

With a little help from my friends? Keeping voting rights in the United Nations General Assembly*

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Abstract

Member states of the United Nations may lose their voting rights due to the non-payment of dues, which according to Coggins and Morse (2022) is the cause for a large share of the absences in roll called votes. While the rules for losing the voting rights are quite clear, namely having failed to pay in full the dues for two consecutive years, not all laggards/defaulters lose their voting rights, as the Committee on Contributions has some leeway in proposing which member states should lose these right (a decision, ultimately made by the United Nations General Assembly itself). Drawing on a complete set of decisions on voting rights withdrawals, it can be shown that these decisions are not free from political influence. These initial results suggest that withdrawals of voting rights need to be studied in more detail and their political nature being taken into account when analyzing voting records, particularly absences.

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1 Introduction

Member states of international organizations (IOs) often have the possibility, either directly in assemblies or indirectly through committees or organs of the IO, to sanction other member states for failing to live up to their commitments (e.g., Mattheis and Staeger, 2021). One such sanction consists of withdrawing the voting rights of an offending member state in a decision-making organ. While this type of sanction has been considerably discussed when it comes to the European Union (e.g., Sadurski, 2009; Kelemen, 2017) much less is known about this process for the United Nations (UN), at least since South Africa regained its voting rights after the end of Apartheid (Peterson, 2005, 93). In the case of this IO, member states can lose their voting rights if they have arrears in the payment of their dues and if the General Assembly (UNGA) supports such a measure, or, as in the case of South Africa, the UNGA refuses a member state to be seated (Mathias and Trengove, 2016, 975f).

While in this latter case the reason for not seating (and thus withdrawing the voting rights from) South Africa was clearly political (Mathias and Trengove, 2016, 975f), much less is known about the way in which decisions on voting rights withdrawals are made in the UN. In one of the few studies of this process Coggins and Morse (2022) note, that of 108 demands for exemptions for applications of Article 19 (the article in the UN Charter stipulating that voting rights are withdrawn in case of arrears) twelve were rejected.¹ In addition, the UNGA (in their period of study, i.e., 1990-2020), always followed the recommendations of its Committee on Contributions regarding the granting or not of exemptions (more on this below).²

As in many literatures voting records from the UNGA are used to measure various aspects of member states and collections thereof, knowing who is allowed to vote and who has lost its voting rights is of considerable importance.³ Thus, Coggins and Morse (2022) find in their study that the rather frequent absences from votes in the

¹Covering a longer time period from 1946 to 2022, we find 157 demands for exemptions of which 12 were rejected (see below for details)

²While for our data collection we also only found this example of the UNGA not following the recommendations of the Committee on Contributions, we also noted that for several rejected demands for exemptions the formal criteria were not fulfilled (e.g., the demand was submitted too late, or concerned an aspect that did not fall into the competencies of the Committee on Contributions. We flagged these decisions separately, as a formal rejection of a demand for an exemption is certainly not the same thing as having it rejected because of not respecting the procedural rules. Note that the UNGA as some instances (see Appendix) reversed these decisions by the Committee on Contributions.

³This information is available in Fjelstul, Hug and Kilby's (2022) database on UNGA decision-making.

UNGA are to a considerable extent due to member states having lost their right to vote. Several (often forgotten) students of voting in the UNGA highlight, however, that abstentions and absences are also informative (Mokken and Stokman, 1970; Stokman, 1977; Mokken and Stokman, 1985; Rosas and Shomer, 2008; Rosas, Shomer and Haptonstahl, 2015). A correct treatment of the latter, however, requires a clear understanding of the process leading to the loss of voting rights, especially if, as we argue in this paper, political considerations affect the process.

Hence in this paper we propose to study in more detail the circumstances under which member states of the UN lose their voting rights due to unpaid dues.⁴ More specifically, we argue that given the leeway the UNGA and its organs have in withdrawing voting rights, political factors are likely to play a direct or at least indirect role. To do so, we first review very briefly the scant literature on losing voting rights in international organizations (IOs) while highlighting that neglecting the political aspect of this process affects a large sway of the literature on IOs. Based on this we sketch a theoretical model highlighting that keeping one's voting rights is likely not only to be affected by objective (mostly economic) factors, but that political factors are likely to play a role as well. Based on this we present newly collected data on the application of Article 19 of the UN Charter, which implies a loss of voting rights when arrears in due payments reach a certain level. We then present an empirical analysis demonstrating that political factors directly and indirectly affect the loss of voting rights, before concluding in the final section.

2 Literature

Despite the fact that a large literature directly or indirectly relies on voting information (e.g., Voeten, 2013, 2020) from international assemblies (Karns, 2016), few studies have assessed when and why voting rights are withdrawn from member states of IOs. Thus, no contribution to the "Routledge Handbook of International Organizations" (Reinalda, 2013) deals with this issue, while in Cogan's (2016, 906f) contribution to "The Oxford Handbook of International Organizations" (Cogan, Hurd and Johnstone, 2016) this issue is only briefly discussed for the UN. Ingadóttir (2011, 109) in his

⁴While the case of South Africa and its failure to be seated in the second half of the twentieth century is also an interesting case to consider (Peterson, 2005, 93f), we refrain from considering here. This despite the fact that the South African government, as a consequence of not being seated, refrained from paying its dues and thus accumulated considerable arrears over the years.

chapter on “Financing International Institutions” briefly mentions that member states of IOs have the “obligation to pay,” and several of them envision the withdrawal of voting rights. We are only aware of Coggins and Morse’s (2022) study that assesses the importance of lost voting rights for the explanation of absences in UNGA voting and Mattheis and Staeger’s (2021) more general study on sanctioning of member states of IOs.⁵

This is problematic for most studies using UNGA voting to assess characteristics of member states, like for instance preferences (e.g., Bailey, Strezhnev and Voeten, 2017). While randomly occurring absences allow for treating these missing voting informations as ignorable, if they are in some ways related to political factors (as we show below), they are non-ignorable (for a detailed discussion of this, including an assessment in the context of the UNGA, see Rosas, Shomer and Haptonstahl, 2015) and thus will lead to biased results.

