What's in a vote*?†

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Abstract

Numerous studies have analyzed the voting behavior of member states in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and often used this information in secondary analyses. Few if any of these studies consider, however, that the largest share of votes in the UNGA is adopted either without a vote or a vote that is not recorded. This paper offers a systematic comparison of the recorded votes with those not recorded and shows that failing to consider these differences is likely to give us biased inferences on voting behavior in the UNGA.

*recorded in the United Nations General Assembly

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1 Introduction

For more than half a century scholars have used recorded votes in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to study a series of important questions. Starting from analyses covering a handful of votes to explore voting alignments (e.g., Ball, 1951) studies have evolved to covering the more or less full sets of recorded votes in this assembly and offered important insights into the workings of this deliberative body. These studies have also started to address more specific questions and employ more sophisticated tools to analyze the empirical data.

An important issue applying to most analyses employing recorded votes (or so-called roll call votes), however, has to my knowledge never been addressed heads-on for the UNGA, namely how recorded votes relate to the full set of decisions in the assembly. As Hug (2010) shows, very few assemblies record the voting behavior of their members in all decisions, and not taking into account what leads to a recorded vote is likely to bias our inferences (see also Carrubba, Gabel, Murrah, Clough, Montegomery and Schambach, 2006; Carrubba, Gabel and Hug, 2008; Thiem, 2009). As information derived from recorded votes is used increasingly in related studies (e.g., Gartzke, 1998) it seems important to get a better sense of how recorded votes in the UNGA relate to the full set of decisions reached in this assembly, and how this relationship might affect our inferences.

In the present paper I offer such an analysis drawing on a dataset covering all final decisions on resolutions in the 1st to 64th sessions of the UNGA. Of these decisions only about a third over this time period are reached in recorded votes. For the 48th to 64th session I complement this dataset with all resolution-related decisions in the UNGA. A second dataset comprises all the recorded votes of member countries on decisions covered in the first dataset. Analyzing these two datasets suggests that recorded votes have quite distinct characteristics and how they differ from non-recorded votes and other decisions changes over time. Consequently, taking recorded votes in the UNGA as a simple sample of the full set of decisions is a perilous affair.

In the next section I first discuss in more detail the way in which the UNGA reaches decisions and how scholars have used recorded votes to make inferences about this assembly and its members. Section three offers first, largely descriptive, analyses of what characterizes recorded votes (especially on resolutions) compared to the remainder of decisions on resolutions. In section four I offer

a series of analyses demonstrating that recorded votes differ systematically from the remainder of the decisions reached in the UNGA, before concluding in section five.

2 Voting in the United Nations General Assembly

When established in 1946 the UNGA was clearly conceived as a "deliberative body" (Peterson, 2005, 2) in which (potentially) all states of the world were supposed to be represented and debate "world issues." (see also Hurd, 2011, 97-132). Comparing it to the main deliberative body in national contexts, namely parliament, Hovet (1960, 10) notes, however, that

> [t]he real difference in the case of the General Assembly is that, since there are no binding decisions, members agreeing to vote for a resolution of no primary concern in exchange for votes on an issue of primary concern can undertake such commitments with a realization that essentially they have nothing more than a moral obligation to vote for and implement resolutions they thus support.

Despite the deliberative character of the UNGA and the absence of binding decisions, the UNGA takes a considerable number of decisions during its main sessions. These decisions are reached in three different ways (see for instance Hovet (1960, 14f) and Peterson (2005, 54)). The United Nations describes them as follows (`http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/gavote.htm`, accessed September 7, 2011):[1]

> The majority of General Assembly resolutions are adopted without a vote. If a vote is taken, it can be documented in two ways: either as a recorded vote or as a summary of the result. Only a recorded vote, which must be requested before the voting is conducted, will clearly identify the stand that a Member State took on the issue under discussion. If such a request is not put forth, only the voting summary (i. e., the number of countries which voted for or against

[1]The existence of non-recorded votes is often neglected, probably also due to the fact that since the 1980s they have become rare if not extinct.

a resolution as well as those who abstained) will be made available, without identification of how an individual Member State voted.

