# Supplementary Materials

# Who Sets the Agenda? Diplomatic Capital and Small Power Influence in the United Nations

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# **1** Descriptive Statistics

#### 1.1 GA Agenda-Setting Procedures

The process of agenda setting follows a formal procedure laid out in the UN Charter and the General Assembly's Rules and Procedures, which delegates this responsibility to the General Committee. The membership of the General Committee consists of the President of the General Assembly, the 21 Vice Presidents, and the Chairmen of the six Main Committees. This always includes the Permanent 5 members of the Security Council (United States, United Kingdom, Russia, France, and China), and rotating representation from the other geographical blocs, each of which employs separate procedures for selecting their Vice Presidents—for example, the African bloc has a rotation scheme, while some blocs have internal elections (Vreeland & Dreher, 2014).

Every state has an equal right to submit new agenda proposals, which may be co-sponsored. The General Committee then considers all proposed agenda items and determines whether they will be included on the GA's agenda. Many agenda items are adopted by consensus, though votes can be requested and are decided by a simple majority rule (Alker, 1964; Kaufmann, 1980; Smith, 2006). Each year, these items are contained in the Preliminary List of Items, the Provisional Agenda, the Supplementary List of Items, and all of the General Committee reports. While most items are proposed by states, some are also submitted by 15 institutional proposers (President of the General Assembly, Secretary-General, the Trusteeship Council, etc).

While these institutional rules are specific to the UN, they also are similar to many other IOs (and in some cases even serve as a template). For example, in the EU, Coreper II similarly determines the agenda for the EU Council.

#### **1.2** Quantitative Measures



Figure A-1: Number of Proposals Decreasing Over Time

*Notes*: As the UN agenda stabilized and countries increasingly called to reduce the burden of the GA's schedule, the number of proposals each year declined (trend lines are linear and Loess fits). Larger and darker circles indicate a higher rate of proposal success, and smaller and lighter circles indicate a lower rate of proposal success. 2010 is excluded as an outlier.

	Proposer	Total Num.	Proposer	Proposals Weighted
		Proposals		by Membership Years
1	Russia/USSR	128	Russia/USSR	1.73
2	India	84	Yemen	1.72
3	Egypt	76	Ukraine	1.50
4	Iraq	68	Belarus	1.21
5	Cuba	65	India	1.17
6	Pakistan	63	Southern Yemen	1.04
7	Philippines	62	Egypt	1.03
8	USA	60	Iraq	0.92
9	Syria	56	Cuba	0.88
10	Costa Rica	54	Pakistan	0.88
11	Romania	52	Philippines	0.85
12	Nicaragua	51	Romania	0.81
13	Indonesia	50	USA	0.81
14	Sudan	50	Sudan	0.79
15	Yemen	50	Czechoslovakia	0.79
16	Guinea	47	Syria	0.79
17	Lebanon	45	Guinea	0.77
18	Libya	45	Senegal	0.76
19	Senegal	45	Algeria	0.74
20	Morocco	44	Costa Rica	0.73
21	Afghanistan	43	Indonesia	0.72
22	Iran	43	Mali	0.71
23	Algeria	42	Libya	0.70
24	Mali	42	Morocco	0.70
25	Saudi Arabia	42	Nicaragua	0.69

 Table A-1: Small Powers Well Represented Among Top Proposers

*Notes*: The total number of proposals by country is shown in the left column; the total number of proposals divided by the number of years of the country's UN membership (until 2018) is shown in the right column.