3 Theory

We consider the decisions leading up to the possible withdrawal of voting rights as a strategic interaction between a member state (MS) and the Committee on Contributions (CoC, the extensive form of the game appears in Figure 1).⁶ Our expectation is that most member states generally are happy to pay their dues, but if they fail to do so they prefer not losing their voting rights.⁷ While for a considerable time arrears almost automatically led to a withdrawal of voting rights (see Figure 2 below), in more recent times, however, more and more exemptions were requested and also granted to a considerable extent (see below and Appendix in Coggins and Morse, 2022).⁸ This

⁵A recent special issue (see introduction by Hellquist and Palestini, 2021) also considers sanctions against members of regional IOs, but none of the contributions focuses on withdrawal of voting rights, explicitly.

⁶In practice it is the UNGA which decides on withdrawing voting rights and granting exceptions from Article 19 of the UN Charter. As the UNGA almost without exception accepts the recommendations by the Committee on Contributions we take this innocuous short cut. Thus, Coggins and Morse (2022, 4) note that “[I]n 2000, the Committee on Contributions recommended that Comoros not be granted an exemption. The General Assembly, however, subsequently over turned this decision.”

⁷Ingadóttir (2011, 110) highlights, however, that some member states of the UN, due to disagreements about particular policies (e.g., the US in the 1980s), fail to pay their full dues.

⁸This is linked to the adoption of resolution 54/237 C, which states the following: “[The UNGA] [u]rges all Member States in arrears requesting exemption under Article 19 of the Charter to provide the fullest possible supporting information, including information on economic aggregates, government revenues and expenditure, foreign exchange resources, indebtedness, difficulties in meeting domestic or international financial obligations and any other information that might support the claim that failure to

suggests that at the time of deciding whether or not to pay its dues a member state is uncertain about what consequences arrears might have for its voting rights. More specifically we assume that both when deciding on the payments of dues and when, in case of arrears, deciding whether or not to request an exemption, the member state is uncertain about the decision to be expected by the Committee on Contributions (depicted with information sets (dotted lines) linking the respective action nodes in Figure 1).⁹ As the Committee on Contributions only grants exemptions if they are demanded by member states with arrears, we assume that this committee only intervenes after a member state with outstanding dues requests an exemption from losing its voting rights. Thus, in case a member state has arrears and fails to request an exemption (or does so in an untimely manner as happens sometimes) the loss of voting rights is automatic.

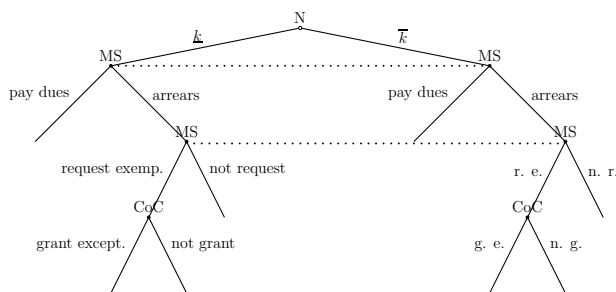


Figure 1: Game tree

While Figure 1 depicts the extensive form of the game and with appropriate assumptions about the payoffs associated with each final node we could derive the equilibrium strategies, we refrain from doing so. We consider this extensive form game as mostly illustrative, highlighting two main facts. First, both when making decisions about whether or not to make the necessary payment of dues to the UN and whether

make necessary payments had been attributable to conditions beyond the control of the Member States; 4. Decides that requests for exemption under Article 19 of the Charter must be submitted by Member States to the President of the General Assembly at least two weeks before the session of the Committee, so as to ensure a complete review of the requests.”

⁹Some additional evidence in support of the assumption that member states with economic difficulties are uncertain about the likely decision of the Committee on Contributions comes from the fact that many member states with arrears pay up during the session during which they lost their voting rights (see Figure 2 below). A very exploratory analyses of the rejected demands for exemptions (see Table 5) suggests that political factors do play a role. While controlling for economic factors, this analysis suggests that the demands for exemptions by more extreme member states are more likely to be rejected, while those of more democratic countries are accepted more frequently.

or not, in the second case, to request an exemption, depends crucially on beliefs of the member states regarding the granting of an exemption by the Committee on Contributions. If we consider Nature's choice of \underline{k} as leading this committee to grant exception, and the choice of \bar{k} is suggesting the committee will reject such a request, then member states belief of $p(k = \underline{k})$ in combination with the assumed payoffs will determine the latter's actions (and thus strategies).

Second, in an ideal world, given the remit of the Committee on Contributions, only the economic conditions and whether the arrears are due to exceptional circumstances, should decide on the value of k . If this were the case and the value of k common knowledge, then only member states certain to get an exemption should request the latter (under the assumption that writing a letter asking for an exemption is costly), and all requests for exemptions would be accepted by the Committee on Contributions. We take the fact that some requests for exemptions are rejected (see below and Appendix in Coggins and Morse, 2022) as evidence that k is not common knowledge and not only related to economic factors. More specifically, we assume that the value of k is determined in part by the economic conditions in a member state, but also by the latter's standing with the members of the Committee on Contributions specifically and the UN member states (with voting rights in the UNGA) more generally.

One way to conceptualize a member state's standing with this committee and the UNGA is to consider how extreme (compared to the median) a member state's preferences are.¹⁰ Based on this we formulate the following general hypothesis:

H1 Member states with extreme preferences are more reluctant to accumulate arrears as they fear not obtaining exemptions and keep their voting rights.

Given this uncertainty faced by the member states possibly facing a loss of voting rights has a direct implication for empirical models wishing to assess when member states fail to pay their dues and possibly request an exemption to not lose their voting rights: these choices are not independent of each other as unobservables, affecting the estimation of k (i.e. the member states' prior beliefs) will affect each decision and thus

¹⁰Operationalizing this political factor in this way allows us also to assess, at least in a preliminary fashion, whether the Committee on Contributions on average is more critical of requests for exemptions coming from member states with more extreme preferences. A preliminary analysis (see Table 5 in the Appendix, covering in essence the last decision node in Figure 1) suggests that political factors do play a role, as demands by more extreme and less democratic member states are more frequently rejected. As we observe the decision of the Committee on Contributions only for cases where a member state with arrears demands an exemption, these results have to be taken with a grain of salt, as they are likely subject to selection biases (i.e., we only see decisions on requests for exemptions from member states that submitted such a requests after failing to pay their dues.

lead to correlated errors. Hence, in the empirical part of this paper we will assess what explains member states' decisions as a choice among three interdependent alternatives, namely paying the dues, refraining from doing so and either request or not request an exemption from losing their voting rights.