Quite soon after the first session of the UNGA scholars have started to analyze the voting behavior of UNGA delegates to learn more about the alignments present in this deliberative body. Ball (1951) presented an early study focusing on a handful of votes before Hovet (1960) and Alker and Russett (1965) covered a broader set of recorded (and in the case of Hovet (1960) even non-recorded votes). The main question addressed in these early studies was whether due to the potential for vote buying (see quote above by Hovet, 1960) blocs could be identified in the voting decisions in the UNGA.[2] Clearly, the most sophisticated study in this area is Voeten's (2000) "Clash in the Assembly."

Following up on the early studies a series of scholars addressed the question whether specific groups, like the group of 77 (Iida, 1988), the European Union (Luif, 2003; Young and Rees, 2005; Hoesli, van Kampen, Meijerink and Tennis, 2010), African countries (Meyers, 1966) etc. vote together and are cohesive.[3] Based on these ideas of cohesiveness votes in the UNGA were also used in order to measure the affinity of particular countries, for instance, with the United States. Based on Gartzke's (1998) pioneering work such affinity measures have been used as explanatory variables in a series of studies.[4] Relatedly a series of studies, like for instance Carter and Stone's (2011) study, attempt to explain decisions of international organization and other actors based on votes in the UNGA.

In a different vein scholars have also focused on explaining the voting behavior of delegates in the UNGA more specifically.[5] Potrafke (2009) assesses whether the ideological alignment of governments affect their voting behavior in the UNGA, while Dreher and Jensen (2009) focus on voting behavior of delegates before and after changes in leadership. On a more instrumental level Dreher, Thiele and Nunnenkamp (2008) and Sturm and Dreher (2012 forthcoming) study how US aid and lending decisions by IMF and World Bank affect voting in the UNGA.

[2]Lijphart (1963) offers a critical discussion of these early studies.

[3]Strictly speaking already Hovet (1960) offered such analyses.

[4]Häge (2011) notes and demonstrates, however, that many of the similarity measures are problematic and confuse proper similarity in preferences with chance correspondence in votes.

[5]Note in this context also, however, the cautionary remarks by Felsenthal and Machover (2001) regarding the frequent misreporting of rules and votes in UN security council.

Boockmann and Dreher (2011) focus on votes on human rights and wish to assess whether human rights offenders vote more frequently against resolutions in this domain. Relatedly, Hillman and Potrafke (2011) analyze whether votes on Israel serves as decoy to deflect from other human rights problems elsewhere.

3 Votes on resolutions in the United Nations General Assembly

While many of the studies discussed above mention the limitations due to the fact that the analyses only cover recorded votes, whether this limitation leads to inferential problems is rarely discussed. Considering the literature on blocs and voting alignments, which has largely a descriptive aim, it is obvious that the description offered is only accurate if recorded votes are a random sample of the full set of decisions. The same applies to studies of cohesiveness of particular country groups. Here even more explicitly the description is almost by definition biased, as the largest share of decisions occur without votes (mostly due to unanimous or near unanimous consent).

In the same disadvantageous position are studies using similarity measures based on votes that are possibly more divisive than decisions (votes or adoptions without votes) reached otherwise. A related problem appears for studies wishing to explain voting behavior more generally. For instance decisions on the Middle East problem and human rights are much more frequently reached in recorded votes than decisions on resolutions with different topics (see below). But not all such decisions are recorded. Hence it is unlikely that one can gain unbiased insights on voting behavior on human rights or the Middle East problem while focusing exclusively on recorded UNGA votes and not consider the selection mechanism leading to recorded votes in the UNGA.

To evaluate these various pitfalls I rely on two datasets. The first dataset contains information on all decisions on adopted resolutions between the 1st and 64th session (1945-2010). This includes information on three different types of decisions:[6]

- resolutions adopted in a recorded vote.

[6]This information stems from the `http://unbisnet.un.org` website and were checked against Voeten and Merdzanovic's (2009) data (and thus also against Alker and Russett's (1965) dataset, see below).

- resolutions adopted in a non-recorded vote.
- resolutions adopted without a vote.

For the 48th to the 64th sessions[7] the data comprises all decisions reached in the General Assembly related to resolutions. These include the following types of decisions:

- Decisions on resolutions (whether voted upon or adopted without a vote)[8]
- All decisions on amendments (whether voted upon or adopted without a vote).[9]
- All motions of no action (and of devisons) if they related to a part or the whole of a resolution.[10]
- All separate votes on parts of a resolution.[11]

The second dataset comprises all country-specific voting information on recorded votes on resolutions for the 1st to 64th session. For the 48th to 64th session the data also includes all recorded votes on resolution-related votes as discussed above.