	Country	Strict Measure	Country	Lenient Measure
1	Turkmenistan	11.82	Monaco	18.00
2	Djibouti	11.24	Liechtenstein	16.30
3	Liechtenstein	8.13	Djibouti	14.98
4	Madagascar	7.43	Turkmenistan	13.96
5	Palestine	7.15	Palestine	12.46
6	Kuwait	7.11	Nicaragua	12.22
7	Southern Yemen	7.00	Antigua and Barbuda	12.14
8	Nauru	6.75	Madagascar	11.77
9	Angola	6.74	Dominica	11.53
10	Guyana	6.61	Azerbaijan	11.46
11	Samoa	5.98	Micronesia	11.10
12	Holy See	5.96	Kuwait	10.33
13	Botswana	5.91	Morocco	10.17
14	Micronesia	5.31	Samoa	10.12
15	Qatar	5.18	Guyana	9.87
16	Norway	5.05	Southern Yemen	9.78
17	Dominica	5.05	Saudi Arabia	9.69
18	Congo (PR)	4.92	Eritrea	9.62
19	Monaco	4.85	San Marino	9.57
20	Gabon	4.65	Liberia	9.42
21	Oman	4.49	Belize	9.39
22	Saint Kitts and Nevis	4.44	Nauru	9.35
23	Bahrain	4.39	Tanzania	9.10
24	Sao Tome and Principe	4.37	Congo (PR)	9.07
25	Tajikistan	4.36	Angola	9.05

Table A-2: Small Powers Have Some of the Longest Diplomatic Tenure

*Notes*: The strict measure is the sum of consecutive years served by the ambassador. The lenient measure is the sum of the consecutive and non-consecutive years served by the ambassador and the deputy in either position.

Var.	Min.	1st Qu.	Median	Mean	3rd Qu.	Max.	Pct. Missing
Polity <sup>a</sup>	-10	-7.00	2.00	0.98	8.00	10	0.08
IO Memberships <sup>b</sup>	2	35.00	50.00	51.24	66.00	126	0.00
Duration UN Membership <sup>c</sup>	0	14.00	28.00	30.34	45.00	74	0.00
Vol. Budget Contribution <sup>d</sup>	2	13.78	15.33	15.38	17.01	23	0.84
Embassies Hosted <sup>e</sup>	0	13.00	29.00	36.97	53.00	184	0.78
Alliances <sup>f</sup>	1	1.00	2.00	2.54	3.00	21	0.45
Defense Pacts <sup>g</sup>	1	1.00	1.00	1.78	2.00	11	0.45
GDP h	13196545	1985582686.50	9931134941.00	193927349208.62	59110874241.00	20600000000000	0.19
Population (Log) <sup>i</sup>	9	14.60	15.78	15.62	16.86	21	0.11
Military Exp. <sup>j</sup>	0	1.21	1.93	2.78	3.21	117	0.33
Military Exp. Log Dollars	-Inf	17.76	19.52	-Inf	21.41	27	0.30
Log Num. of UN Staff <sup>k</sup>	0	1.79	2.83	2.78	3.74	7	0.66
Share of UN Staff <sup>1</sup>	0	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	0	0.66
Amb. Gender <sup>m</sup>	0	1.00	1.00	0.89	1.00	1	0.08
Level Rep. <sup>n</sup>	0	1.00	1.00	1.38	2.00	2	0.60
Amb. Tenure (Strict) <sup>o</sup>	1	1.00	2.00	3.10	4.00	28	0.02
Amb. Tenure (Lenient) <sup>p</sup>	1	4.00	5.00	6.48	8.00	37	0.02