4 Data

Coggins and Morse (2022) for their work on absences in the UNGA collected data on countries with arrears for the period between 1990 and 2014. We extended this data back to the beginning of the UN and updated it to cover the period up to 2022.¹¹ As our data collection is based on letters presented by the Committee on Contributions to the UNGA, we also have information about whether a member state with arrears, in the course of a session, actually paid its outstanding dues.

Figure 2, which reports on the basic information in this data set, suggests a few interesting findings.¹² First of all, and this also transpires in the reports by the Committee on Contributions (available at <https://legal.un.org/repertory/art19/english>), the latter did not identify any country in arrears until the second half of the 1960s. Starting from then, the number of countries with arrears increased dramatically until the end of the 1990s, before declining almost as steeply at the beginning of the 21st century.¹³ Second, the practice of granting exemptions from losing voting rights (even though envisioned in the Charter) started only in the 1990s and since a peak in the early 2000s has tapered off slightly. One of the possible reasons for this is transpiring in the line reflecting the number of countries that during a session paid up their arrears. This number has over time and especially since the early 2000s approached the number of countries with arrears. It bears noting, however, that these payments often occur during a session when most of the votes (typically in the last months of a

¹¹To do so we searched in the digital library of the UN for documents related to Article 19 and coded which countries were mentioned to be in arrears, whether they paid up during a session for which they lost their voting rights, whether they requested an exemption from losing their voting rights and whether this was granted.

¹²Here, as well with all analyses that follow, we only consider arrears and losses of voting rights in the normal sessions of the UNGA. As the excerpts from the "Repertory of Practices" (see Appendix) the Committee on Contribution also reports on arrears and its recommendations the Presidents of the special and emergency special sessions. As the ensuing decisions are then separate, we refrain from covering them here.

¹³It is interesting to note that the peak of the curve occurs in a period in which, according to data by Bauer, Cruz and Graham (2012), the number of countries under IMF agreements was also at a highpoint (see also Vreeland, 2003).

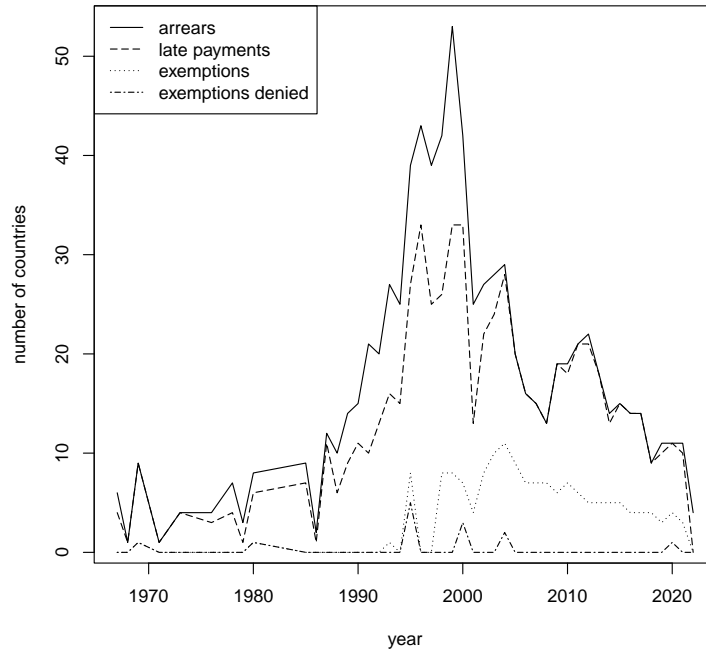


Figure 2: Countries with arrears and requests for exemptions

calendar year) have already occurred.¹⁴ Finally, not all demands for exemptions from losing voting rights are granted. As overall in the time period covered 157 demands for exceptions were addressed to the Committee on Contributions, the 12 rejected demands correspond to slightly less than 10 percent. Most of these rejections occurred in the 1990s and early 2000s.

5 Analyses

To analyze the decisions by member states we rely on a Bayesian multinomial probit model (Imai and van Dyk, 2005).¹⁵ More specifically we evaluate whether member

¹⁴This justifies to some extent Coggins and Morse’s (2022) decision to collect data on arrears and the application of Article 19 on an annual basis. Our more fine-grained data collection allows, however, to determine more specifically what share of absences from voting are due to Article 19.

¹⁵We also estimated two separate probit models using the package **brms** (Bürkner, 2017) assessing the choice between having arrears and demanding an exemption, respectively having arrears and not demanding an exemption, against paying up the dues. We report the results in the Appendix in Table 3 and Figure 4.

states in their decision to accumulate arrears and whether or not to request an exemption from the application of Article 19 is influenced by the extremeness of their preferences. For this information we rely on Bailey, Strezhnev and Voeten’s (2017) estimates of ideal-points derived from an item-response theory (IRT) model.¹⁶ For simplicity’s sake we take the absolute values of these ideal-points, as for identification purposes these ideal-points are assumed to be distributed according to a standardized normal distribution.

As decisions on due payments are likely to be affected as well by other factors, we rely on data from the “World Economics and Politics Dataverse” (Graham, Hicks, Milner and Bougher, 2018; Graham and Tucker, 2019). First, we use from the “Penn World Tables” (Feenstra, Inklaar and Timmer, 2015) information on the logged per capita GDP. Second, we use, drawing on Vreeland (2003) and Bauer, Cruz and Graham (2012), the information whether a country in a given year had an outstanding at the IMF.¹⁷ In addition, we control for the level of democracy as conceptualized by the Varieties of Democracy (VDEM) polyarchy-measure (Coppedge and Gerring, 2011). We lag all these indicators, as well as the information on ideal-points, by one year in order to ensure that economic (and political conditions) of the time of failing to pay dues are taken into account. Finally, we use as additional covariate the year and its square-term to account for changing practices over time.

