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ABSTRACT

United Nations Security Council (UNSC) membership comes with privileges. Existing research shows that the world's most powerful countries funnel financial favors to governments elected to the UNSC, arguably to influence their votes on matters of international importance. This study investigates whether these governments, whose election elevates them to prominent positions of power, also receive security benefits. We argue that elected UNSC members win the attention and protection of the world's super powers, and, as a result, are less likely to be attacked. But we further argue that the General Assembly and the world's super powers prefer pacific countries on the UNSC. In support of our theory, we find empirically that temporary membership on the UNSC is associated with lower rates of being targeted and lower rates of initiating conflict. We conclude that UNSC membership has existential benefits and is associated with a reduced likelihood of militarized disputes.

La afiliación al Consejo de Seguridad de las Naciones Unidas (CSNU) conlleva algunos privilegios. La investigación existente demuestra que los países más poderosos del mundo canalizan favores financieros a los gobiernos de los países que han sido elegidos para el CSNU, posiblemente con el fin de influenciar sus votos en asuntos de importancia internacional. Este estudio investiga si estos gobiernos, cuya elección los eleva a posiciones prominentes de poder, reciben también beneficios en materia de seguridad. Argumentamos que los miembros electos del CSNU reciben una mayor atención y protección por parte de las superpotencias mundiales y, como resultado, tienen menos probabilidades de ser atacados. Pero, además, argumentamos que la Asamblea General y las superpotencias mundiales prefieren la presencia de países pacíficos en el CSNU. Para apoyar nuestra teoría, constatamos de forma empírica que la afiliación temporal al CSNU se asocia con unas menores probabilidades de estar en el punto de mira y con unos menores índices en lo que se refiere a iniciar conflictos. Concluimos que la afiliación al CSNU conlleva beneficios existenciales y que está asociada con una menor probabilidad de participar en disputas militarizadas.

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L'appartenance au Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies (CSNU) n'est pas sans avantages. Des travaux de recherche ont déjà montré que les pays les plus puissants du monde accordent des faveurs financières aux gouvernements élus au CSNU, supposément pour influencer leur vote sur des thématiques internationales importantes. Cette étude tente de déterminer si ces gouvernements, promus à de puissantes positions grâce à leur élection, reçoivent aussi des avantages en matière de sécurité. Nous affirmons que les membres élus du CSNU obtiennent l'attention et la protection des superpuissances mondiales et, par conséquent, ont moins de risques de faire l'objet d'une attaque. Toutefois, nous soutenons aussi que l'Assemblée générale et les superpuissances mondiales préfèrent voir des pays pacifistes au CSNU. Pour vérifier notre théorie, nous observons empiriquement qu'une appartenance temporaire au CSNU s'accompagne de taux plus faibles d'attaques subies et d'initiations de conflits. Nous concluons que l'appartenance au CSNU revêt des avantages existentiels et qu'elle est associée à une probabilité plus faible de conflits militarisés

And if by chance an honest man like yourself should make enemies, then they would become my enemies.

And then they would fear you.

I want reliable people, people that aren't going to be carried away. I mean, we're not murderers, in spite of what this undertaker says.

Vito Corleone, *The Godfather*

Introduction

Security Council membership has its privileges. Governments elected to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) vote on important matters in international affairs, such as the imposition of sanctions and the legal use of armed force in international relations (Allen and Yuen 2022). Not surprisingly, then, scholars have found that powerful countries are willing to pay for influence over these votes: when serving their two-year terms on the UNSC, elected members receive a plethora of financial perks.[1] In this study, we explore consequences of a more existential nature: does UNSC membership influence the occurrence of militarized disputes?

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[1]Scholars have found that temporary UNSC members see increases in assistance from the United States (Kuziemko and Werker 2006), Japan (Vreeland and Dreher 2014), Germany (Dreher, Nunnenkamp, and Schmaljohann 2015), and China (Stone, Wang, and Yu 2021), as well as increases in multilateral assistance from organizations where these countries exert influence (Vreeland and Dreher 2014). See also Reynolds and Winters (2016).

We theorize that both selection onto the UNSC and membership itself reduce the likelihood of international conflict. We contend, more specifically, that elected UNSC members are less likely to be targeted and also less likely to initiate disputes. We focus on two key mechanisms, illustrated by the epigraphs above: (1) powerful friends and (2) restraint.

Concerning the first mechanism, we hypothesize that when a country rises in political importance, they are privileged with enhanced security by the world's most powerful countries. The logic is straightforward: in case an important UNSC issue arises, powerful countries are willing to do favors for UNSC members, including the provision of diplomatic and potentially military support. Potential rivals anticipate this, and, as our first epigraph suggests, governments fear adversaries with powerful friends. UNSC members are thus less likely to be targeted militarily.

