts in foreign policy. In contrast, democratic leaders are generally accountable to broader coalitions and face legislative oversight, limiting the ability to dramatically alter established foreign policy positions. This helps explain why democracies typically show more consistent UNGA voting patterns over time, even after leadership turnover (Mattes et al. 2015). Brazys and Panke (2017A) likewise find that "pluralistic gridlock" limits shifts in UNGA voting patterns. DiLorenzo and Rooney (2021) demonstrate that such domestic political effects persist even in settings where decision-makers face international constraints. Brazys and Panke (2017A, 70) present evidence that states with limited financial capacity (from poorer and more aid-dependent countries) are more likely to shift positions, engaging in "serial shifting on the same resolution." Brazys and Dukalskis (2017) consider how China induces governments to move toward its preferred position on repeated UNGA votes.

Taken together, these studies suggest that the effect of leadership change on UNGA voting behavior is shaped both by external incentives, such as U.S. key votes / aid linkages, and by internal governance structures. While the U.S. or China can leverage material rewards or punishments to influence positions, the degree of shifting after a leadership transition also depends on the country's political institutions.

The empirical analysis in this paper differs from the analysis in those above as we look at vote switching—delegates amending their current vote—rather than countries shifting positions on resolutions that are repeated across sessions. We draw on a unique feature of the UNGA-DM database recently released by Fjelstul et al. (2025), namely reporting both a member state's original vote and their amended position as reflected in meeting record notes that indicate if subsequent to the vote a delegation informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote differently. The UNGA-DM database systematically covers all resolution-related decisions made in UNGA plenary sessions from the first session in 1946 through the present, including special and emergency sessions; its coverage of original and amended votes separately is an essential distinction for studying vote switching behavior.[5]

As noted above, discussions in the UN about vote switching often focus on concerns about strategic behavior. Yet not all vote switches are strategic. Some are the product of simple procedural errors or confusion in the moment. The General Assembly's voting process, while formal, is often fast-paced and structured in a way that leaves room for mistakes. Proposals postponed for budgetary review may be taken up again unexpectedly, multiple amendments can be grouped under the same agenda item, and explanations of votes are limited. Delegates are generally allowed to speak only once in committee or plenary sessions, unless they are changing their position, which can mean that corrections have to be made after the fact through the Secretariat.

When several recorded votes are taken in quick succession, especially on similar paragraphs or amendments, delegates are required to keep track of these distinctions at a fast pace. It is not unheard of that they realize afterward that they pressed the wrong button or misunderstood the item at hand, prompting a formal correction that shows up in the meeting record.

[5] Earlier datasets (e.g., Bailey et al. (2017)) did not systematically distinguish between original and amended votes, sometimes reporting one, sometimes the other.

In the first recorded vote switch (December 10, 1954) the delegates of Costa Rica, El Salvador and Syria reported being unavoidably detained for the vote on Resolution 906(IX). This took place on the first vote of the day (during a session that started at 2:30 PM and ended at 7:05 PM) on a draft resolution that had been debated over the course of four previous meetings (starting in the afternoon of December 8). The high-profile resolution requested the Secretary General to seek the release of eleven U.S. airmen captured by Chinese forces after bailing out their damaged B-29 aircraft over North Korea in early 1953. The U.S. requested a recorded vote; the draft resolution was adopted with 45 in favor, 5 against (Eastern Bloc countries Ukraine, USSR, Belarus, Czechoslovakia, and Poland), and 6 abstaining (Yemen, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Burma (Myanmar), India and Indonesia). Costa Rica and El Salvador requested "to be considered as having voted in favour" and Syria as abstaining "to remove any doubt" (A/PV.509, 462). The requests from Costa Rica and El Salvador came just after the conclusion of that agenda item while Syria added its request after the President announced the request by Costa Rica and El Salvador at the end of the day's meeting.[6]

A more recent example comes from Resolution 79/238 ("Nuclear War Effects and Scientific Research," adopted by the UNGA on 24 December 2024). In a separate vote on whether to include the third preambular paragraph, Belgium and Finland abstained while the United States voted in favor. After the vote, Belgium and Finland informed the Secretariat they had intended to vote in favor, while the United States reported it had intended to vote against (A/79/PV.55 (Resumption 1), page 8). A similar pattern emerged on the fifth preambular paragraph, with Australia correcting a missed vote to "in favor" and the United States again switching from "in favor" to "against" (A/79/PV.55 (Resumption 1), page 8). In both cases, the likely cause was the rapid-fire sequence of votes on closely worded paragraphs within the same draft resolution.[7]

The same session saw a more extreme case in Resolution 79/256 ("Proposed Programme Budget for 2025"), which recorded 18 vote switches—most from "in favor" to "abstain." Budget resolutions are among the most technical in the UNGA, and this one was complicated further by oral amendments and overlapping discussions of related items. In discussing a paragraph of the

---

[6] Requests are not always (and likely not often) made the same day as the vote. The second such request was made by Poland on a separate vote on November 9, 1956, regarding whether "under United Nations auspices" should be stricken from operative paragraph 2 of Resolution 1005(ES-II), "The situation in Hungary." On December 11, 1956, Poland asked that it "be included among the Members who had voted against" (joining the other Eastern Bloc countries).

The UN was somewhat inconsistent in this first instance (December 1954) about whether vote changes should be included in the final tally. The President states "I presume that there would be no objection to the registration of these votes since the result of the vote as announced would remain unchanged" (A/PV.509, 462) and a footnote in the meeting record indicates "In view of the statements by the President and the representative of Syria (see paras. 304-306, inclusive), the final result of the vote should read as follows: 'The draft resolution was adopted by 47 votes to 5, with 7 abstentions'" (A/PV.509, 442). The UN Yearbook likewise reports the outcome as 47 to 5 with 7 abstentions (UN 1955, 43). However, the UN webpage lists the original tally (https://research.un.org/en/docs/ga/quick/regular/9) as does the UN Digital Library database:
https://digitallibrary.un.org/search?cc=Voting+Data&ln=en&p=A%2FRES%2F906%28IX%29&f=&action_search=Search&rm=&sf=&so=d&rg=50&c=Voting+Data&c=&of=hb&fti=0&fti=0
Four days later on December 14, the Sixth Committee passed a resolution requesting the Secretary General submit a report to the General Assembly in the next session (the 10th Session) on how to handle correction of voting mistakes (http://www.worldlii.org/int/other/UNGA/1954/81.pdf, 51).

[7] This late afternoon Christmas Eve session lasted two hour and fifteen minutes during which time 66 decisions were taken, including 38 roll-call votes of which 7 were on oral amendments.

draft resolution that became 79/242, a resolution that addressed related budget questions, the Russian delegation publicly criticized the procedural handling, claiming that political tensions, continuous negotiations, and visa disputes disrupted participation. In such an environment, the risk of delegates missing, mishearing, or misreading a vote increases.[8]

These cases show that some amended votes reflect the messy realities of multilateral procedure rather than a calculated change. High complexity, rapid sequences, and politically charged atmospheres all create conditions for honest mistakes—something that needs to be kept in mind when interpreting UNGA voting data.

Countries amend their votes most frequently when they fail to vote during the original roll call. Thus, understanding why countries fail to vote provides important context for analyzing subsequent amendments to these absences. Absenteeism may be a procedural error or strategic behavior.

Panke (2014) emphasizes the role that capacity constraints play in shaping voting behaviors. According to Panke, member states with limited resources, including smaller GDP and understaffed UN missions, frequently skip votes out of necessity. These states prioritize participation according to domestic priorities or the perceived importance of specific resolutions (Panke, 2014). Such patterns suggest that amended votes from low-capacity states may frequently represent sincere corrections to unintended absences rather than calculated diplomatic signaling.

Morse and Coggins (2024) extend this analysis of absenteeism by emphasizing the notion of "strategic absence," where states deliberately avoid voting on politically sensitive issues to minimize geopolitical risks. Their analysis shows that weaker states often employ this tactic to navigate competing international pressures without explicitly taking sides. Unlike abstentions that publicly signal neutrality and thus might be viewed negatively by powerful states, absences allow both sides to suppose the absent delegate would have voted with them had that delegate not missed the vote.