In Table 1 we report the estimated coefficients (in a Bayesian perspective) of a multinomial probit model, focusing on the period starting in 1967 and ending in 2022.¹⁸ As regards the preferences of member states we find that the choice of not

¹⁶It bears noting that if we find support for our hypothesis, then this undermines the validity of these ideal-point estimates as absences from voting is affected by political aspects. Similar conclusions can be derived from the work by Carter and Stone (2015) on vote-buying and Rosas, Shomer and Haptonstahl’s (2015) work on absences, which are likely to be strategic and not due to indifference as assumed by Bailey, Strezhnev and Voeten (2017) (see the related finding based on recoding “strategic absences” as abstentions in Coggins and Morse, 2022).

¹⁷Strictly speaking Vreeland (2003) and Bauer, Cruz and Graham (2012) use the fact whether a country is still under an agreement. As their data only goes up to 2008, we relied on the IMF’s International Financial Statistics (IFS, 2023 M01, <https://data.imf.org/?sk=388DFA60-1D26-4ADE-B505-A05A558D9A42&sid=1479331931186>, accessed January 11, 2023) to check whether a country still had outstanding loans. This indicator correlates strongly with the data collected by Vreeland (2003) and Bauer, Cruz and Graham (2012). In only roughly ten percent of country years did their data indicate an ongoing agreement, while no loans were outstanding, and in another 10 percent their data showed no ongoing agreement, while a country still owed money to the IMF. We thank Benjamin Graham for sorting out these differences.

¹⁸As Figure 2 shows, no demands for exemptions were lodged before 1967. In the appendix we provide an additional analysis, which covers all years until 2019 (see Table 4), yielding largely identical results).

	pay	arrears: not request exemption
Intercept	6693.63 [4176.01; 9613.37]	-86.96 [-6904.61; 5278.91]
Democracy _{t-1} (VDEM-polyarchy)	-0.50 [-1.10; 0.00]	-0.68 [-1.14; -0.22]
GDP p.c. _{t-1} (log)	0.57 [0.37; 0.70]	0.26 [-0.10; 0.59]
Ideal point _{t-1} (absolute value)	0.02 [-0.31; 0.25]	-0.19 [-0.44; 0.04]
Outstanding IMF loans _{t-1}	-0.16 [-0.32; 0.01]	0.01 [-0.19; 0.23]
year	-6.67 [-9.58; -4.14]	0.11 [-5.25; 6.92]
year ² /1000000	1660.08 [1025.97; 2386.67]	-35.25 [-1733.34; 1302.47]
σ_{pay}^2		1.38 [0.64; 1.92]
$\sigma_{pay, noexemption}$		0.21 [-0.84; 0.99]
$\sigma_{noexemption, noexemption}$		0.62 [0.08; 1.36]
Observations		7026

Table 1: Multinomial probit model of requesting or not requesting exemptions (reference category: demanding exception (mean and credible intervals, 1967-2019))

demanding an exception from Article 19 is negatively affected by the extremeness of a member states' preferences. On the other hand these same preferences appear not to affect the decision to pay the dues. Not surprisingly, the latter decision is considerably affected by the GDP per capita and outstanding IMF loans. More specifically, richer countries are much more likely to pay their dues while outstanding loans make it more likely to have arrears. Finally, more democratic countries are less likely to pay their dues and less likely not to demand an exemption if they have arrears.¹⁹

We depict the results with respect to our hypothesis in Figure 3 relying on average predicted probabilities of the three choices as a function of ideal-points, while holding

¹⁹As regards the temporal controls (i.e., year and its quadratic form), the coefficients imply for the time period considered a simple negative trend both with respect to the choice of paying and the choice of demanding an exemption. This suggests that once controlling for (especially) economic factors, the peak in the number of countries with arrears in the late 1990s and 2000s, is not due to time (alone).

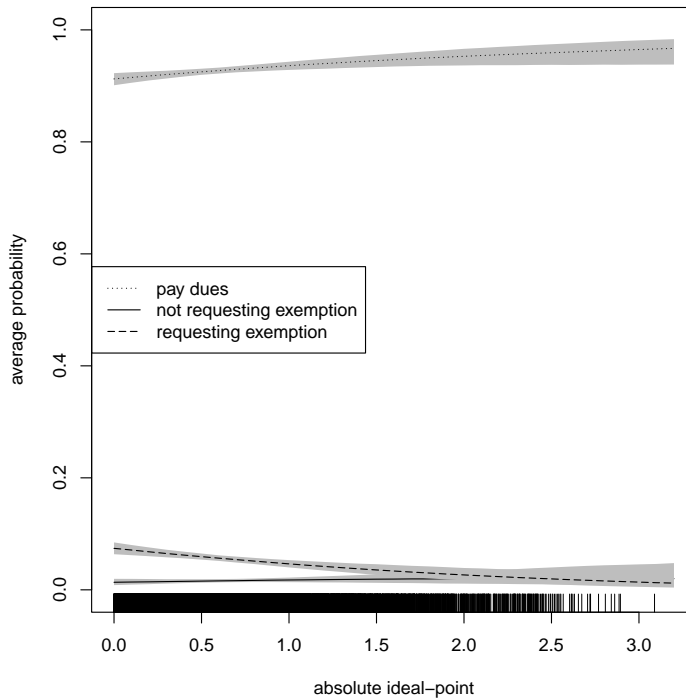


Figure 3: The effect of extreme preferences on having arrears and asking for an exemption from Article 19: multinomial probit

the values of the other covariates constant at the sample-values for each observation (Gelman and Hill, 2007, 466). Figure 3 nicely shows that the extremeness of preferences matters. More specifically, we find that member states with more extreme preferences are more likely to pay their dues. Related to our hypothesis, we suspect that this is due to the fact that more extreme member states fear losing their voting rights as the Committee on Contributions is likely to reject their demand for an exemption (see also the preliminary analysis focusing on this decision reported in Table 5). Interesting enough this increase in the willingness to pay dues is compensated by a decrease in the probability of failing to pay dues and requesting an exemption. This again supports our hypothesis that more extreme member states are likely to pay their dues for fear of losing their voting rights if they were to fail in their financial commitments. On the other hand asking for an exemption is not affected by the extremeness of the member states' preferences.