Concerning the second mechanism, we contend that powerful countries also impose restraint on their protégés.[2] UNSC votes are valuable because the institution serves to legitimize forceful actions in international affairs. The ability of the UNSC to validate such measures could be undermined if the elected members themselves routinely undertook aggressive foreign policies themselves. As the second epigraph suggests, powerful countries do not want to be "carried away" by their protégés. Yet, the promise of diplomatic support might inadvertently inventivize bellicism.

We suggest that an important component of the restraint comes through financial incentives. The plethora of financial perks promised to elected UNSC members can be reduced or even taken away for misbehavior. Indeed, scholars have found that the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is less likely to elect countries engaged in warfare (Dreher et al. 2014; Vreeland and Dreher 2014, chapter 4). Other research shows that when UNSC members do not vote inline with powerful countries, they do not receive financial favors (Dreher et al. 2022). Powerful countries can similarly use the threat of withholding financial rewards to induce restraint. Governments, especially of low-income countries, respond to these incentives with pacific foreign policies when running for election and serving on the UNSC.

The strategic setting is complex. Because UNSC membership affects both the relative diplomatic strength of a country and the cost of dispute involvement, membership influences the likelihood of a dispute occurring and its potential outcome. As an additional complication, in anticipation of such power transitions, governments might preemptively shift their dispute involvement ahead of UNSC elections (Kim and Morrow 1992; Powell

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[2]See Leeds (2003), Fang, Johnson, and Leeds (2014), and McManus and Yarhi-Milo (2017).

1999; Chadefaux 2011). To untangle and identify the competing mechanisms at play, we introduce a game theoretic model.

We model an infinitely repeated two-player "disagreement game," where nation A is the potential initiator of conflict, and nation B is the potential target. The model predicts that both UNSC membership and the prospect of UNSC election reduce conflict. Specifically, governments are unlikely to initiate conflict when they are up for election to the UNSC and while serving on the UNSC. At the same time, countries are unlikely to be the targets of a dispute while serving on the UNSC. However, an adversary may seek to target them *prior* to an election. In response, nations (and poor nations in particular) likely make concessions to avoid such preemptive targeting—so that they may avoid conflict and increase their chance of winning UNSC election and the financial rewards that membership brings.

We test our hypotheses in both monadic and dyadic settings using Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) data from 1951 to 2014. We find a reduced likelihood of being targeted in a dispute while serving on the UNSC. We also find that governments are unlikely to initiate conflict when they are either up for election or serving on the UNSC. Moreover, the degree to which the prospect of UNSC election appears to induce pacifism is moderated by the extent to which nations value the financial rewards of UNSC membership. The association between prospective UNSC membership and pacific behavior is stronger for poor countries than for rich ones.

Our theoretical model assumes that conflict initiation reduces the chances of winning election. Selection bias is thus an obvious concern in our estimation of the relationship between UNSC membership and dispute involvement. While we cannot completely rule out selection bias, we control for the estimated propensity to win UNSC election in our empirical models of MID involvement. We find that likely election to the UNSC reduces the likelihood of MIDs; furthermore, the extent of the effect is larger for poor nations than rich nations. We also find that—while controlling for this selection probability—UNSC membership further reduces the chances of MIDs. So, while we do not consider our empirical approach to yield precise causal estimates, the associations that we estimate hold when controlling for propensity to win election—as well as country and dyadic fixed effects.

The paper proceeds by putting our argument in the context of previous work. We then present our formal theoretic model before turning to a series of empirical tests. We conclude with a discussion of implications of our work for future research and policy decisions.

Background

Trading Finance for Favors

The UNSC is the world's preeminent organization for the maintenance of peace and security. Research suggests that its resolutions—especially those with unanimous or near-unanimous support—increase both international and domestic support for foreign policies (Voeten 2001, 2005; Chapman and Reiter 2004; Fang 2008; Hurd 2008; Thompson 2010). Power at the institution is, of course, concentrated in the votes of the five veto-wielding permanent members (the P5: the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, and France (O'Neill 1996). However, resolutions require at least nine affirmative votes to pass, and so some support from elected members is required.

Hurd (2008) highlights the legitimizing role that a voice for the rest of the world plays. Along these lines, Voeten (2005) argues that there is a premium on receiving unanimous or near-unanimous votes supporting resolutions. Scholars taking a rationalist approach emphasize the informational role that the institution plays (Fang 2008). Chapman and Reiter (2004) have shown, in particular, that US public support for military action increases when associated with a UNSC resolution. Thompson (2010), more generally, argues that UNSC resolutions increase international support by sending signals to leaders and their publics. So, both normative and rationalist sides of the literature suggest that every vote matters. And research (referenced above) suggests that powerful countries are willing to provide financial favors return for a vote for (or against) a resolution.

Enhanced Diplomatic Strength

For all of the emphasis on the financial benefits associated with UNSC membership, scholars have not explored whether members of this security-oriented organization enjoy any security benefits. Diplomatic support provides an additional means through which powerful states can "buy" UNSC votes. The support of powerful friends gives UNSC members additional international clout (at least for the duration their term). Challenging such a country would draw the attention of powerful countries, including the United States. And thus other countries should be afraid to take action against UNSC members.