Morse and Coggins identify scenarios where absences are most likely strategic—when states miss some votes but participate in others on the same day. Using this definition, they find that strategic absences are more frequent for votes where major powers take opposing positions (e.g., the United States vs. Russia or China). Morse and Coggins argue this is due to "competing principals" problems, where small states must carefully navigate pressures from powerful allies. In such contexts, later amendments to absences may serve as delayed alignment with the eventual majority or with key allies once political risks subside.

Both Panke (2014) and Morse and Coggins (2024) note the reputational implications of absenteeism. Repeated absences can diminish a state's credibility and influence within international coalitions, particularly when the missed votes are of high importance to major powers or regional blocs. Amended votes following such absences may therefore be interpreted as efforts to restore standing within a coalition, reaffirm alignment with a strategic partner, or signal renewed commitment to an issue.

[8] Of course, many of these votes were in fact due to the Russian strategy of requesting roll-call votes on dozens of preambular and operative paragraphs in an attempt to slow or derail resolutions directed against Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

3. Theory

Why do U.N. delegations amend their votes? Vote switches could be for a domestic audience or an international audience, or simply a bureaucratic response to a mistake. If the government is focused on a domestic audience, the likelihood of amending a vote should depend on the type of government. We would expect democracies to be more concerned with correcting the record when an error is made; this concern likely increases before a competitive election or when there are more veto players. Regarding international audiences, predictions are more complex. If a country was strategically absent to avoid taking sides in a great power conflict (e.g., when the U.S. and China or Russia are expected to take opposite positions), the country is unlikely to amend its absence because this would defeat the original purpose of not voting. However, if the country was strategically absent for some other reason (e.g., waiting to see which side won), it may be more likely to amend its vote.

The logic of vote switching for international audiences is a little hard to work out. Who exactly cares about amended votes that cannot impact outcomes? For example, the annual *Voting Practices in the United Nations* report from the U.S. State Department to Congress uses original votes, not amended votes. Another possible international audience is a voting bloc. If a country is a member of WEOG (Western Europe and Others Group), the Africa Group, the Group of 77, the non-aligned movement, la Francophonie, or the Warsaw Pact, that audience might care about amended votes. We can identify blocs from historical/geographical caucusing groups, or we can do this empirically (following Russett 1966) using factor analysis (also called principal components analysis or pca). In the latter case, we would likely use voting from the previous year to identify groups with similar loading on the same components. In either case, we would then look for votes in the current year on which most of the group voted the same way and then see if a country that was in the group failed to vote the same way. If so, does it have a higher-than-average probability of switching its vote from that roll call to match the group position?

There are a couple of details to worry about here. A country might belong to several groups that take conflicting positions (here, we would expect a higher probability of being absent) so we need to capture this, too. In the case that a country does not face such a conflict, there are two potential explanations if the probability of a vote switch is high. That switch may be geostrategic, intended to match voting by the bloc. That is, the original action (e.g., not voting) was an error and the country is willing to make the effort to switch because it wants to signal to the bloc that it is a loyal member, perhaps to strengthen its claim on other countries in the bloc to support it on a future issue. Alternatively, the country might feel strongly about the issue and want to correct its error regardless of how the other countries in the bloc voted. But those other countries might feel similarly and strongly about the issue, too. That is, they have a common interest and so all feel strongly motivated to vote the same way for individual reasons. For example, if we look at Kenya voting on an issue related to international trade in cocoa, it might want to correct a voting absence to signal commitment to the Africa bloc, which includes West African countries that depend heavily on cocoa exports. Kenya itself is not reliant on cocoa exports.[9] This would constitute a strategic vote switch. In contrast, if the vote was related to decolonization, the Kenyan government would want to correct a voting absence to signal to its domestic constituency that it takes these issues seriously. That would align with voting by the Africa bloc because all the other governments

[9] This is true historically; Kenya ha recently started exporting cocoa but is still a minor player.

in that bloc would also feel strongly (i.e., want to signal to their constituents). However, Kenya's vote switch in this case is not primarily geostrategic.

One way to separate these is to separate votes by topic. That is something we should consider.

Original votes may be sincere, accidental or strategic. Amended votes themselves may be sincere or strategic. If the original vote is sincere, any amendment is strategic.[10] If the original vote is strategic, then the amended vote could be either sincere or strategic. The example in the paragraph above assumes missing the vote was accidental; this does not always have to be the case. For example, a delegation could be absent (or abstain) for the original vote to please an international audience and then "correct" the vote for a domestic audience (switching from a strategic vote to a sincere vote).

Amended votes are most common after absences. This suggests that to study vote switching it is important to understand the reasons for absences. Absence itself can be accidental or strategic.[11] Morse and Coggins (2024) identify absences as potentially strategic if the country participated in any other roll-call votes on the same day. This definition implicitly categorizes absences on "one-vote days" as accidental and absences on multi-vote days as potentially strategic. We might, however, worry that confusion on days with many votes (the maximum observed is 115) might lead to accidental outcomes, for example missing a vote. For this reason, we control for the daily number of votes.[12] Because the distribution is highly skewed (average of 4, median of 2 and maximum of 115), we use the log of the daily number of votes.

Voting errors can occur for various reasons, all contingent on government capacity. The UNGA has many meetings with debates and statements but no voting and other meetings with a flurry of voting (especially in November and December). In the period studied, there are 385 days with one vote. These votes might have been unexpected (or not worth the effort to show up for). There 629 days with more than one vote (accounting in total for 6,752 votes). We might expect low-capacity countries to be less likely to vote on measures when those were the only vote of the day. High-capacity countries should not be impacted by this and, in general, should be less prone to voting error. Conversely, high-capacity countries should be more likely to correct a voting error when it does occur (the bureaucratic explanation for vote switching).

Data

Describe data; include transition matrix. Note that the most common case is changing from not voting.

---

[10] We term sincere initial votes that are later switched due to a change in government preferences (due to turnover) as accidental as the government changing their vote views them this way.

[11] Strictly speaking, a country may choose to be absent because it has no preference, and it does not wish to incur the cost of attending. We classify this as accidental as it is also a function of state capacity. [I spoke with Rick Nigart on August 2, 2025. He worked in the U.S. delegation to the United Nations between 1984 and 1989 (primarily working on the Fifth Committee that deals with administrative and budget issues). He indicated that the delegate at the time for a Pacific Island nation was a dentist who lived in the New York area. That delegate would show up to participate and vote when he could fit it into his professional schedule. Using the internet, I failed to identify the country or the delegate. However, I did find a number of small island nation delegates with more than one responsibility. See listing near end of this document.]

[12] The high point for roll-call votes was on 4 December 2023, reflecting a Russian strategy to request roll-call votes on every paragraph of each draft resolution. This appears to have been an attempt to slow UN proceedings related to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Empirical Strategy

We start by assessing whether the pattern of amending votes is consistent with simply "fixing" random errors in the initial votes. We then turn to a systematic analysis. Since three-quarters of requests to record a different vote are when the country did not initially vote, we start by examining the determinants of not voting using a linear probability model (LPM) that allows for country and year fixed effects with two-way clustering by country and UNGA decision.[13] We then turn to the main analysis of vote switching.

First, a simple comparison. If vote switches were just to correct errors, the percentages among switched votes should match the percentages for other votes. Comparing both changes starting from not voting and changes from other votes to votes that were never changed, this does not appear to be the case:

Table 1: Comparing Amended and other votes

	% of not voting changed to:	% of other votes changed to:	% of unchanged votes in category:
in favor	90.19%	37.81%	71.78%
against	2.78%	11.29%	7.14%
abstaining	7.03%	44.82%	11.63%
not voting		6.08%	9.45%
Total	4,495	1,399	1,192,164

To approach this more formally, we look at changes from each category and compare that with percent of unchanged votes that are in each of the destination categories. For example, we calculate the percentage of changed "in favor" (if) initial votes that are amended to "against" (ag) and comparing that with the percent of unamended "against" votes as a share of unamended "against," "abstaining" and "not voting" votes:

$$p_{if}^{ag} = 100\% \times \frac{n_{if}^{ag}}{n_{if}^{ag} + n_{if}^{ab} + n_{if}^{nv}} \quad \text{and} \quad p_{ag}^{ag} = 100\% \times \frac{n_{ag}^{ag}}{n_{ag}^{ag} + n_{ab}^{ag} + n_{nv}^{ag}}$$

Subscripts indicate the original vote, superscripts indicate the amended vote; if they match, the vote was not amended. n is the number of such cases. Abstaining is indicated by ab and not voting by nv. For comparability with the first proportion (which does not include n_{if}^{if}), the second proportion also excludes "in favor" votes. We then test the difference between these proportions:

$$H_0: p_{ag}^{ag} - p_{if}^{ag} = 0 \ \ vs. \ H_1: p_{ag}^{ag} - p_{if}^{ag} \neq 0$$

If the vote switches simply correct random errors, $p_{ag}^{ag} = p_{if}^{ag}$ and the difference in proportions should zero. We repeat this comparison for each switch pair and report results in the table below.