6 Conclusion

Some IOs, among them UN, have the possibility to withdraw the voting rights of their members, for instance if they fail to pay their dues. As external shocks may sometimes make the payment of dues difficult, the UNGA allows member states to keep their voting rights, if the Committee on Contributions comes to the conclusion that arrears are due to conditions beyond the control of the member state and the UNGA reinstores these voting rights. Thus, one would expect that decisions that grant such exceptions are heavily influenced by economic conditions.

Based on a game-theoretic model we suggest, however, that these objective conditions are unlikely to be the only driving forces, making that a member state in economic difficulties chooses actions in a situation of uncertainty. More specifically the choice among three available actions (pay the dues, not pay the dues and request or not for an exemption) will likely depend on the expected decision by the Committee on Contributions and the UNGA to grant an exemption from Article 19. We use this game-theoretic model to motivate a hypothesis, namely that paying dues or not (and whether in the latter case to request an exemption) will be influenced by the extremeness of a member state's preferences.

Evaluating this claim empirically shows that extreme member states, even when controlling for their economic conditions, are more likely to pay their dues than those with preferences close to the median in the UNGA. At the same time the choice of accumulating arrears and not requesting an exemption becomes more likely. We suspect that this is due to the anticipated actions by the Committee on Contributions.

These findings are at best a start for evaluating how political factors may lead to the withdrawal of voting rights from member states with arrears.²⁰ An important next step, after gaining a more solid understanding of this process, will however be to assess the consequences for studies using UNGA voting records. As the study by Fjelstul, Hug and Kilby (2022) already shows, having available a complete and systematic dataset on votes in the UNGA affects findings presented in the literature, a more explicit treatment of absences (especially those happening because lost voting rights or strategic reasons, see Rosas, Shomer and Haptonstahl, 2015; Coggins and Morse, 2022) seems necessary

²⁰One might suspect that the composition of the Committee on Contributions might be of importance. Its members are elected by the UNGA, but the exact selection of candidates is quite unclear (so far we were unable to obtain more detailed information on this selection process and other aspects of the operations of the Committee on Contributions).

to put analyses of votes in the UNGA on less shaky ground.

Appendix

In Table 2 we report the descriptive statistics of the variables used in the analyses presented in the main text. Table 3 reports the results of two separate probit models where the base category is paying dues while requesting or not an exemption are the respective choices. The average predicted probabilities are depicted in figure 4. Table 4 reports the results of a multinomial probit model covering the period 1946 to 2019. Finally, in the next subsection we report excerpts from the “Repertory of Practices” which highlight some of the aspects of the application of Article 19 referred to in the main text.

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Choice	7,733	1.132	0.481	1	3
Democracy (VDEM-polyarchy)	7,733	0.452	0.286	0.012	0.919
GDP p.c. (logged)	7,733	8.189	1.458	4.977	12.109
Ideal points (absolute value)	7,733	0.735	0.522	0.00002	3.089
Outstanding IMF loans	7,733	0.254	0.435	0	1
Year	7,733	1,991.595	17.519	1,951	2,019

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

	pay	arrears: not request exemption
Intercept	1967.14* [488.79; 3550.81]	-383.65 [-2220.77; 1418.46]
Democracy _{t-1} (VDEM-polyarchy)	-0.86* [-1.36; -0.38]	-1.11* [-1.87; -0.36]
GDP p.c. _{t-1} (log)	0.55* [0.44; 0.66]	0.62* [0.44; 0.80]
Ideal point _{t-1}	-0.14 [-0.40; 0.12]	-0.39* [-0.76; -0.01]
Outstanding IMF loans _{t-1}	-0.16 [-0.35; 0.03]	0.06 [-0.24; 0.36]
Year	-1.94* [-3.52; -0.46]	0.45 [-1.36; 2.28]
Year ² /100	0.05* [0.01; 0.09]	-0.01 [-0.06; 0.03]
Observations	6568	565

Table 3: Probit models of requesting or not requesting exemptions (mean and credible intervals, 1967-2019)

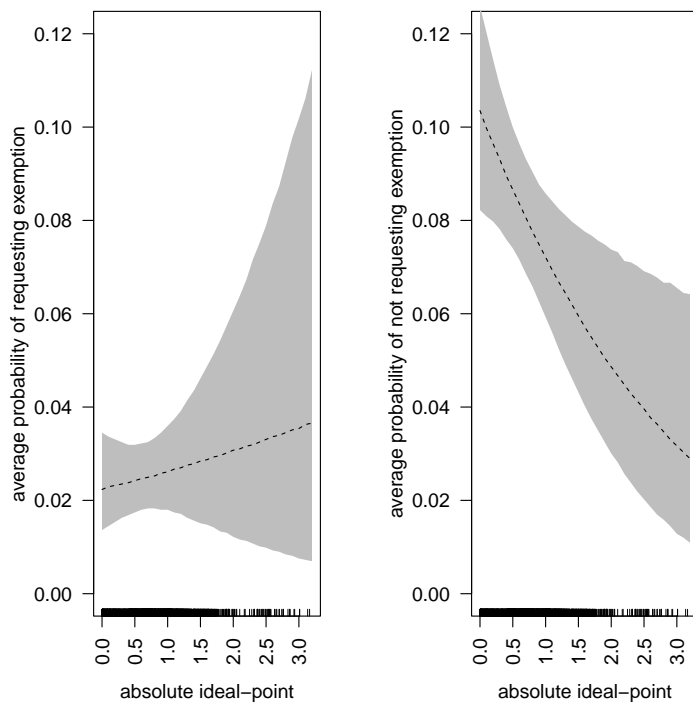


Figure 4: The effect of extreme preferences on having arrears and asking for an exemption from Article 19: probit models

	pay	arrears: not request exemption
Intercept	7515.20 [4215.69; 9752.34]	-2064.82 [-7194.93; -35.24]
Democracy _{t-1} (VDEM-polyarchy)	-0.20 [-0.67; 0.23]	-0.42 [-0.98; -0.09]
GDP p.c. _{t-1} (log)	0.53 [0.36; 0.65]	0.08 [-0.12; 0.23]
Ideal point _{t-1} (absolute value)	0.13 [-0.08; 0.34]	-0.16 [-0.43; -0.02]
Outstanding IMF loans _{t-1}	-0.19 [-0.35; -0.04]	0.04 [-0.05; 0.21]
Year	-7.50 [-9.73; -4.20]	2.08 [0.05; 7.22]
Year ² /100	0.19 [0.10; 0.24]	-0.05 [-0.18; -0.00]
σ_{pay}^2		1.69 [0.53; 1.99]
$\sigma_{pay, noexemption}$		-0.25 [-0.81; 0.06]
$\sigma_{noexemption, noexemption}$		0.31 [0.01; 1.47]
Observations		7715