Before proceeding it is worth comparing these two datasets and some of their characteristics with Voeten and Merdzanovic's (2009) data. The latter contains 4943 votes for the period 1946-2008.[12] These 4943 votes relate to 4765 distinct resolutions, suggesting that the data contains very few votes apart from recorded

[7]This coverage is related to the fact that only for these sessions the Official Records are available as electronically readable files.

[8]All resolutions considered during the 48th to the 64th sessions have been adopted. These decisions were garnered automatically from the `http://unbisnet.un.org` website.

[9]Source: Official records obtained from the `http://undocs.org` website.

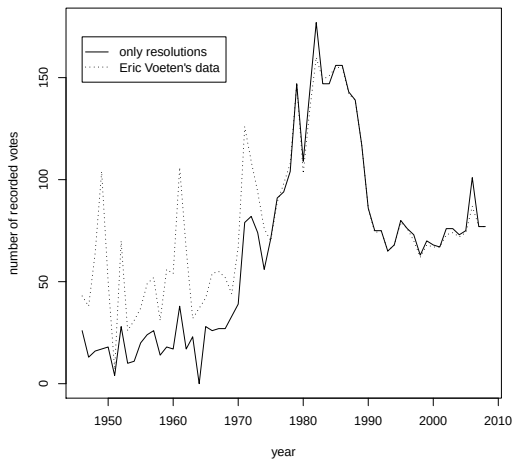
[10]Source: Official records obtained from the `http://undocs.org` website.

[11]Source: Official records obtained from the `http://undocs.org` website.

[12]Comparimg carefully all recorded votes on resolutions in Voeten and Merdzanovic's (2009) data and the data generated from the `http://unbisnet.un.org` website, we identified 43 votes that could not be identified in the former data. The resolution IDs of these recorded votes (all falling in the years 1946-1986)are the following: A/RES/62(I)[II], A/RES/62(I)[I], A/RES/8(I), A/RES/10(I), A/RES/106(S-1), A/RES/104(S-1), A/RES/189(S-2), A/RES/647(VII), A/RES/706(VII), A/RES/914(X), A/RES/982(X), A/RES/981(X), A/RES/980(X), A/RES/979(X), A/RES/978(X), A/RES/975(X), A/RES/974(X), A/RES/970(X), A/RES/969(X), A/RES/948(X), A/RES/947(X), A/RES/977(X), A/RES/976(X), A/RES/1122(XI), A/RES/1005(ES-II), A/RES/1007(ES-II), A/RES/1006(ES-II), A/RES/1002(ES-I), A/RES/1001(ES-

votes on resolutions. This also transpires from figure 1 which simply depicts the number of recorded votes per year in my and Voeten and Merdzanovic's (2009) data.

Figure 1: Recorded votes on resolutions and Erik Voeten's data



The differences in the first half of the period covered is due to the fact that up to the 41st session Voeten and Merdzanovic's (2009) data is largely identical with Alker and Russett's (1965) dataset, which includes all recorded votes in the General Assembly and its main committees.[13] In the second part of the period covered there appear almost no more differences, as both Gartzke's (1998) dataset, on which Voeten and Merdzanovic's (2009) data is partly based, and Voeten and Merdzanovic's (2009) data only cover recorded votes on resolutions.[14]

As for a large period covered in these datasets only recorded votes on resolutions form the entirety of the data available and for most other sessions forms

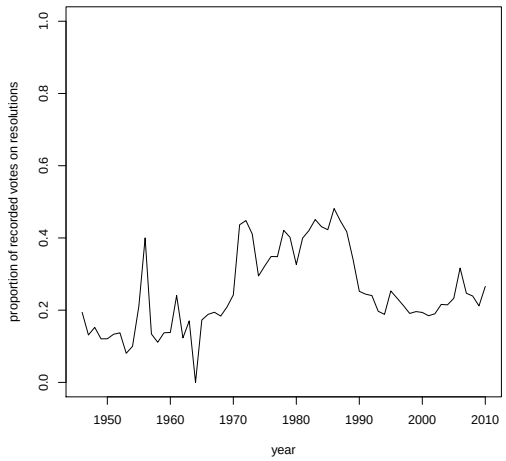
I), A/RES/1000(ES-I), A/RES/999(ES-I), A/RES/998(ES-I), A/RES/1004(ES-II), A/RES/997(ES-I), A/RES/1474(ES-IV), A/RES/1622(S-III), A/RES/1598(XV), A/RES/1992(XVIII), A/RES/1889(XVIII), A/RES/1875(S-IV), A/RES/1876(S-IV), A/RES/1877(S-IV), A/RES/2189(XXI).