Table 2: Two-sample test of proportions

[13] One odd result: Probit indicates significantly lower probability of not voting for democracies whereas LPM does not (even when both including year dummies and clustering by country only)…

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
in favor		0.303***	0.0383**	-0.109***
		(8.91)	(2.15)	(-24.51)
against	0.115***		-0.0476***	0.0510***
	(8.37)		(-3.35)	(20.68)
abstaining	-0.417***	-0.358***		0.0582***
	(-27.74)	(-10.52)		(15.20)
not voting	0.302***	0.0553***	0.00931	
	(41.97)	(3.85)	(0.74)	
Observations	337,073	1,107,299	1,054,031	1,083,983

Notes: Figures reported are Proportion 1 (never amended) minus Proportion 2 (amended). In Column (1), Proportion 1 is share of unchanged votes in indicated category where the comparison group (denominator) excludes unchanged votes "in favor." Proportion 2 is the share of amended votes that started as "in favor" and changed to the indicated category. Observations indicate the number of data points to calculated both proportions. Columns (2), (3), and (4) repeat this with "against," "abstaining," and "not voting" as the group considered. z-statistics in parentheses from two-sided test that the difference in proportions equals zero. * .1 ** .05 *** .01

Since almost all these reject the null hypothesis of equal proportions, we conclude that errors and/or amending of votes are non-random and that more analysis would be fruitful.[14]

As three-quarters of switches happen when a country initially failed to vote, our analysis starts by examining the country, government, and decision characteristics associated with countries choosing not to participate as their "original vote." Our primary estimation approach is a linear probability model (LPM) because in later analysis we explore high dimensional fixed effects (country and decision). However, where feasible, we compare results with the average marginal effects from a Probit estimation (reported in Appendix). All estimates include unreported year dummies. For the LPM, we use two-way clustering (by country and decision) for standard errors; for Probit, we cluster standard errors by country.[15] Our sample starts in 1972 when Freedom House data become available and runs through 2024; in specifications including a dummy for the U.S. designating a vote as important, data availability restricts the sample to 1983-2023. We exclude China, Russia/USSR and the United States as one important variable is whether the U.S. took a different side than China or Russia/USSR on the vote in question (Major power conflict).

Table 3 reports LPM results where the dependent variable is 1 if the original vote is "not voting," 0 otherwise ("in favor," "against" or "abstaining"). Columns (1) and (4) cover all 6,480 resolution-related decisions (1,044,889 original votes); Columns (2) and (5) cover 4,798 final decisions on draft resolutions (761,667 original votes) and Columns (3) and (6) cover the remaining 1,682 draft resolution-related decisions before the final vote (amendments, motions and separate votes; 283,222 original votes).

[14] The one insignificant different—comparing the proportion of unchanged original "in favor," "against" or "not voting" cases that are "not voting" to the proportion of abstentions that change to "not voting"—is a low powered test given that countries rarely decide to switch from "abstaining" to "not voting." There are only 54 such cases.
[15] LPM results are quite similar if we also just cluster by country.

A consistent result across all specifications and samples is that the incidence of not voting decreases with increasing country capacity. A one percent increase in GDP, ceteris paribus, is associated with a 0.0375 percentage point decrease in the probability of not voting (Column (1)). The effect is stronger for non-final votes (amendments, motions and separate votes) but statistically significant throughout. Also consistent is the insignificance of country size measured by population—once we control for GDP. Countries are more likely to participate in final votes on draft resolutions than on other votes; new governments are more likely than established governments to participate in non-final votes. More democratic countries are less likely than other countries to miss non-final votes (even controlling for GDP). The more roll-call votes on a given day, the less likely delegates are to miss a vote. This effect is somewhat stronger for non-final votes but is significant across the board and appears related to government capacity; it shrinks in size as government capacity (measured by GDP) increases (see Columns (4) to (6)).

Geopolitics have an impact—in some situations. Nonpermanent UNSC members are no more or less likely to vote than others. However, countries are less likely to miss votes where major powers take conflicting positions; this is driven by final votes on draft resolutions, with no apparent effect for earlier resolution-related amendments, motions and separate votes.[16]

Table 4 introduces an additional geopolitical variable (US important vote) that tracks whether the U.S. State Department flagged a decision as important to the U.S. (and subject to U.S. lobbying). These votes are identified in the annual report to Congress titled *Voting Practices in the United Nations*, which starts with 1983 voting. Thus, including this variable shrinks the sample to 5,107 decisions.[17] Column (1) shows that countries are less likely to skip US important votes; Column (2) demonstrates that this is effect is driven by issues that divide the major powers.

One interesting side question is whether absences and abstentions are similar. One could imagine a UN delegate without a clear position (e.g., because they did not receive instructions from their government) either not voting or abstaining. Likewise, although Morse and Coggins (2024) argue that not voting may have a greater value in terms of strategic ambiguity, both not voting and abstaining avoid taking sides in a major conflict. Table 5 presents results from a LPM where the dependent variable is equal to 1 if the country abstained and 0 otherwise. The sample is limited to cases where the delegate was not absent.

Comparing Tables 5 and 3 reveals that these are on average very different decisions. Larger economies are more likely to abstain whereas they were less likely to be absent. More populous countries are less likely to abstain in the case of final votes on draft resolutions; population had no impact on absences, ceteris paribus. More democratic countries are also more likely to abstain in the case of final votes on draft resolutions; they were less likely to be absent in the case of non-final votes. Countries are less likely to abstain while they hold a temporary seat on the UNSC;

[16] A Probit model yields minor differences. For all votes and final draft resolution votes average marginal effects for level of democracy are negative and statistically significant, indicating that democracies are less likely to skip voting on all types of roll-call decisions, not just amendments, motions and separate votes. Also, the Probit finds that nonpermanent UNSC members are less likely to skip final votes on draft resolutions (significant at the 10% level). See Appendix Table 1 for details.

[17] This includes 568 flagged as important, of which 539 are final votes on draft resolutions. Since only 29 are non-final votes, we do not separately report these. However, the US important result holds for both groups.

UNSC status was not relevant for absences. Finally, major power conflicts are associated with more abstentions but fewer absences.[18]

Table 6 again introduces an additional geopolitical variable, US important vote (with its reduced sample). Ceteris paribus, countries are more likely to abstain on decisions the U.S. has flagged as important; this effect is twice as larger if there is a major power conflict. Recall that absences were less common for US important votes when there was a major power conflict. These differences indicate that, beyond simply including errors (unavoidable or unintentional absences), the factors driving absences appear very different from those motivating abstentions.

Amended Votes

We next examine a key issue for this paper, the decision to amend a vote. Table 7 presents results when the dependent variable equals 1 if the country amended its vote, 0 if it did not. The sample for Column (1) covers all initial situations (where the country voted "in favor," "against," "abstaining," or did not vote). Following the literature ((Russett 1966; U.S. State Department 1984; Voeten 2013) that emphasizes the role of voting blocs, we use the previous year's voting to identify up to six blocs. Voting differently than the bloc (including failing to vote) might be a motivation to amend a vote.

Column (1) shows that countries with larger economies are less likely to amend their votes though this is only marginally significant; this effect is consistent with a capacity story where these countries do not make as many mistakes (by missing votes or casting the wrong vote initially). More populous countries are more likely to amend votes, ceteris paribus. Governance variables (changes in government and level of democracy) do not appear to play a role.[19] Countries are less likely to amend their votes when voting was on days that featured many roll calls, again consistent with delegates being less likely to miss votes on such days. The probability of amendment is higher for final votes on draft resolution as compared to earlier votes on amendments, motions and paragraphs. The likelihood of amendment is also unrelated to UNSC membership. However, delegates are less likely to amend votes if there was a major power conflict on the roll call. Both of these are consistent with earlier findings (that UNSC membership does not impact the probably of voting and that countries are less likely to be absent when there is a major power conflict). Finally, if a country initially voted differently than its voting bloc, it is more likely to switch its vote.