Table A-3: Independent Variable Summary Statistics

- a 1945-2018 (all years) (Center for Systemic Peace, 2018)
- b 1945-2012, interpolated for 2012-2018 (Pevehouse et al., 2020)
- c 1945-2012, interpolated for 2012-2018 (Pevehouse et al., 2020)
- d 2009-2018, manually collected from UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (2019). The agencies included are WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM, UNDP, WHO, UNRWA, FAO, UN, IAEA, UNODC, UNAIDS, ILO, UNFPA, IFAD, PAHO, UNEP, UN-HABITAT, UNWOMEN, WMO, ICAO, UNIDO, WTO, IARC, OPCW, UNITAR, ITC, UNCDF, UNESCO, IMO, CTBTO, WIPO, UNU, UNSSC, UNFCCC, ITU, UNITAID, ICC, UNWTO, UNRISD, DPKO, and UNOPS.
- e 1970-2010, interpolated between 3 and 5-year measurements (Rhamey et al., 2013)
- f 1945-2012 (Gibler, 2009)
- g 1945-2012 (Gibler, 2009)
- h 1960-2018 (World Bank, 2019)
- i 1960-2018 (World Bank, 2019)
- j 1960-2018 (World Bank, 2019)
- k 1997-2015 (Parizek & Stephen, 2021)
- l 1997-2015 (Parizek & Stephen, 2021)
- m 1945-2018 (all years), manually constructed with genderize
- n 1970-2017 (Baturo et al., 2017)
- o 1945-2018 (all years), manually collected
- p 1945-2018 (all years), manually collected



Figure A-2: Correlation of Independent Variables

Figure A-3: Treatment Distribution Across Units and Time







### 1.3 Interview Data

		GDP Tercile			
		1	2	3	
	Africa		7	6	13
Docion	Americas	2	3	4	9
negion	Asia	5	2	3	10
	Europe	11	6	2	19
		18	18	15	51

 Table A-4:
 Geographic Representation of Respondents

 Table A-5:
 Level of Representation of Respondents

Level	
Permanent Representative	17
Deputy Permanent Representative	14
Minister Counsellor / Counsellor	1
Counsellor	7
Secretary	11
Attache	1

40 38.1 Percent of Responses 30 28.6 20 10 9.5 9.5 7.1 3.6 3.6 Andessedures 0 depends Not ed Bothally State-level Unclear other ALC REALUTES

Figure A-5: Importance of Individuals and Structural Features

Do you think that structural or state-level features or ambassador-level features matter more in a state's success in the UN?



Figure A-6: Importance of Individuals and Structural Features, Disaggregated by State Size

Do you think that structural or state-level features or ambassador-level features matter more in a state's success in the UN?



Figure A-7: Variation of Influence

that you would say are more influential than others?



Do you have a sense of which PRs have been in NY for a long time? (left panel) Are PRs who have been in NY a long time more effective? (right panel)

# 2 Main Results

### 2.1 Predicting Diplomatic Capital



#### Table A-6: Predicting Diplomatic Capital

*Notes*: p<0.1; p<0.05; p<0.05; p<0.01. OLS model estimates, clustered (Country & Year) standard errors in parentheses. Missing data imputed using Amelia, averaged over 5 imputations. Coefficient estimates for size-based predictors (blue triangles) are averaged across all models.

### 2.2 Predicting Agenda Setting

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	
Experienced (3 Yrs.)	$0.059^{**}$ (0.025)											
Male Amb.	(01020)	$0.026^{***}$ (0.007)										
Polity2		()	-0.038 $(0.023)$									
IO Memberships			()	-0.054 (0.035)								
Years UN Member				( )	-0.010 (0.024)							
Vol. Budget Cont. (log)					( )	$0.331^{***}$ (0.096)						
Embassies Hosted						( )	0.028 (0.028)					
Alliances							( )	$0.133^{***}$ (0.017)				
Defense Pacts									$0.145^{***}$ (0.021)			
English Lang.										0.007 (0.041)		
Level Rep.											$\begin{array}{c} 0.121^{***} \\ (0.028) \end{array}$	
UN Staff (Log)												$0.130^{***}$ (0.036)
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Power Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	9,931	10,167	10,167	10,167	10,167	10,167	10,167	10,167	10,167	9,885	10,167	10,167
$\mathbb{R}^2$	0.212	0.211	0.211	0.212	0.210	0.219	0.210	0.229	0.229	0.206	0.212	0.215

### Table A-7: Predicting Agenda-setting Frequency

Notes: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01. OLS model estimates, clustered (Country & Year) standard errors in parentheses. Missing data imputed using Amelia, averaged over 5 imputations.