Table 4: Multinomial probit model of requesting or not requesting exemptions (reference category: demanding exception (mean and credible intervals, 1946-2019))

	Model 1
Intercept	2.59 [−6.74; 12.10]
Democracy _{t−1} (VDEM-polyarchy)	−0.70 [−2.20; 0.83]
GDP p.c. _{t−1} (log)	−0.16 [−0.82; 0.46]
Ideal point _{t−1} (absolute value)	0.64 [−0.55; 1.87]
Outstanding IMF loans _{t−1}	−0.63 [−1.39; 0.09]
Year/1000	−0.16 [−2.10; 1.79]
Year ² /1000000	−0.65 [−2.58; 1.26]
WAIC	54.92
N	112.00

Table 5: Explaining denied exemptions (probit model, mean and credible intervals, 1946-2019)

Excerpts from “Repertory of Practices”

The UN published Repertory of Practices also with respect to Article 19 until 2009 (<https://legal.un.org/repertory/art19.shtml>). Below we report the relevant excerpts:²¹

- 1945-1954 https://legal.un.org/repertory/art19/english/rep_orig_voll_art19.pdf

“On the basis of the status of the contributions at the time of its meetings, usually August of each year, the Committee on Contributions reported annually to the General Assembly that no action was required by the General Assembly in respect of the application of Article 19, jj and consequently no such action has been taken by the General Assembly.”

- 1954-1955 https://legal.un.org/repertory/art19/english/rep_suppl_voll_art19.pdf

“ The reports of the Committee on Contributions to the General Assembly at its ninth 2/ and tenth 3/ sessions indicated that no Member State was in arrears in the payment of its contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 Consequently, at these sessions, as at all previous sessions, no action was required by the General Assembly in respect of the application of Article 19. In its report 4/ to the eleventh session of the General Assembly, which was issued in April 1956, the Committee authorized the Chairman to issue at a later date an addendum to the report regarding the question of the status of collection of contributions.”

- 1955-1959 https://legal.un.org/repertory/art19/english/rep_supp2_vol2_art19.pdf

“In 1958t the Committee on Contributions, referring in its report I/ to the arrears of a. Msmbler State, invited attention to the terms of Article 19 of the Charter. Before the opening of the General Assembly session, however, arrangements had been made by the Member State concerned for the payment of the outstanding arrear”

²¹ Apparently misplaced numbers refer to footnotes.

- 1959-1966 https://legal.un.org/repertory/art19/english/rep_supp3_voll_art19.pdf

“When the Assembly reconvened on 18 January 1965, the Secretary-General issued a further report concerning the collection of contributions as at 17 January 1965¹². That report indicated that, on the basis of the Financial Regulations and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, sixteen Member States were in arrears in amounts in excess of their assessed contributions for the preceding two full years, namely 1963 and 1964. On 29 January 1965, the Secretary-General, in response to several written protests, issued a revised version of the abovementioned report including in full the information contained in his report of 30 November 1964 regarding the position of certain Member States on the question of the expenses of the peace-keeping operations and also referring to other Member States which had protested. 18. The Secretary-General issued further reports on the collection of contributions on 2 February¹³ and 3 February 1965.¹⁴ Three Member States had made sufficient payments for them to be removed from the list of those in arrears contained in the previous report.”

“The reports of the Committee on Contributions to the General Assembly at its twentieth²³ and twenty-first²⁴ sessions referred to the abovementioned consensus of the General Assembly and indicated that at the time of the issuance of the reports no Member State was in arrears in the payment of its contribution to the United Nations Regular Budget to the extent that Article 19 would apply.”

- 1966-1969 https://legal.un.org/repertory/art19/english/rep_supp4_voll_art19.pdf

“During the fifth special session, at the 1518th plenary meeting, held on 19 May 1967, when the name of a Member State at that time in arrears within the terms of Article 19 was not called out during a roll-call vote, no question was raised.”

“6. At the resumed twenty-second session, in a letter dated 18 June 1968,² the Permanent Representative of the Soviet Union drew the attention of the Secretary-General to the fact that, during the voting at the 1582nd meeting of the First Committee, as well as at the 1671st and 1672nd plenary meetings of the General Assembly, members of the Secretariat, during a roll-call vote, had not called the names of the two Member States which the Secretary-General had informed the Assembly were at that time in arrears within the terms of Article

19, thus depriving them of their voting rights.”

“At the twenty-third session of the General Assembly, one Member State in arrears under Article 19 cited a number of economic reasons in explanation of its failure to meet its obligations and requested a three-month period of grace in order to do so.⁶ The General Assembly permitted the Member to vote during the session pending advice from the Committee on Contributions under rule 1617 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. The Committee on Contributions concluded that it could not support the Member’s contention that failure to pay was beyond its control.⁸ Prior to the end of the session the Member State in question paid the necessary amounts to reduce its arrears below the limit specified in Article 19.”