Column (2) restricts the sample to cases where the country initially did not vote. This also allows us to consider whether vote amendments are more or less likely after strategic absences (Morse and Coggins 2024).[20] As expected from the above analysis, results are quite different when the starting position is not voting. Countries with larger economies are more likely to amend a vote if they missed the initial vote; thus, high-capacity countries are less like to miss a vote but more

[18] Countries are also less likely to abstain when the daily number of roll calls is high though this is not related to capacity for abstentions. Abstaining is more likely in case of major power conflict
The effect of major power conflicts is stronger for smaller countries (measured by population; no link when measured by GDP). All these abstention results hold whether or not we include "not voting" in the sample. In addition, results for abstentions using a Probit Model are essentially the same as with the LPM. See Table 7.

[19] We explored whether the "non result" for government transitions hides a difference based on the form of government but did not find evidence to support this.

[20] Results for strategic absences are similar if we use the full sample but including both a "not voting" dummy and a "strategic absence" dummy (or if we also include "against" and "abstaining" dummies).

likely to correct it if they do. More populous countries are again more likely to amend their missed vote, as are more democratic countries. Missed votes are less likely to be amended if there are a large number of votes that day; this could be because delegates missed these votes on purpose (a high-capacity reason) or because these votes got lost in the shuffle (a low-capacity reason).[21] Missed final votes on draft resolutions are more likely to be amended than other missed votes; the effect is ten times as large in these cases where the country initially failed to vote. UNSC members are more likely to amend missed votes (though this result is only marginally statistically significant). Major power conflict is not a significant factor in this setting; that effect appears limited to increasing the likelihood that countries cast their original vote so that subsequent amendment is less likely that when the country initially failed to vote. Countries are again more likely to switch votes when their bloc voted differently (i.e., was not absent). Interestingly, amended votes are more likely after strategic absences (even though we control for the number of votes in the given day).[22]

Columns (3) and (4) report results with high dimensional fixed effects, including fixed effects for 188 countries and 6,437 decisions. With country fixed effects, the coefficient estimates for GDP and population are quite different (as is their interpretation). Other estimates, particularly for voting blocs and strategic absences, are hardly impacted despite the large number of fixed effects.

Table 8 introduces the important vote dummy (which reduces the same to 1983 to 2023). Results for other variables are little impacted by the restricted sample and inclusion of an additional control. Important votes enter with a negative coefficient; the estimate for the full sample (with no restriction on the initial vote) is small and not statistically significant. However, when we look just at cases where the country initially failed to vote, the negative coefficient estimation is statistically significant, indicating that delegates are less likely to switch away from not voting in cases the U.S. designated as important. One interpretation is that such absences were intentional. Results are similar using a Probit model.[23]

Table 9 narrows the focus to look at whether a country initially not voting switched to match the U.S. vote. Column (1) considers all cases where the country initially did not vote, both when they switch and when they do not. Column (2) narrows the sample to cases where the country initially did not vote and then switched to something else that might or might not match the U.S. position. Column (3) considers all cases where the country initially participated in some way (in favor, against or abstaining). Column (4) narrows this to just the cases where the country switched. These specifications include the US important vote dummy so the sample is restricted to 1983 to 2023 once more. Given the number of restrictions imposed in Column (4), the final sample for that column is only 671 observations.

Focusing on the political economy variables, the likelihood of switching to the U.S. position is unrelated to UNSC membership in any of the situations examined. Switching to the U.S. position is less likely in the case of major power conflict. Moving to the U.S. position is more likely for votes the U.S. designates as important—unless there is a major power conflict. These last two patterns are estimated more precisely when the country initially failed to vote.

[21] Using an interaction term yields insignificant results, suggesting that both factors are at play.
[22] This result also holds if we expand to the full sample and include a dummy for any type of absence. The probability of switching from not voting to any type of vote is twice as larger for strategic absences as for other absences.
[23] The Probit model indicates this is driven by cases where there is there is a major power conflict.

- Decision to amend vote <u>conditional on not voting originally</u> (LPM or Probit)
    - Looking separately at final votes on draft resolutions
        - Daily # votes effect is for draft resolutions only
        - Strategic absence effect is for draft resolutions only
        - Capacity effects are stronger for non-draft resolutions
- Decision to amend vote conditional on previously voting (yes, no, abstaining)
    - Less likely to amend vote if major power conflict (even if we also drop abstaining)
- Decision to amend vote conditional on previously abstaining
    - Less likely to amend vote if large GDP (Probit only)
    - Less likely to amend vote if major power conflict (LPM or Probit)
    - Less likely to amend vote if recent transition (LPM only)

    - Presumably many missed votes are "mistakes," i.e., cases where delegate was unable to attend or did not have instructions from leadership in time for vote.
    - However, if missing vote was strategic, country may plan to amend that vote later.
        - If on a given day delegation sometimes voted (yes, no or abstaining) and sometimes failed to vote (absent), those absences are strategic. [from Morse and Coggins]

Random notes:

"In a few cases a country, though absent, later officially recorded its position. I listed it as if it had so voted." Russett (1966, 329)

"The remaining absences are in general concentrated on a few countries, often those with small delegations…I chose to equate an absence with abstention. In many instances an absence does in fact mean abstention" Russett (1966, 330)

Russett uses factor analysis to assign countries to groups. In principle, we could do the same thing, e.g., using last year's votes to identify groups and then look at this year's data. If a large share of the other members of a group to which the country belonged in the previous year voted one way on a measure (and the country in question was absent or voted some other way), they might amend their vote to conform to the group position.

This has pro's and con's. On the pro side, it does a better job at identifying groups that we are likely to do. On the con side, it may also be picking out the cases where the country made a voting error. Voting differently than the group might signal a voting error, which the country then fixes. What we would really like is to know that country made a mistake and then see if it fixes this mistake when its group had a clear position but not other times. Or we know the country did not make a mistake and then see if it changes when its group has a clear position but not other times.

Note that this problem exists even if we have predefined groups (e.g., Warsaw Pact).

So if this does work, we have two possible explanations, one of them interesting/illuminating, the other not. And if it doesn't work, we remain in the dark

“Kiribati became a member of the United Nations in 1999, but does not maintain a resident ambassador in New York.”

https://2009-2017.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/kiribati/35118.htm#:~:text=Kiribati%20became%20a%20member%20of,an%20honorary%20consulate%20in%20Honolulu.

Robert Van Lierop – first permanent representative at UN for Vanuatu (1981-1994); U.S. citizen who happened to meet Vanuatu Prime Minister Walter Lini.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Van_Lierop

Francis Bugotu: First UN permanent representative for Solomon Islands. “simultaneously accredited to the U.S., the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, West Germany, Sweden, the UN, and the European Economic Community. This model was subsequently taken up by several other small countries.”

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Bugotu

References

Bailey, Michael A., Anton Strezhnev, and Erik Voeten. 2017. “Estimating dynamic state preferences from United Nations voting data.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61(2): 430-456.

Bailey, Michael A., and Erik Voeten. 2018. “A two-dimensional analysis of seventy years of United Nations voting.” *Public Choice* 176(1): 33-55.

Brazys, Samuel, and Alexander Dukalskis. 2017. “Canary in the coal mine? China, the UNGA, and the changing world order.” *Review of International Studies* 43(4): 742-764.

Brazys, Samuel, and Diana Panke. 2017A. “Analysing voting inconsistency in the United Nations General Assembly." *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 28(3): 538-560.

Brazys, Samuel, and Diana Panke. 2017B. “Why do states change positions in the United Nations General Assembly?” *International Political Science Review* 38(1): 70-84.

Carter, David B., and Randall W. Stone. 2015. “Democracy and multilateralism: The case of vote buying in the UN General Assembly.” *International Organization* 69(1): 1-33.

DiLorenzo, Matthew, and Bryan Rooney. 2021. “International constraints, political turnover, and voting consistency in the United Nations General Assembly." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 17(1): oraa017.

Dreher, Axel, and Nathan M. Jensen. 2013. “Country or leader? Political change and UN General Assembly voting." *European Journal of Political Economy* 29: 183-196.