# 3 Robustness

#### 3.1 Main Robustness Results

Figure A-9: Robustness to Alternate Model Specifications: Tenure



*Notes*: Estimated coefficients from OLS models (except for the "NegBin" model, which shows coefficients from a negative binomial model) with 95% confidence intervals.

Figure A-10: Robustness to Alternate Measures of Small Powers: Tenure



Notes: Estimated coefficients from OLS models with 95% confidence intervals.



Figure A-11: Robustness to Alternate Model Specifications: Agenda-setting

Notes: Estimated coefficients from OLS models (except for the "NegBin" model, which shows coefficients from a negative binomial model) with 95% confidence intervals.

### 3.2 Alternate Model Specifications

	(1)
Male Amb.	-0.009
	(0.065)
Polity2	-0.479***
	(0.053)
IO Memberships	0.140
	(0.169)
Years UN Member	$0.481^{***}$
	(0.096)
Vol. Budget Cont. (log)	-1.23***
	(0.183)
Embassies Hosted	$0.771^{***}$
	(0.144)
Alliances	-0.506***
	(0.089)
Defense Pacts	0.866***
	(0.118)
English Lang.	-0.374**
	(0.162)
Level Rep.	-0.034
	(0.138)
UN Staff (Log)	-0.772***
	(0.131)
GDP (log)	-0.446***
	(0.063)
Population (log)	-0.520***
	(0.086)
Military Exp.	$0.332^{***}$
	(0.050)
Year FE	Yes
Observations	$9,\!654$
$\mathbb{R}^2$	0.106

 Table A-8: Predicting Tenure: Fully Saturated Model

Notes: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01. OLS model estimates, clustered (Country & Year) standard errors in parentheses. Missing data imputed using Amelia, averaged over 5 imputations.

	(1)
Experienced (3 Yrs.)	0.083***
-	(0.028)
Male Amb.	-0.002
	(0.006)
Polity2	$-0.064^{***}$
	(0.018)
IO Memberships	-0.229***
	(0.045)
Years UN Member	-0.026
	(0.022)
Vol. Budget Cont. (log)	$0.529^{***}$
	(0.116)
Embassies Hosted	$-0.047^{*}$
	(0.026)
Alliances	$0.077^{***}$
	(0.025)
Defense Pacts	$0.074^{**}$
	(0.031)
English Lang.	-0.052
	(0.038)
Level Rep.	$0.148^{***}$
	(0.028)
UN Staff (Log)	$0.337^{***}$
	(0.056)
GDP (log)	-0.069***
	(0.014)
Population (log)	-0.131***
	(0.028)
Military Exp.	-0.092***
	(0.017)
Year FE	Yes
Observations	$9,\!654$
R <sup>2</sup>	0.271

 Table A-9:
 Predicting Agenda Setting:
 Fully Saturated Model

Notes: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01. OLS model estimates, clustered (Country & Year) standard errors in parentheses. Missing data imputed using Amelia, averaged over 5 imputations.

	(1)
Tenure (Continuous)	0.022**
	(0.010)
$GDP \ (log)$	0.028***
	(0.009)
Population (log)	0.037***
	(0.014)
Military Exp.	-0.018
	(0.013)
Year FE	Yes
Observations	9,247
$\mathbb{R}^2$	0.223

Table A-10: Predicting Agenda Setting: Continuous IV

*Notes*: p < 0.1; p < 0.05; p < 0.05; p < 0.01. OLS model estimates, clustered (Country & Year) standard errors in parentheses. Missing data imputed using Amelia, averaged over 5 imputations. Observations of tenure above the 95th percentile are trimmed.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Experienced (3 Yrs.)	$0.169^{*}$	0.058**	0.058**	0.058**
	(0.098)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)
Small State Ind.	0.028			
	(0.103)			
Experienced (3 Yrs.) $\times$ Small State Ind.	-0.123			
	(0.102)			
Experienced (3 Yrs.) $\times$ GDP (log)		0.016		
		(0.024)		
Experienced (3 Yrs.) $\times$ Population (log)			0.015	
			(0.025)	
Experienced (3 Yrs.) $\times$ Military Exp.				-0.010
				(0.034)
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Power Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	9,931	9,931	9,931	9,931
$\mathbb{R}^2$	0.214	0.213	0.213	0.213