[13]Including recorded votes in the (currently) six main committees is appropriate as these committees are "committees of the whole," i.e. have the same membership as the General Assembly (see for instance Peterson, 2005, 59).

[14]This suggests that using indiscriminately Voeten and Merdzanovic's (2009) data is quite problematic, as the rules for inclusing vary quite dramatically (Voeten and Merdzanovic's (2009) codebook), which is not the case for the data used here.

the large majority of votes, it seems important to assess how frequent recorded votes on resolutions are. Figure 2 depicts for each year the proportion of final decisions on resolutions that were recorded. As the figure clearly shows only a minority of decisions on resolutions is reached in recorded votes. A sizeable share is adopted in non-recorded votes and others without votes. The figure also clearly shows that the proportion of recorded votes varies over time.[15] While in the first two and a half decades approximately every fifth resolution was adopted in a recorded vote, this share increased to around a third in the 1970s and 1980s. Starting with the 1990s this share dropped back again to almost one fifth as in the early years of the UNGA. This share is very close to the proportion reported by Hovet (1960, 14): "... there were at least 8917 votes in the plenary or main committees through the thirteenth regular session. . . .[O]nly 1908, or 21.6 per cent, of the votes were roll-call votes."[16]

Figure 2: Proportion of recorded votes on resolutions in the UNGA over time



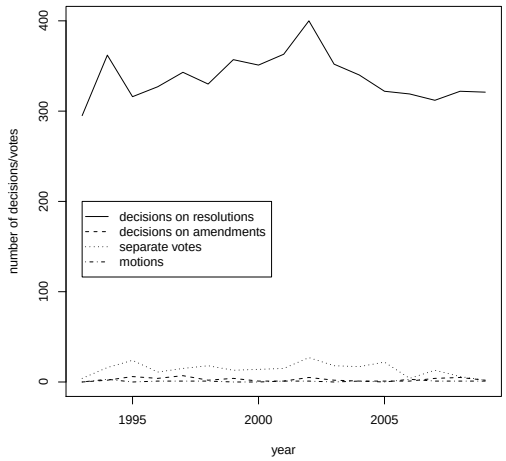
As I have information on all resolution-related votes for the 48th to 64th sessions I can assess the likelihood of recorded votes much more in detail for this period. Figure 3 first illustrates the respective shares of decisions on resolutions,

[15]The rather extraordinary drop in 1964 is due to the fact the 19th session was "voteless . . . [as] the superpowers argued out the question of whether peacekeeping expenses are part or not of the regular UN budget." (Peterson, 2005, 49).

[16]Hovet (1960, 14) also notes that ". . . at least 6184 votes were held in the main committees and 2733 votes in the plenary."

decisions on amendments to resolutions, separate votes on parts of resolutions and motions related to resolutions over time. The figure nicely shows that an overwhelming share of all decisions in the UNGA are the adoptions (there are no negative final decisions on resolutions in the period covered) of resolutions. A much smaller and declining number of decisions concerns separate votes on parts of resolutions. Almost negligible is the number of decisions on amendments to resolutions and motions related to resolutions. Regarding this second to last category it is interesting to note that in the first 29 sessions of the UNGA the number of votes on amendments is much higher as is partly reflected in figure 1.[17]

Figure 3: Decisions in the UNGA (48th-64th session)



Not surprisingly, the large majority of these decisions are adopted without votes as table 1 shows.[18] While as noted above only a fifth of final passage votes

[17]From 1945 to 1975, the period for which information on amendments to resolutions is available, about 17 percent of all recorded votes are on amendments (which also includes amendments adopted in the main committees). For the 1993-2010 period this share drops to less than 2 percent. This might be due to the fact that more and more informal discussions take place before decisions in the General Assembly. As Peterson (2005, 3) notes the UNGA ". . . also speeded deliberations on particular items through a set of unwritten practices for circulating drafts, presenting amendments or rival proposals, and developing a single draft through informal consultations held outside the public meetings." Peterson (2005, 3) links this to the expansion of UN membership.