- 1970-1978 https://legal.un.org/repertory/art19/english/rep_supp5_voll_art19.pdf

“At the opening of the twenty-fifth, twenty-seventh, sixth special and thirtieth sessions of the General Assembly, those Member States reported by the Secretary-General as being in arrears within the terms of Article 19 made the required payments ahead of time to reduce their arrears below the limits prescribed by Article 19 and thus retained their right to vote”

“At the twenty-sixth session, the one Member State in arrears at the opening of the session⁸ cited certain circumstances which it claimed caused the delay in its remittance. In anticipation of the payment by the Member State concerned, the General Assembly agreed, on the proposal of the Temporary President, to exercise the option vested in it by the second sentence of Article 19⁹ by allowing the Member State to vote. The matter was settled a few days later with the receipt of the payment from the Member State.¹⁰”

“The Secretary-General reported four Member States in arrears under Article 19 at the beginning of the twenty-eighth session of the General Assembly.¹³ The Member States in question made a similar request to the Assembly as had been made by the Member in arrears at the twenty-sixth session. The Assembly followed the same procedure¹³ and within a week’s time three of the Member States made payment in sufficient amounts to reduce their arrears below the limit specified in Article 19.^M The fourth Member State claimed that circumstances beyond its control had caused the delay in its remittance and that efforts were be-

ing made to pay the soonest possible. The President of the Assembly informed the Assembly that an "understanding" on the matter in compliance with Article 19 had been reached and that the Assembly would be informed of any new development.¹⁵ A short time later the required payment was made."

"10. The same procedure was followed by the Assembly at its thirty-first session with respect to two Member States in arrears at that time,¹⁶ and at the resumed thirty-first session with respect to two of the four Member States in arrears at the opening of the session.¹⁷ The two other Member States were Democratic Kampuchea and South Africa. With regard to South Africa, the question of the right to vote, in terms of Article 19, was a theoretical one since no delegation had been accredited by it to the General Assembly session and consequently no decision needed to be taken regarding the application of Article 19 with respect to its arrears.¹⁸ Democratic Kampuchea indicated that it should not be required to pay those arrears incurred by the previous regime which governed the country from 18 March 1970 to 17 April 1975. At the suggestion of its President, the General Assembly decided to hold the application of Article 19 to Democratic Kampuchea in abeyance until it had the opportunity to consider the matter at its thirty-second session.¹⁹"

"At the opening of the thirty-second session, no solution had yet been found that would satisfy the requirements of Article 19 and at the same time take account of the position of Democratic Kampuchea. At the Temporary President's suggestion, and without constituting a precedent, the General Assembly decided to waive rule 92 of its rules of procedure and proceeded to elect the President of the thirty-second session by acclamation on the basis of the endorsement of his candidacy by all regional groups.²⁰ A short time afterward, Democratic Kampuchea made a payment in an amount sufficient to avoid application of Article 19.²¹"

"At the opening of the eighth and ninth special sessions of the General Assembly, six Member States were in arrears within the terms of Article 19.ⁿ At the ninth special session, noting that the names of those Member States were not called during a roll-call vote and consequently they had been unable to take part in the voting, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics questioned the attempt to automatically deprive these States of the right to vote under Article 19 of the Charter. It maintained that the provisions of Article 19 should be applied in

accordance with Article 18(2) of the Charter, which states that "Decisions of the General Assembly on important questions should be made by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting. These questions shall include ... the suspension of the rights and privileges of membership."

- 1979-1984 https://legal.un.org/repertory/art19/english/rep_supp6_vol2_art19.pdf

"During the period under review, three Member States made requests, two of them twice, in the context of the second sentence of Article 19, to be permitted to vote on the basis that their failure to pay was due to conditions beyond their control. These requests for exceptions attributed the failure to pay either to economic difficulties or to a breakdown in the national administration."

"During the period under review, the General Assembly decided to agree to four requests from two Member States that were more than two years in arrears to be permitted to vote in the Assembly under the provisions of the second sentence of Article 19, once at the sixth emergency special session, twice at the seventh emergency special session and once at the thirty-fifth session. In addition, the request of a Member State in arrears under the terms of Article 19 during the resumed thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly was referred to the Committee on Contributions for advice, in accordance with rule 160 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, on action to be taken in the implementation of the provisions of Article 19. The three Member States made the required minimum payments within a few months."

"Throughout the period under review, South Africa remained in arrears under the terms of Article 19. The Secretary-General therefore included South Africa in his communications to the President of the General Assembly when notifying him of the names of those Member States that were in arrears under the terms of Article 19. Although South Africa remained a Member, following the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 3207 (XXIX) and the subsequent interpretation given to it by the President, which was upheld by a majority vote, in 1974 it was suspended from participation in the work of the General Assembly."

"A total of nine Member States were more than two years in arrears at one time or another during the sixth, seventh (including the resumed session), eighth and ninth emergency special sessions and the eleventh and twelfth special sessions

of the General Assembly, two persistently. A few of them paid their outstanding arrears relatively shortly after the publication of their names in the Secretary-General's notification to the President at each session and maintained their right to vote. As mentioned above, at the sixth and seventh emergency special sessions, two Members in arrears requested that their right to vote be maintained, attributing their inability to pay to circumstances beyond their control.⁴ The Assembly permitted those Member States to participate in the voting during those sessions.”

“At the resumption of the thirty-third regular session of the General Assembly on 15 January 1979, seven Member States were in arrears within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter. However, at the suggestion of the President of the General Assembly, who stated that steps were being taken to expedite payment of the contributions, the Assembly allowed the Member States concerned to maintain their voting rights. Of the seven Member States in arrears, four made the necessary remittances, two of them shortly after the resumption of the session and the other two in May 1979. While South Africa remained in arrears and did not participate in the work of the General Assembly during the period under review, the remaining two Member States made the necessary payments to reduce their arrears after the opening of the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly in September 1979.”

“At the opening of the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly, on 18 September 1979, three Member States were reported to be in arrears. Two of them made the necessary payments to reduce their arrears immediately and maintained their right to vote, while one Member remained in arrears.⁵ On 4 January 1980, when the thirty-fourth General Assembly session reconvened after a short recess, the President informed the Assembly that 11 Member States were in arrears within the terms of Article 19, only two Members having made the necessary payments since the publication of the Secretary-General's letter.⁶ In view of the short notice, at the plenary meeting of that session scheduled on 4 January 1980 to elect the five non-permanent members of the Security Council, the Assembly authorized, as an exceptional measure, those Member States to participate in the voting until 11 January 1980.⁷ Except for South Africa, this authorization was further extended to all Member States that were in arrears at the opening of the Sixth Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly

on 10 January 1980.”