 Table A-11: Interacting Tenure with Smallness

Notes: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01. OLS model estimates, clustered (Country & Year) standard errors in parentheses. Missing data imputed using Amelia, averaged over 5 imputations. Small indicator shows countries not in the G20. Results in Model 1 are robust to three indicators of smallness (non-G20, FOSS, SSF). G20 results are shown; others available upon request.

### 3.3 Elections Results



Figure A-12: Electorally Induced Turnovers

*Notes*: Estimated coefficients from OLS models with 95% confidence intervals. Variable suffixes of 1 show results for the incumbent being replaced, and suffixes of 2 show results for the incumbent's party losing, both constructed from the NELDA dataset.





Notes: Estimated coefficients from OLS models with 95% confidence intervals.

	Var.	T-Test P val.	Ctrl. Mean	Treatment Mean
1	Polity	0.59	2.13	1.20
2	IO Memberships	0.16	59.87	51.14
3	Duration UN	0.02	41.40	30.27
4	Vol. Budget	0.47	9.64	11.15
5	Embassies	0.83	33.56	35.18
6	Alliances	0.95	2.42	2.44
7	Defense Pacts	0.39	1.48	1.63
8	GDP	0.06	43886549048.28	129021406765.13
9	Pop. (Log)	0.37	15.18	15.66
10	Military Exp.	0.48	3.57	2.83
11	UN Staff (Log)	0.30	2.77	2.37
12	Gender	0.00	1.00	0.89
13	Level Rep.	0.00	1.59	2.17

 Table A-12:
 Death Balance Table

#### 3.4 Death Analysis Robustness

# 4 Proposal Topics and State Preferences

#### 4.1 Large vs. Small Powers' Proposed Topics

Figure A-14 shows that the topics of proposals put forward by small and large powers substantively differ.<sup>1</sup> Under the CAP coding, small powers are more likely to present proposals related to issues of UN governance, international affairs, territorial disputes, environment, and culture (among others), while major powers are more likely to make proposals about conflict and international law (among other topics). Under the UN coding, small powers are more likely to make proposals about economic and social issues, while large powers are more likely to submit items related to political and security matters.

#### 4.2 Large vs. Small Powers' Foreign Policy Priorities

These differences in states' proposing behavior reflects differences in their foreign policy priorities. I identify state preferences based on their expressed policy priorities. I utilize the UN General Debate Corpus, which comprises 7,897 speeches delivered in the General Debate from 1970-2017 (Baturo et al., 2017). Because General Debate speeches are not linked to particular resolutions or votes, they are more informative about a country's underlying priorities and positions. States take the General Debate seriously: each year, nearly all countries who are can do so choose to send high-level representatives to deliver their speeches in the UNGA plenary session. States send high-level representatives to the session, with 44.3% represented by heads of state or government, 49.3% by vice-presidents, deputy prime ministers, and foreign ministers, and only 6.4% by country

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>For proposals submitted by coalitions, I code the submission as being made by small powers if at least one of the proposers is a member of FOSS. The results are similar in an alternate coding where proposals are categorized as being presented by small powers if at least half of the coalition members are members of FOSS.



Figure A-14: Topics of Agenda Proposals by State Size

*Notes*: Total number of proposals according to the two major qualitative coding schemes, the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) and UN internal codes. Bars represent the proportion of overall proposals by small or large powers.

representatives to the UN (Baturo et al., 2017, 3). Speeches are limited by institutional norms to fifteen minutes. Speech-time, then, is a limited resource—countries are simply unable to address every issue in a given speech because of time considerations. Allocating the scarce resource of speech-time to discuss a given issue is a signal that a country considers it to be of great importance. Each year, speeches are specially created to address current events and themes emphasized by the Secretary-General, and they are submitted well in advance of the General Debate to be translated into the UN's official languages and circulated to the press and other delegates. Thus, speech content is determined ahead of time rather than in response to earlier speakers' statements.