[18]During the 48th to 64th sessions no non-recorded votes have occurred.

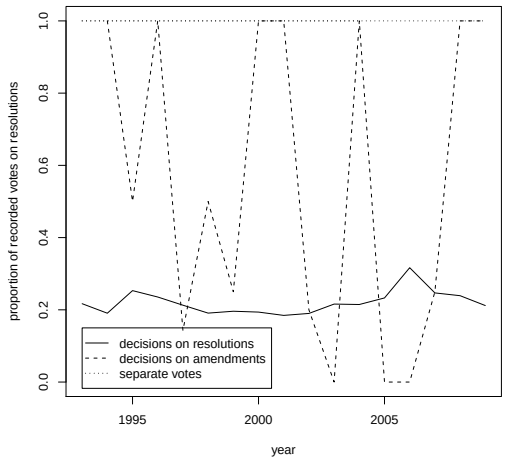
on resolutions are recorded this share is half for decisions on amendments to resolutions. Separate votes on parts of resolutions and motions are systematically subject to a recorded vote in the 48th to 64th sessions of the UNGA.

Table 1: Recorded votes and adoptions without vote (48th-64th session)

	adoptions without votes	recorded votes
decisions on resolutions	4478	1254
amendments to resolutions	24	24
separate votes on parts of resolutions	0	240
motions of no action (or devisons)	0	16

Figure 4 depicts the share of recorded votes by type of vote over time. This share remains rather stable during this period for votes on resolutions at around one fifth. Similarly, if separate votes on parts of a resolution are held these are in the 48th to 64th sessions systematically recorded votes.[19] Finally, figure 4 shows that whether amendments to resolutions are adopted in recorded votes or without votes varies dramatically over time. In some years all amendments are voted upon in recorded votes, while in others all are decided (i.e., adopted, in this case) without votes.

Figure 4: Proportion of recorded votes on resolution-related matters



[19] I do not report the share of recorded votes for motions, first of all given that they are quite rare and second because again all of them are recorded votes.

Before moving to a more analytical perspective figures 5 and 6 depict how recorded votes differ from non-recoded votes in terms of their relative vote margin.[20] Figure 5 gives a first illustration of the rather different nature of recorded and non-recorded votes. As the boxplots show more than half of the non-recorded votes are unanimous, while this is not the case for recorded votes. Second, among the recorded votes there are quite a few votes that are much more divisive than what one sees for the non-recorded ones.

Figure 5: Relative vote margins in recorded and non-recorded votes

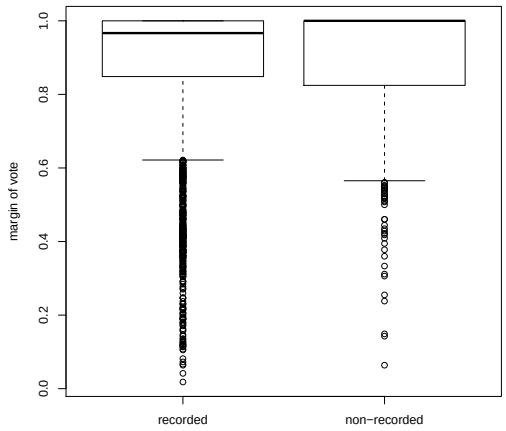
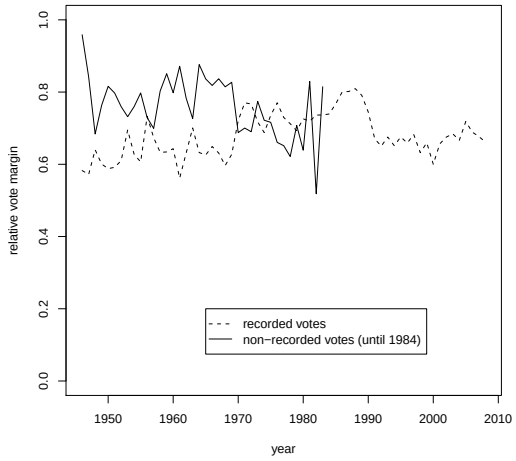


Figure 6 depicts this same information averaged per year over time.[21] What transpires from this figure is that until the beginning of the 1970s non-recorded votes had in general considerably higher vote margins than recorded votes, suggesting that the latter were much more divisive. Starting with the 1970s this appears no longer to be the case with the two types of votes having, on average, quite comparable vote margins.