Dreher, Axel, Peter Nunnenkamp, and Rainer Thiele. 2008. “Does US aid buy UN General Assembly votes? A disaggregated analysis.” *Public Choice* 136(1): 139-164.

Dreher, Axel, and Jan-Egbert Sturm. 2012. “Do the IMF and the World Bank influence voting in the UN General Assembly?” *Public Choice* 151(1): 363-397.

Dreher, Axel, Jan-Egbert Sturm, and James Raymond Vreeland. 2009. “Global horse trading: IMF loans for votes in the United Nations Security Council.” *European Economic Review* 53(7): 742-757.

Hug, Simon, and Richard Lukács. 2014. “Preferences or blocs? Voting in the United Nations Human Rights Council.” *The Review of International Organizations* 9(1): 83-106.

Mattes, Michaela, Brett Ashley Leeds, and Royce Carroll. 2015. “Leadership turnover and foreign policy change: Societal interests, domestic institutions, and voting in the United Nations.” *International Studies Quarterly* 59(2): 280-290.

McGillivary, Fiona, and Alastair Smith. 2004. “The impact of leadership turnover on trading relations between states.” *International Organization* 58(3): 567-600.

Morse, Julia C., and Bridget Coggins. 2024. “Your silence speaks volumes: Weak states and strategic absence in the UN General Assembly.” *Review of International Organizations* 19(3): 515-544.

Panke, Diana. 2014. “Absenteeism in the General Assembly of the United Nations: Why some member states rarely vote.” *International Politics* 51(6): 729-749.

Russett, Bruce M. 1966. “Discovering voting groups in the United Nations.” *American Political Science Review* 60(2): 327-339.

Time Magazine. 1980. “A voting fiasco at the U.N.” March 17, 1980. https://time.com/archive/6883471/world-a-voting-fiasco-at-the-u-n/

United Nations. 1955. *Repertory of Practice, Supplement No. 1 (1954-1955*). http://legal.un.org/docs/?path=../repertory/art21/english/rep_supp1_vol1_art21.pdf&lang=EF

U.S. State Department. 1984. *Voting Practices in the United Nations*. GPO, Washington, DC.

Voeten, Erik. 2013. “Data and analyses of voting in the United Nations: General Assembly.” *Routledge handbook of international organization*. Pages 54-66.

Wang, Te-Yu. 1999. “US foreign aid and UN voting: An analysis of important issues.” *International Studies Quarterly* 43(1): 199-210.

Tables

Table 3: Not voting

	(1) All	(2) Resolution	(3) Other	(4) All	(5) Resolution	(6) Other
GDP (log)	-0.0375***	-0.0327***	-0.0504***	-0.0469***	-0.0451***	-0.0672***
	(-8.08)	(-7.38)	(-8.51)	(-9.02)	(-9.54)	(-9.18)
Population (log)	0.00270	0.00202	0.00412	0.00263	0.00193	0.00403
	(0.46)	(0.37)	(0.53)	(0.44)	(0.35)	(0.51)
Upcoming transition	0.00430	0.00622	0.00840	0.00309	0.00560	0.00480
	(0.38)	(0.55)	(0.50)	(0.27)	(0.50)	(0.29)
Recent transition	0.00198	0.0159	-0.0323**	0.00232	0.0164	-0.0319**
	(0.13)	(0.98)	(-2.04)	(0.16)	(1.00)	(-2.04)
Freedom House	-0.00359	-0.000907	-0.0118**	-0.00351	-0.000886	-0.0115**
	(-0.92)	(-0.24)	(-2.27)	(-0.90)	(-0.24)	(-2.21)
Draft resolution	-0.0533***			-0.0527***		
	(-10.83)			(-10.59)		
UNSC nonpermanent member	-0.00229	-0.00355	0.00147	-0.00226	-0.00345	0.00127
	(-0.32)	(-0.61)	(0.11)	(-0.32)	(-0.59)	(0.09)
Major power conflict	-0.00914***	-0.0131***	0.00265	-0.00858***	-0.0124***	0.00353
	(-4.43)	(-6.17)	(0.75)	(-4.10)	(-5.77)	(1.00)
Daily # roll calls	-0.0310***	-0.0275***	-0.0430***	-0.108***	-0.134***	-0.167***
	(-13.96)	(-13.02)	(-11.88)	(-5.67)	(-9.09)	(-4.76)
GDP × Daily # roll calls				0.00328***	0.00458***	0.00519***
				(4.20)	(7.66)	(3.68)
Observations	1,044,889	761,667	283,222	1,044,889	761,667	283,222
Countries	188	188	188	188	188	188
Decisions	6,480	4,798	1,682	6,480	4,798	1,682

Linear Probability Model. Dependent variable: 1 if country not voting, 0 otherwise. (1) & (4): full sample; (2) & (5): final votes; (3) & (6): non-final votes t-statistics in parentheses based on standard errors estimated with clustering by country and UNGA decision.
* 0.10 ** 0.05 *** 0.01. All specifications include unreported year dummies. Sample excludes China, Russia & US.

Table 4: Not voting - Impact of geopolitics

	(1)	(2)
GDP (log)	-0.0386***	-0.0386***
	(-7.98)	(-7.98)
Population (log)	0.00378	0.00378
	(0.60)	(0.60)
Upcoming transition	0.00232	0.00231
	(0.19)	(0.19)
Recent transition	-0.00121	-0.00121
	(-0.07)	(-0.07)
Freedom House	-0.00543	-0.00543
	(-1.28)	(-1.28)
Draft resolution	-0.0573***	-0.0575***
	(-10.54)	(-10.54)
Daily # roll calls (log)	-0.0333***	-0.0334***
	(-13.66)	(-13.67)
UNSC non-permanent member	0.00321	0.00321
	(0.41)	(0.41)
Major power conflict	-0.00881***	-0.00759***
	(-3.77)	(-3.21)
US important vote	-0.0142***	-0.00479
	(-3.79)	(-0.91)
Major power conflict × US important vote		-0.0130**
		(-2.08)
Observations	871,439	871,439
Countries	188	188
Decisions	5,107	5,107

Dependent variable: 1 if country not voting, 0 otherwise. t-statistics in parentheses based on standard errors estimated with clustering by country and UNGA decision. * 0.10 ** 0.05 *** 0.01. All specifications include unreported year dummies. Sample excludes China, Russia & US. Cover 1983 to 2023, years when important vote data are available.

Table 5: Abstaining

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	All	Resolution	Other	All	Resolution	Other
GDP (log)	0.0161***	0.0194***	0.00632***	0.0161***	0.0171***	0.00251
	(6.54)	(6.31)	(2.65)	(4.97)	(4.96)	(0.60)
Population (log)	-0.00564**	-0.00942***	0.00428	-0.00564**	-0.00943***	0.00428
	(-2.06)	(-2.70)	(1.57)	(-2.06)	(-2.70)	(1.57)
Upcoming transition	0.0108	0.0130*	0.0126	0.0108	0.0129*	0.0118
	(1.61)	(1.84)	(1.38)	(1.61)	(1.81)	(1.28)
Recent transition	0.00660	0.0146	-0.0106	0.00660	0.0147	-0.0104
	(0.77)	(1.45)	(-1.14)	(0.77)	(1.46)	(-1.11)
Freedom House	0.0134***	0.0180***	-0.000442	0.0134***	0.0181***	-0.000351
	(7.23)	(7.59)	(-0.23)	(7.24)	(7.59)	(-0.18)
Draft resolution	-0.0344***			-0.0344***		
	(-5.58)			(-5.59)		
UNSC non-permanent member	-0.0142***	-0.0151***	-0.00988*	-0.0142***	-0.0151***	-0.00994*
	(-3.51)	(-3.35)	(-1.94)	(-3.51)	(-3.34)	(-1.95)
Major power conflict	0.0340***	0.0299***	0.0276***	0.0340***	0.0300***	0.0277***
	(5.92)	(4.83)	(3.58)	(5.94)	(4.84)	(3.61)
Daily # roll calls (log)	-0.0123***	-0.00548**	-0.0297***	-0.0124	-0.0257*	-0.0574**
	(-6.19)	(-2.58)	(-7.94)	(-0.80)	(-1.84)	(-2.26)
GDP × Daily # roll calls				0.00000358	0.000858	0.00114
				(0.01)	(1.38)	(1.08)
Observations	940,682	695,860	244,822	940,682	695,860	244,822
Countries	188	188	188	188	188	188
Decisions	6,480	4,798	1,682	6,480	4,798	1,682

Linear Probability Model. Dependent variable: 1 if country abstains, 0 otherwise. (1) & (4): full sample without 'not voting' cases; (2) & (5): final votes without 'not voting' cases; (3) & (6): non-final votes without 'not voting' cases. t-statistics in parentheses based on standard errors estimated with clustering by country and UNGA decision. * 0.10 ** 0.05 *** 0.01. All specifications include unreported year dummies. Sample excludes China, Russia & US.