I pre-process the speech data following the procedures in Arias (2022) and estimate a Structural Topic Model (STM) with speech segments as the unit of analysis, which are analogous to paragraphs (Hearst, 1997; Roberts et al., 2019). I allow topic proportions and topic prevalence to vary over time, and estimate a model with 50 topics to match the level of specificity in the resolutions model. Every topic k is represented as a unique vector of word probabilities  $\beta$ , which are used to calculate segment-level topic proportions. Each segment can ultimately be represented as a mixture of different topics summing to 1.

In general, large and medium states are generally less likely to address economic and social matters than small states (Figures A-17 and A-16). Large and medium states are more likely to speak on just 1/7 social topics in the full dataset and 1/8 topics in the post-1990 dataset, while they are less likely to speak on 2/7 topics in the full dataset and 5/8 topics in the post-1990 datset. On economic topics, we observe roughly the same pattern: large and medium states are more likely to speak on 2/6 economic topics in the full dataset and 1/6 topics in the post-1990 dataset, while they are less likely to speak on 2/6 topics in the full dataset and 4/6 topics in the post-1990 datset. This is true when examining both the full corpus and in speeches post-1990, as well as looking at only large states.<sup>2</sup>

On security topics (Figure A-15), the patterns are more mixed, but this may simply be because of the prevalence of security topics in the discourse. Large and medium states are more likely to speak on 5/16 security topics in the full dataset, and 6/16 topics in the post-1990 dataset, while they are less likely to speak on the same numbers of topics.

### 5 Research Ethics

This research draws on expert interviews with diplomats, which were executed in compliance with standards and obligations described in the APSA Principles and Guidance for Human Subject Research. The interview protocol went through an IRB review and approval process at the author's university in the U.S. to ensure that the activities were in line with regulations regarding the protection of human subjects. I did not engage with vulnerable populations, and the questions did not cover sensitive topics. The subjects of the interviews were public figures. I did not gather identifying information unless explicitly given permission by the respondent. All interview data are stored in a password-protected folder accessible only to the author. Respondents were asked whether they were comfortable with the author note-taking and recording during the interview, and if they were not, no notes or recordings were taken.

Before conducting the interviews, respondents were provided documentation of the risks and details of the interview to obtain their consent to participate. All respon-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Figures showing only large states are omitted for space considerations.



Figure A-15: Expected Topic Proportions: Security

Note: Difference in expected topic proportions for large and medium states versus small states. Full corpus shown in left panel, subset of speeches post-1990 shown in right panel. Uncertainty calculated from the STM by composition with 95% confidence intervals.

dents were also informed beforehand that they always had the option to opt-out during any point in the interview (none chose to do so). No compensation was provided to respondents. I assessed that the potential contributions of this research project were substantial while risks were minimal, and further that there were no conflicts of interest. Before, during, and after interviews, I ensured that participants understood that no identifying information was collected or would be revealed without the explicit consent of respondents. No deception was used in the study. Interviews to reduce any possible harm and not raise sensitive subjects.



Figure A-16: Expected Topic Proportions: Social

Note: Difference in expected topic proportions for large and medium states versus small states. Full corpus shown in left panel, subset of speeches post-1990 shown in right panel. Uncertainty calculated from the STM by composition with 95% confidence intervals.



Figure A-17: Expected Topic Proportions: Economic

Note: Difference in expected topic proportions for large and medium states versus small states. Full corpus shown in left panel, subset of speeches post-1990 shown in right panel. Uncertainty calculated from the STM by composition with 95% confidence intervals.

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