[20]The vote margin here is simply the absolute value of the difference between the votes in favor and the votes against, divided by the sum of these values. It thus corresponds to the value of the Rice (1925) index (see also Rice, 1928) calculated on the whole voting body of the UNGA.

[21]As non-recorded votes almost disappeared after 1984 to disappear completely after 1988, I depict the vote margins for these votes only until 1984).

Figure 6: Relative vote margins over time in recorded and non-recorded votes



4 Empirics

As discussed above almost without exceptions all studies dealing with voting in the UNGA focus on recorded votes and barely consider how these votes relate to the overall set of decisions in this "deliberative body." As is well known, inferences based on such a subset are unproblematic if what is to be explained on the basis of recorded votes is unrelated to the mechanism leading to recorded votes (e.g., Heckman, 1976; Maddala, 1983; Achen, 1986). As already illustrated above recorded votes (compared to non-recorded votes) appear to be more conflictual. As many studies focus on conflicts in the assembly (or groups) this should already give us sufficient material to pause. This transpires also quite clearly in table 2 which reports the results of a simple linear regression relating the vote margin to whether a vote was recorded or not and the year of the vote. As this is a linear regression the estimated coefficient for the type of vote dummy suggests that, controlling for the years, recorded votes have much narrower vote margins, i.e. by 6 percent.

Turning things around table 3 reports again a result of a linear regression model explaining the probability of a recorded vote as a function of the type of decision and the margin of vote. The first two columns, focusing on the first 64 sessions, suggest that when not taking into account the vote margin (first

Table 2: Explaining margin of votes

	Model 1
year	0.00*
	(0.00)
recorded vote	−0.06*
	(0.01)
(Intercept)	−1.24*
	(0.33)
N	5925
Resid. sd	0.17

Standard errors in parentheses
* indicates significance at $p < 0.05$

column) recorded votes on separate votes and motions are the most likely, while amendments (and especially resolutions) are quite rarely voted upon in recorded votes. When taking into account the vote margin (and hence only resolutions adopted in (recorded or non-recorded) votes are covered) it appears that the vote margin positively and significantly affects the likelihood of a recorded vote. Controlling for the vote margin suggests that it appears to be less the type of vote than the divisiveness that leads to a recorded vote (again an indication for treading carefully in relying exclusively on recorded votes). The last column reproduces the analyses reported in the first column for the 48th to 64th session, as in these sessions non-recorded votes no longer occurred. A comparison with the first column suggests that these last 17 session barely differ from the larger set.

As the vote margin can only be used for analyses covering the earlier periods I turn to another possible explanatory factor for the request of a recorded vote, namely the topic of the resolution decided upon. I rely for this on Hovet's (1960, 26) classification which is based on the UN charter.[22] In table 4 I use this categorization to explain in a linear probability model the likelihood that a vote is recorded.[23]

As table 4 nicely shows two categories of decisions are much more likely to be

[22]Table 7 in the appendix reports on the distribution of votes across Hovet's (1960, 26) categories for the first 13 sessions (i.e., the sessions covered by him).

[23]Resolutions were coded automatically searching for the terms appearing in table 4. Resolutions with keywords belonging to different categories where categorized in separate categories. The large majority of votes (and thus forming the base category) could not be allocated to any of these categories. The consequence of this is that our results will be biased against finding any significant differences.

Table 3: explaining the likelihood of a recorded vote in the unga

	1st-64th sessions		48th-64th sessions
	all decisions	recorded and non-recorded votes	all decisions
year	0.00*	0.01*	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
amendment	0.22*	−0.03	0.28*
	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)
separate vote	0.72*	−0.07*	0.78*
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)
motion	0.72*	−0.06	0.78*
	(0.11)	(0.08)	(0.10)
relative vote margin		0.00*	
		(0.00)	
(Intercept)	−0.87*	−27.38*	−3.97
	(0.42)	(0.92)	(2.18)
N	15863	6209	6038
Resid. sd	0.44	0.33	0.41

Standard errors in parentheses
* indicates significance at $p < 0.05$

reached in recorded votes than the remaining decisions, namely those on economic issues and human rights. If both are combined or with settlement, respectively self-determination, the likelihood of a recorded vote is also considerably higher. A slightly higher likelihood for recorded votes also appears for collective decisions. For decisions dealing with all the remaining categories the likelihood of a recorded vote is either not statistically significantly different from the one of non-categorized votes, or much smaller.