“The President of the General Assembly, on 15 January 1981, reported to the General Assembly at its resumed thirty-fifth session that eight Member States were in arrears under the terms of Article 19. He also indicated that, as a result, those Member States would not be authorized to participate in the vote.⁹ In the event, however, only South Africa and the Central African Republic were unable to vote, as four of the Members concerned made their payments the next day and two more prior to the reconvening of the session on 2 March 1981. At that plenary meeting, in response to the President’s announcement, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics expressed its reservation about the procedure of depriving States that were in arrears of their rights to vote. The Assembly proceeded to the election by secret ballot of judges to the International Court of Justice, after the President assured the USSR that its observation would be reflected in the records.¹⁰”

“At the 102nd plenary meeting on 3 March in 1981, the President of the General Assembly drew the attention of the Assembly to a letter from a Member State in which it requested that its right to vote be maintained, as the delay in the payment of its outstanding contributions was due to conditions beyond its control.” On the proposal of the President, the Assembly, in accordance with rule 160 of its rules of procedure, decided, without a vote, to refer the request of that Member State to the Committee on Contributions.¹² The Member State concerned did not participate in the voting on 6 March 1981 when the Assembly took action on 10 draft resolutions relating to the question of Namibia.”

“In view of the relatively small amount involved and the fact that several Member States also found themselves in a similarly difficult situation, the Committee on Contributions did not agree that the non-payment of arrears below the limit specified in Article 19 was due to conditions beyond the particular Member State’s control. The Committee stressed that, as a matter of principle, all Member States had the responsibility of paying their assessed contributions in order to continue enjoying the benefits of membership in the United Nations. 14 16. In a statement on 12 October 1981, during the Fifth Committee’s consideration of the item on the scale of assessments, the representative of the Member State informed the Committee that Article 19 of the Charter would not be applicable to it, as a portion of its arrears had been paid.“

“With the exception of South Africa, those Member States that were in arrears persistently during the thirty-sixth, thirty-seventh, thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth sessions of the General Assembly made the necessary payments, after some delays, and reduced their arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 and maintained their right to vote.”

- 1985-1988 https://legal.un.org/repertory/art19/english/rep_supp7_vol2_art19.pdf

“Each year, only South Africa remained in Article 19 arrears for the entire calendar year.”

- 1989-1994 https://legal.un.org/repertory/art19/english/rep_supp8_vol2_art19.pdf

“At the end of 1989, only South Africa remained in Article 19 arrears.⁶ At the end of 1990, three Member States, including South Africa, remained in Article 19 arrears.⁷ At the end of 1991, two Member States, including South Africa, remained in Article 19 arrears.⁸ At the end of 1992, 14 Member States, including South Africa, remained in Article 19 arrears.⁹ At the end of 1993, 6 Member States, including South Africa, remained in Article 19 arrears.¹⁰ At the end of 1994, 8 Member States were deemed as being in Article 19 arrears.¹¹ The Assembly noted, however, that it had not been notified in a timely manner that certain Member States had made sufficient payments to reduce their arrears below the amounts specified in Article 19.¹² The Assembly in 1994 also decided as an exceptional measure that South Africa’s accrued arrears were due to conditions beyond its control and, accordingly, that the question of the applicability of Article 19 related to the loss of voting rights in the General Assembly in this respect would not arise.¹³”

- 1995-1999 https://legal.un.org/repertory/art19/english/rep_supp9_vol2_art19.pdf

“During the period under review, 18 Member States requested the General Assembly for permission to vote,¹⁰ with 9 of them making such requests at least twice.¹¹ The requesting Member States attributed the failure to pay their assessed contributions to economic difficulties, political instability, natural disasters or a combination of these factors,¹² which were conditions beyond their

control.13”

- 2000-2009 https://legal.un.org/repertory/art19/english/rep_supp10_vol12_art19.pdf

“On the 30th of June 2000, 30 Member States of the United Nations had fell under these terms of Article 19 and had no vote in the General Assembly.² At the end of June 2009, as had been the case in 2005, only one Member State was in this situation,³ and, in 2006, 2007 and 2008, not a single Member State was deprived of its right to vote. 3. The number reached in 2000 -30 Member States with no vote in the General Assembly - was a historical record and the culmination of a trend dating from the beginning of the 1990s. There were eight Member States deprived of their vote in 1990, 12 in 1991, 16 in 1993, 21 in 1994, 18 in 1995 and 1996, 19 in 1997, 23 in 1998, and 24 in 1999.⁴ After the peak of 2000, the reduction was achieved rather rapidly in a span of five years: 9 Member States had no vote in 2001, 15 in 2002, 9 in 2003, 7 in 2004 and, as already noted, only one in 2005.”

“As for the second element of Article 19, that a Member State in arrears may be permitted to vote if the Assembly is satisfied that such failure to pay is due to conditions beyond the control of the Member, the number of countries concerned did not did not vary very much during the period under review. The Assembly granted seven exemptions in 2000, seven again in 2007 and 2008, and six in 2009. In the rest of the period, the number was four in 2001, eight in 2002, ten in 2003 and 2005, eleven in 2004, and nine in 2006.⁸ A total of 12 Member States benefited from such exemptions: one for every year of the ten-year period, one for nine years, two for eight years, two for seven years, one for six years, one for five years, two for four years, and two for a single year.⁹”

“In granting these exemptions from the no-vote sanction, the General Assembly had before it, as in the past, recommendations from the Committee on Contributions, but there was, during the decade under review, a marked change in the degree of conformity between decisions and recommendations. In 2000, the Assembly decided on seven permissions to vote, whereas the Committee on Contributions had recommended only four.¹⁰ In 2001 and 2002, the General Assembly decided to grant exemption to a Member State for which the Committee on Contributions had taken “no-action” because the request had, in both

years, been presented too late.¹¹ In 2003, the General Assembly granted exemption to a Member State that submitted its request directly to its President, thus by-passing the Committee on Contributions.¹² In 2004, the Assembly took the same decision with respect to two Member States that presented their demand orally in the Fifth Committee at the beginning of its session.¹³ In 2005, the Assembly granted exemption to two Member States for which the Committee on Contributions had taken “no-action” and, in both 2005 and 2006, the Assembly took the same decision for a Member State that had presented its request directly.¹⁴”

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