Table 6: Abstaining - impact of geopolitics

	(1)	(2)
GDP (log)	0.0148***	0.0148***
	(6.52)	(6.52)
Population (log)	-0.00537**	-0.00537**
	(-2.10)	(-2.11)
Upcoming transition	0.0109	0.0109
	(1.58)	(1.58)
Recent transition	0.000171	0.000209
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Freedom House	0.0112***	0.0112***
	(6.37)	(6.37)
Daily # roll calls (log)	-0.00965***	-0.00935***
	(-4.53)	(-4.38)
Draft resolution	-0.0380***	-0.0371***
	(-5.60)	(-5.41)
UNSC non-permanent member	-0.0131***	-0.0131***
	(-3.11)	(-3.11)
Major power conflict	0.0287***	0.0234***
	(4.68)	(4.04)
US important vote	0.0836***	0.0429***
	(8.99)	(3.00)
Major power conflict × US important vote		0.0562***
		(3.73)
Observations	783,946	783,946
Countries	188	188
Decisions	5,107	5,107

Linear Probability Model. Dependent variable: 1 if country abstaining, 0 otherwise. t-statistics in parentheses based on standard errors estimated with clustering by country and UNGA decision. * 0.10 ** 0.05 *** 0.01. All specifications include unreported year dummies. Sample excludes China, Russia & US. Cover 1983 to 2023, years when important vote data are available. Excludes 'not voting' cases.

Table 7: Amending Votes

	Pooled		FE	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	All	Not voting	All	Not voting
GDP (log)	-0.000402*	0.00571*	0.000251	0.00823*
	(-1.88)	(1.96)	(0.37)	(1.77)
Population (log)	0.000520**	0.00477*	-0.00426***	-0.0284**
	(2.09)	(1.84)	(-2.85)	(-2.01)
Upcoming transition	0.00232	0.0423	0.00267	0.0331
	(0.79)	(1.31)	(0.83)	(1.11)
Recent transition	-0.000691	-0.00256	-0.000366	-0.00353
	(-0.60)	(-0.19)	(-0.31)	(-0.27)
Freedom House	-0.0000193	0.00697***	0.000264	0.00179
	(-0.12)	(4.18)	(0.90)	(0.68)
Daily # roll calls (log)	-0.00136***	-0.00967***		
	(-6.58)	(-5.17)		
Draft resolution	0.00210***	0.0239***		
	(5.14)	(6.92)		
UNSC non-permanent member	0.000999	0.0292*	0.000739	0.0187
	(1.24)	(1.83)	(0.92)	(1.40)
Major power conflict	-0.00219***	-0.00422		
	(-6.31)	(-1.60)		
Different from bloc	0.0224***	0.0220***	0.0238***	0.0125***
	(14.32)	(6.01)	(14.64)	(3.04)
Strategic absence		0.0281***		0.0246***
		(5.03)		(5.12)
Observations	1,044,889	104,207	1,044,889	104,179
Countries	188	188	188	188
Decisions	6,480	6,465	6,480	6,437

Linear Probability Model. Dependent variable: 1 if country amended vote, 0 otherwise. t-statistics in parentheses based on standard errors estimated with clustering by country and UNGA decision. (1) & (2) include full sample; (3) & (4) include cases where country originally did not vote. * 0.10 ** 0.05 *** 0.01. (1) & (3) includes unreported year dummies; (2) & (4) includes country & decision FEs.

Table 8: Amending Votes (including US important dummy)

	Pooled		FE	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	All	Not voting	All	Not voting
GDP (log)	-0.000281	0.00685***	0.000144	0.00760
	(-1.39)	(2.86)	(0.18)	(1.31)
Population (log)	0.000496**	0.00376	-0.00427***	-0.0384**
	(2.02)	(1.53)	(-2.86)	(-2.49)
Upcoming transition	0.0000195	0.0117	0.000332	0.00587
	(0.02)	(0.80)	(0.24)	(0.41)
Recent transition	-0.00000542	0.00158	0.000379	0.000617
	(-0.00)	(0.12)	(0.28)	(0.05)
Freedom House	0.0000106	0.00706***	0.000210	0.00361
	(0.07)	(4.26)	(0.61)	(0.94)
Daily # roll calls (log)	-0.00124***	-0.00772***	-0.00122***	-0.00455***
	(-5.79)	(-4.58)	(-5.69)	(-2.63)
Draft resolution	0.00164***	0.0226***	0.00172***	0.0241***
	(3.74)	(6.07)	(3.90)	(6.42)
UNSC non-permanent member	0.000326	0.0110	0.000291	0.0106
	(0.36)	(0.66)	(0.32)	(0.64)
Major power conflict	-0.00183***	-0.00223	-0.00184***	-0.000581
	(-5.07)	(-0.83)	(-5.10)	(-0.23)
Different from bloc	0.0198***	0.0190***	0.0208***	0.0120***
	(12.76)	(5.48)	(13.37)	(3.47)
US important vote	-0.00180***	-0.0115***	-0.00187***	-0.0118***
	(-3.48)	(-2.78)	(-3.60)	(-2.94)
Strategic absence		0.0259***		0.0213***
		(5.81)		(4.97)
Observations	871,439	87,493	871,439	87,493
Countries	188	188	188	188
Decisions	5,107	5,092	5,107	5,092

Linear Probability Model. Dependent variable: 1 if country amended vote, 0 otherwise. * 0.10 ** 0.05 *** 0.01. All specifications include unreported year dummies; (3) & (4) also include country FEs. t-statistics in parentheses based on country- & decision-clustered SEs. (1) & (3) include full sample; (2) & (4) limited to cases where country initially did not vote.