Drawing on this analysis I proceed to a Heckman (1976)-type two-step analysis [24]on votes related to Israel as analyzed by Hillman and Potrafke (2011).[25] Based on a reestimation of the model appearing in table 4 as a probit model I calculated the Mills-ratio and introduced it into a linear probability model covering all the voting decisions related to the Goldstone report dealing with Israel as used by Hillman and Potrafke (2011) (see also Hurd, 2011, 97-132).[26] As additional

[24]This is one way to deal with issues of sample selectivity and allows to correct for biases, even if the selection relates in part to unobservables. It is, however, quite heavily dependent on the correct specification of the selection equation (see for instance Brandt and Schneider, 2007). Matching would be another strategy (e.g., Ho, Imai, King and Stuart, 2007), requiring, however, that selection is based on observables.

[25]I use this example and the following one because I am familiar with their studies, not because they somehow differ (both in the positive or negative sense) from related studies UNGA voting.

[26]I proceed in this way as the Mills-ratio is the appropriate correction only if the outcome

Table 4: Linear regression recorded vote as a function of topics from Hovet (1960)

	Model 1
a) administration	−0.09*
	(0.04)
b) international law	−0.23*
	(0.04)
c) human rights	0.21*
	(0.02)
a) administration/ c) human rights	−0.28*
	(0.10)
d) humanitarian	−0.13*
	(0.02)
a) administration/ d) humanitarian	−0.28
	(0.20)
c) human rights/ d) humanitarian	−0.10
	(0.07)
e) social	0.02
	(0.02)
d) humanitarian/ e) social	0.06
	(0.26)
f) economic	0.72*
	(0.14)
c) human rights/ f) economic	0.34*
	(0.12)
d) humanitarian/ f) economic	−0.28*
	(0.05)
c) human rights/ d) humanitarian/ f) economic	−0.28
	(0.45)
g) self-determination	0.10
	(0.06)
c) human rights/ g) self-determination	0.58*
	(0.06)
h) settlement	0.04
	(0.04)
f) economic/ h) settlement	0.72*
	(0.20)
i) collective	0.15*
	(0.02)
d) humanitarian/ i) collective	−0.28
	(0.31)
f) economic/ i) collective	−0.09
	(0.13)
(Intercept)	0.28*
	(0.00)
N	15915
Resid. sd	0.45

Standard errors in parentheses
* indicates significance at $p < 0.05$

equation is a linear model. Given that the selection is based on characteristics of votes, while the outcome of interest is the voting behavior (i.e. country-specific information) more appropriate ways to proceed would require a tailor-made estimation strategy (which I put off for later).

explanatory variables I include only a civil rights measure from Cingranelli and Richards (2010), namely the physical integrity scale, and the democracy measure by Cheibub, Gandhi and Vreeland (2010), both for 2008 as available in Teorell, Holmberg and Rothstein's (2008) "Quality of Government" data.[27]

Table 5: Explaining voting decisions related to the Goldstone report: Linear probability model

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
CIRI physical integrity: 1	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
2	0.01	0.01	0.01
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)
3	−0.07	−0.07	−0.07
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
4	−0.00	−0.00	−0.00
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
5	0.03	0.03	0.03
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
6	−0.04	−0.04	−0.05
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
7	−0.07	−0.07	−0.07
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
8	−0.16*	−0.16*	−0.17*
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
democracy (Cheibub et al, 2010)	−0.08*	−0.08*	−0.08*
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Mills-ratio		0.02	0.02
		(0.02)	(0.02)
(Intercept)	1.03*	1.01*	1.01*
	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.05)
N	891	891	891
Resid. sd	0.22	0.22	0.22
Resid. sd (resolution)			0.06

Standard errors in parentheses
* indicates significance at $p < 0.05$

The results depicted in table 5 show that both the civil rights measure and democracy relate to the voting behavior on resolutions on Israel as identified by Hillman and Potrafke (2011). In the second model (second column) it also appears clearly that the Mills ratio affects (though not statistically significantly) the voting behavior in the resolutions covered. Obviously two things need to be noted. First, despite the introduction of the Mills ratio none of the remaining results change. This, however, is due to the fact that I only use country specific