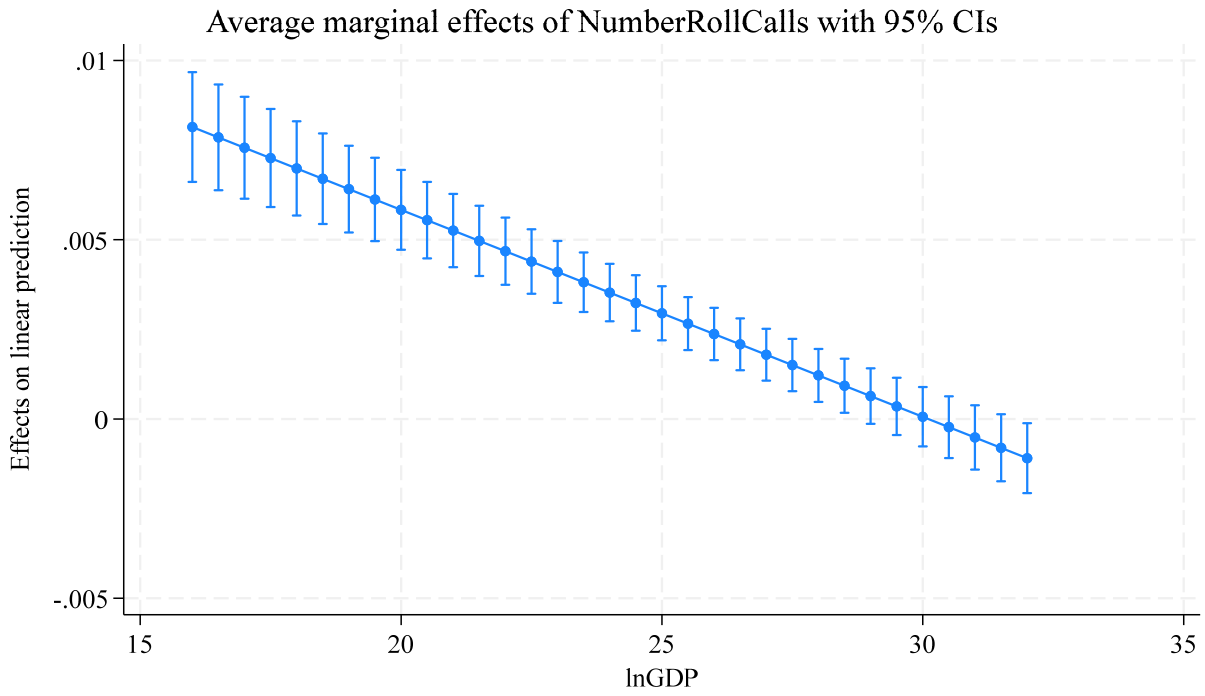
Table 9: Switching to US position

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
GDP (log)	0.00341***	0.00945	0.000105**	0.0191
	(4.45)	(1.57)	(2.49)	(1.65)
Population (log)	0.000449	-0.00646	-0.0000698*	-0.0157
	(0.66)	(-0.96)	(-1.96)	(-1.21)
Upcoming transition	0.00809	0.0825*	-0.000361***	-0.260***
	(1.32)	(1.94)	(-3.19)	(-3.65)
Recent transition	-0.000138	0.00546	0.000463	0.119
	(-0.04)	(0.12)	(1.37)	(1.02)
Freedom House	0.00272***	0.00816*	-0.00000127	0.0195**
	(4.87)	(1.79)	(-0.04)	(2.02)
Daily # roll calls (log)	-0.000992*	-0.00762	-0.000200***	-0.0262
	(-1.70)	(-0.75)	(-3.12)	(-1.42)
Draft resolution	0.000216	-0.203***	-0.000264	-0.0220
	(0.17)	(-5.34)	(-1.16)	(-0.47)
UNSC non-permanent member	0.00320	-0.0150	-0.0000329	-0.0261
	(0.57)	(-0.43)	(-0.22)	(-0.33)
Major power conflict	-0.0125***	-0.339***	-0.00118***	-0.520***
	(-6.90)	(-11.58)	(-5.15)	(-7.29)
Different from bloc	0.00241**	-0.0569	0.00238***	0.0410
	(2.42)	(-1.56)	(7.33)	(1.08)
US important vote	0.0287***	0.546***	0.000769	0.0601
	(3.16)	(11.16)	(1.13)	(0.50)
US important × Major Power Conflict	-0.0266***	-0.451***	-0.000686	0.140
	(-2.93)	(-7.84)	(-1.02)	(0.98)
Observations	86,235	2,823	558,174	671
Countries	188	180	188	164
Decisions	5,055	1,598	5,085	505

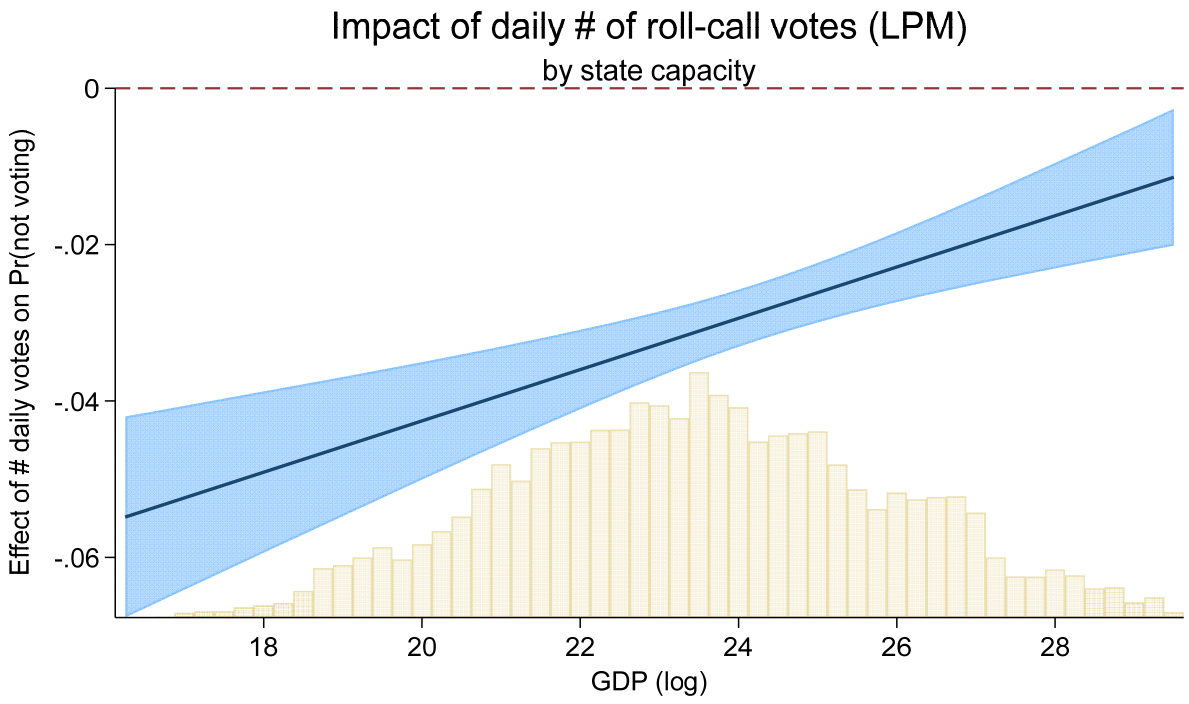
Linear Probability Model. Dependent variable: 1 if vote amended to match US, 0 otherwise. * 0.10 ** 0.05 *** 0.01. All specifications include unreported year dummies. t-statistics in parentheses based on country- and decision-clustered SEs. (1) All cases where country originally did not vote. (2) Cases where country switched from not voting. (3) All cases where country originally voted. (4) Cases where country originally voted and then switched votes.

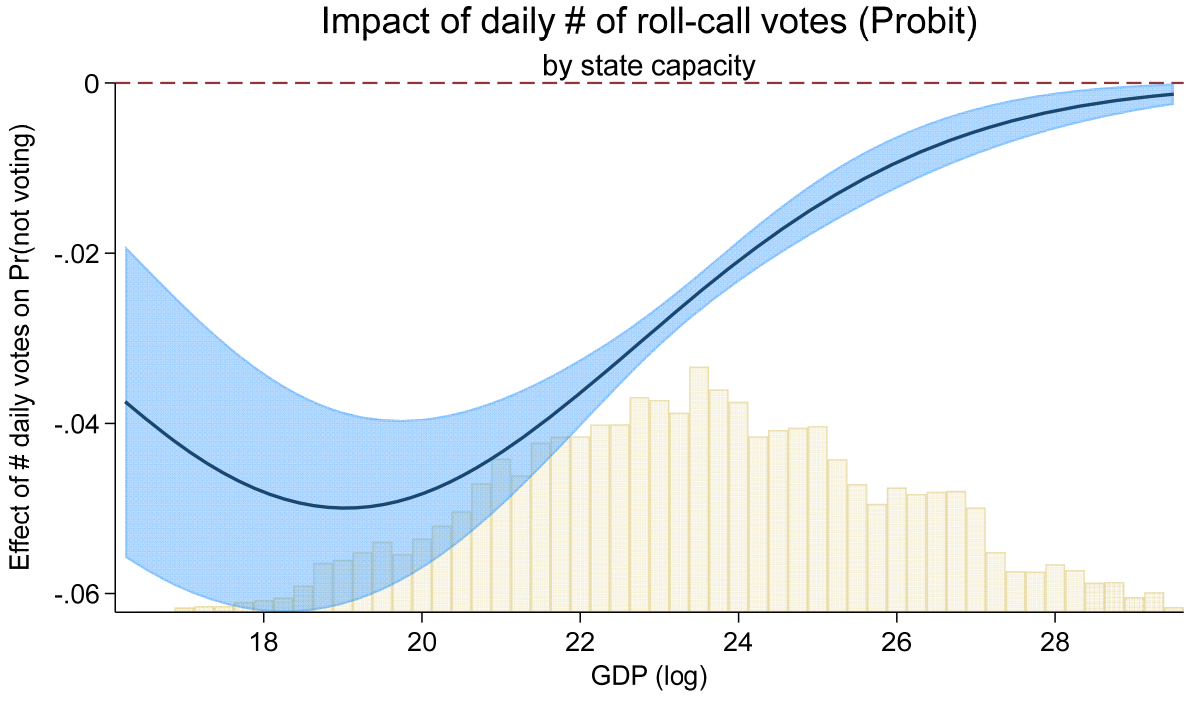
Table 10

Probability of not missing all votes in a given day:



It is higher when the number of votes that day is greater except for very large countries. If it reflected missing votes randomly, then it would not be a function of GDP.


Impact of daily # of roll-call votes (LPM)
by state capacity
Effect of # daily votes on Pr(not voting)
0
-.02
-.04
-.06
18
20
22
24
26
28
GDP (log)


Impact of daily # of roll-call votes (Probit)
by state capacity
Effect of # daily votes on Pr(not voting)
0
-.02
-.04
-.06
18
20
22
24
26
28
GDP (log)

Appendix

Table A1: Not voting (Probit)

	(1) All	(2) Resolution	(3) Other
GDP (log)	-0.0404***	-0.0348***	-0.0557***
	(-9.45)	(-8.28)	(-11.03)
Population (log)	0.00381	0.00328	0.00480
	(0.74)	(0.67)	(0.73)
Upcoming transition	-0.00574	-0.00450	-0.00626
	(-0.51)	(-0.41)	(-0.37)
Recent transition	-0.00261	0.00900	-0.0315**
	(-0.19)	(0.59)	(-1.97)
Freedom House	-0.0107***	-0.00683**	-0.0221***
	(-3.01)	(-2.03)	(-4.65)
Draft resolution	-0.0519***		
	(-14.25)		
Daily # roll calls (log)	-0.0274***	-0.0246***	-0.0369***
	(-24.31)	(-23.34)	(-20.48)
UNSC non-permanent member	-0.0122	-0.0127*	-0.00964
	(-1.35)	(-1.72)	(-0.52)
Major power conflict	-0.00887***	-0.0125***	0.00361
	(-5.42)	(-8.63)	(1.40)
Observations	1,044,889	761,667	283,222
Countries	188	188	188

Probit. Dependent variable: 1 if country not voting, 0 otherwise. Table reports average marginal effects. (1): full sample; (2): final votes; (3): non-final votes. z-statistics in parentheses based on country-clustered standard errors. * 0.10 ** 0.05 *** 0.01. All specifications include unreported year dummies. Sample excludes China, Russia & US.

Table A2: Not voting - impact of geopolitics (Probit)

	(1)
GDP (log)	-0.0432***
	(-10.03)
Population (log)	0.00519
	(0.95)
Upcoming transition	-0.00915
	(-0.84)
Recent transition	-0.00146
	(-0.09)
Freedom House	-0.0130***
	(-3.32)
Draft resolution	-0.0556***
	(-13.77)
Daily # roll calls (log)	-0.0291***
	(-23.83)
UNSC non-permanent member	-0.00424
	(-0.42)
Major power conflict	-0.00867***
	(-4.66)
US important vote	-0.0105***
	(-4.27)
Observations	871,439
Countries	188
Decisions	5107

Dependent variable: 1 if country not voting, 0 otherwise. AMEs from Probit model. z-statistics in parentheses based on standard errors estimated with clustering by country and UNGA decision. * 0.10 ** 0.05 *** 0.01. All specifications include unreported year dummies. Sample excludes China, Russia & US. Cover 1983 to 2023, years when important vote data are available.

Table A3: Abstaining (Probit)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	All	Resolution	Other
GDP (log)	0.0151***	0.0173***	0.00726***
	(6.82)	(6.47)	(3.52)
Population (log)	-0.00541**	-0.00848***	0.00395
	(-2.07)	(-2.68)	(1.56)
Upcoming transition	0.0104	0.0116	0.0141
	(1.58)	(1.64)	(1.53)
Recent transition	0.00694	0.0145	-0.0107
	(0.87)	(1.59)	(-1.10)
Freedom House	0.0127***	0.0176***	-0.00178
	(7.45)	(7.97)	(-1.22)
Draft resolution	-0.0357***		
	(-6.69)		
Daily # roll calls (log)	-0.0120***	-0.00571***	-0.0277***
	(-9.77)	(-4.79)	(-16.17)
UNSC non-permanent member	-0.0133***	-0.0141***	-0.00970*
	(-3.72)	(-3.69)	(-1.93)
Major power conflict	0.0333***	0.0283***	0.0301***
	(6.96)	(5.86)	(6.19)
Observations	940,682	695,860	244,822
Countries	188	188	188

Probit. Dependent variable: 1 if country abstained, 0 otherwise. Table reports average marginal effects. (1): full sample without 'not voting' cases; (2): final votes without 'not voting' cases; (3): non-final votes without 'not voting' cases z-statistics in parentheses based on country-clustered standard errors. * 0.10 ** 0.05 *** 0.01. All specifications include unreported year dummies. Sample excludes China, Russia & US.

Table A4: Abstaining - impact of geopolitics (Probit)

	(1)
GDP (log)	0.00749***
	(3.56)
Population (log)	0.00341
	(1.24)
Upcoming transition	0.0129
	(1.33)
Recent transition	-0.0180*
	(-1.70)
Freedom House	-0.00416***
	(-2.66)
UNSC non-permanent member	-0.00927*
	(-1.69)
Major power conflict	0.0349***
	(6.83)
US important vote	-0.0166*
	(-1.73)
Daily # roll calls (log)	-0.0274***
	(-16.10)
Observations	219,253
Countries	188

Dependent variable: 1 if country abstaining, 0 otherwise. Average marginal effects from Probit. z-statistics in parentheses based on country-clustered SEs. * 0.10 ** 0.05 *** 0.01. All specifications include unreported year dummies. Sample excludes China, Russia & US. Cover 1983 to 2023, years when important vote data are available. Excludes 'not voting' cases.

Table A5: Amending Votes (Probit)

	(1)	(2)
	All	Not voting
GDP (log)	-0.00103***	0.00318
	(-4.86)	(1.38)
Population (log)	0.000730***	0.00603**
	(3.07)	(2.42)
Upcoming transition	0.00303	0.0520
	(0.94)	(1.38)
Recent transition	-0.000961	-0.00759
	(-0.86)	(-0.64)
Freedom House	-0.0000154	0.00510***
	(-0.11)	(3.46)
Daily # roll calls (log)	-0.00174***	-0.0104***
	(-15.87)	(-5.90)
Draft resolution	0.000534	0.0269***
	(1.59)	(9.59)
UNSC non-permanent member	0.000613	0.0190*
	(0.71)	(1.68)
Major power conflict	-0.00136***	-0.00176
	(-6.75)	(-0.92)
Strategic absence		0.0312***
		(5.79)
Observations	1,044,889	104,207
Countries	188	188

Probit. Dependent variable: 1 if country amended vote, 0 otherwise. z-statistics in parentheses based on standard errors estimated with clustering by country. * 0.10 ** 0.05 *** 0.01. All specifications include unreported year dummies. (1) AMEs including all votes; (2) AMEs including cases where country originally did not vote.

Table A6: Amending Votes (including US important dummy) (Probit)

	(1)	(2)
	All	Not voting
GDP (log)	-0.000880***	0.00387**
	(-4.47)	(2.04)
Population (log)	0.000700***	0.00490**
	(3.09)	(2.02)
Upcoming transition	0.000433	0.0107
	(0.30)	(0.75)
Recent transition	-0.000434	-0.00307
	(-0.35)	(-0.25)
Freedom House	-0.0000179	0.00517***
	(-0.12)	(3.33)
Daily # roll calls (log)	-0.00150***	-0.00816***
	(-14.48)	(-5.23)
Draft resolution	0.000139	0.0232***
	(0.39)	(8.44)
UNSC non-permanent member	0.0000249	0.00564
	(0.03)	(0.50)
Major power conflict	-0.00131***	-0.0000943
	(-6.22)	(-0.05)
US important vote	-0.000290	-0.00666***
	(-1.21)	(-3.41)
Strategic absence		0.0282***
		(6.46)
Observations	871,439	87,493
Countries	188	188

Probit. Dependent variable: 1 if country amended vote, 0 otherwise. Sample is cases where country originally did not vote. * 0.10 ** 0.05 *** 0.01. All specifications include unreported year dummies. AMEs, z-statistics in parentheses based on country-clustered SEs.