[27]These variables cover broadly the main variables used by Hillman and Potrafke (2011).

explanatory variables which by definition cannot correlate with the resolution specific Mills ratio. Consequently, omitting this variable can in a linear model not affect the estimated coefficients of the other variables. Second, the coefficient for the Mills ratio picks up all the differences in the average support across resolutions, as this is the only variable varying across resolutions. Model 3 in table 5 partly addresses this issue by reporting the results of a random effects model. The results suggest, however, that allowing for random effects across resolutions hardly affects the main results. While the estimated coefficient for the Mills ratio increases, a similar increase in its standard error leads to a just slightly statistically non-significant effect.[28]

A second analysis relies on Boockmann and Dreher's (2011) study of UNGA voting behavior on resolutions related to human rights. As table 4 suggests, decisions on human rights are much more likely to be subject to recorded votes. In my dataset 981 decisions on resolutions related to human rights occurred. Of these 472 were reached in recorded votes. Table 4 suggests also, however, that even among these human rights resolutions the likelihood of a recorded vote varies, an element we take advantage of in the analyses that follow.

To simplify my exploratory analysis I selected the last 12 votes on human rights in the 64th session and assured myself that at last two votes belonged to different categories as appearing in table 4. Table **??** shows again that democracy and civil rights contribute to explaining the voting behavior of delegates in the UNGA on human rights. Even stronger than in table 5 is the effect of the Mills ratio. Its statistical significant effect (model 2) survives even when considering random effects specific to resolutions (model 3) and random effects specific to countries (not reported here).[29]

5 Conclusion

Recorded votes in the UNGA offer an important glimpse at member states voting behavior. As in many other representative bodies these glimpses are, however, only partial. Less than a third of all decisions on resolutions are recorded and thus we must ask ourself whether the available information allows us to have an unbiased glimpse.

[28] I also included random effects at the country-level without any substantive changes.

[29] The same caveats as discussed above obviously also apply here.

Table 6: Explaining voting decisions related to human rights in the 64th session: Linear probability model

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
CIRI physical integrity: 1	0.00	0.01	0.01
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
2	−0.01	0.00	0.00
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
3	−0.06	−0.04	−0.04
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
4	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
5	0.00	0.01	0.01
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
6	−0.06	−0.05	−0.05
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
7	−0.11*	−0.10*	−0.10*
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
8	−0.16*	−0.15*	−0.15*
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
democracy (Cheibub et al, 2010)	−0.08*	−0.08*	−0.08*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Mills ratio		0.26*	0.26*
		(0.01)	(0.02)
(Intercept)	1.03*	0.81*	0.81*
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
N	1918	1918	1918
Resid. sd	0.25	0.23	0.23
Resid. sd resolution			0.02

Standard errors in parentheses
* indicates significance at $p < 0.05$

In the present paper I tried to assess whether recorded votes in the UNGA differ in systematic ways from those unrecorded and decisions adopted without a vote. Focusing on only resolution related votes clearly showed that recorded votes are quite different from those other decisions. They are on average much more divisive and occur more frequently on particular subjects compared to others.

Assessing whether there are differences is, however, leads us only half the way to better inferences. Hence, I also presented explorations drawing on two studies on UNGA voting to assess whether well-known ways to address selectivity issues might offer any help. In both of these explorations significant evidence appeared suggesting that pursuing on this path seems a fruitful avenue. Clearly, however, the limitations in these analyses are still quite considerable, and future revised versions of this paper and hopefully the efforts of other scholars to address

selectivity issues in UNGA recorded votes will allow for improved inferences.

6 Appendix

Table 7 reports on Hovet's (1960, 26) classification of decisions in the UNGA based on the UN's charter and the approximate frequency for the first 13 sessions covered by him.

Table 7: Subject categories in percent

[a]

subject	approximate frequency (%)
Collective measures, including such issues as regulations of armament	10.4
Peaceful settlement	18.5
Self-determination	23.9
Economic cooperation	5
Social and cultural	3
Humanitarian cooperation (i.e., relief and short-term social cooperation)	4
Human rights	9.4
Development of international law	5
Administrative, procedural and structural	26.3

[a] *Source:* gleaned from Hovet's (1960, 27) table F (approximation)

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