Restraint

At the same time that powerful governments seek favors from elected UNSC members, they also need to be wary of encouraging conflict. Providing protection from adversaries is one thing, but being drawn into

disputes that elected UNSC members initiate would be something else (Fang, Johnson, and Leeds 2014). Powerful countries do not want to be carried away by their protégés.

Previous research shows that countries in conflict are less likely to win election (Dreher et al. 2014, 52–56, 75–76). We further contend that, if nations were to initiate disputes after election to the UNSC, powerful countries would impose costs on them. For instance, the financial prizes that come with serving on the UNSC could be cut off. The shadow of such costs generates a pacifying effect that counters the temptations created by the military-support effect to initiate disputes while serving on the UNSC.

The pacifying effect of imposing costs on UNSC members who initiate disputes has a further benefit. Knowing that a UNSC member will face costs for initiating disputes reassures potential adversaries. These adversaries need not fear becoming targets if their potential enemies win election to the UNSC. This reassurance reduces the incentive of adversaries to preemptively initiate disputes in the run up to an election.

In sum, we propose that elected UNSC members enjoy a "support" effect of having powerful friends but also face a "pacifying" effect from the restraint imposed on them. The prospect of diplomatic backing makes them unattractive targets. At the same time, powerful countries do not want to be drawn into costly disputes, so they select pacific candidates for the UNSC and further impose costs for bellicose adventurism. The strategic interaction of adversaries in this setting is complex. In the next section, we offer a rigorous analysis in the context of a game-theoretic model.

Theory

Before presenting the model, it is useful to anticipate the structure of the MID data that we subsequently use to test our hypotheses because our theoretical setup adheres to this structure. We use a directed-dyadic version of the dataset where nation A is always the "initiator" of potential disputes and nation B is always the potential "target." Accordingly, our theoretical model includes a target-state that is satisfied with the status quo (nation B) and addresses conditions under which a dissatisfied state (nation A) might initiate a dispute.

Below, we present a baseline model along these lines. We then introduce the prospect of election to the UNSC for nations A and B, respectively. In the main text, we provide only the structure of the game, the intuitions, and the key hypotheses that we subsequently subject to empirical tests. The Supplementary Appendix presents the details and proofs.

The Basic Disagreement Game

We start with the premise that a disagreement exists between nations A and B over an issue with a value of 1. Neighboring states, such as the politically-relevant dyads that we focus on, are rarely in complete harmony with respect to each other's policies, although these disagreements rarely escalate into disputes. We assume some level of disagreement exists between neighbors. We model the disagreement in an infinitely repeated setting. The status quo favors B, so B receives the reward 1 in each period $\tau = 0, 1, 2, \ldots$ until the disagreement game ends because either B diplomatically concedes to A or the disagreement escalates to an active dispute.

If a dispute occurs, then the disagreement is settled in A's favor with probability p and settled in B's favor with probability $1 - p$, and each side pays a cost, K_A and K_B, respectively. Each player's cost is randomly drawn at the start of each period. Player i knows her cost, K_i, but only knows the distribution from which the other nation's cost if drawn, F_j.

Once settled, the game is over (at least for the foreseeable future) and the side that prevailed enjoys the reward in every future period. Both players have common discount factor δ. Hence the net present value of prevailing is $\frac{1}{1-\delta}$.

Figure 1 presents the disagreement game for period τ. We denote the net present value of playing the game starting at time τ as V_A^τ for A and V_B^τ for B. The final node shown in the figure indicates repeating the disagreement game starting in period $\tau + 1$.

We characterize the results in terms of two probabilities, α and β. The probability α refers to the likelihood that A initiates a dispute, while β is the probability that B diplomatically concedes. If B concedes diplomatically,
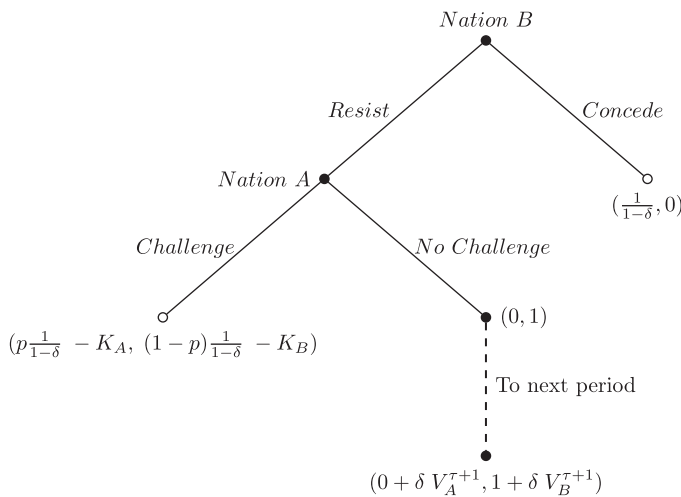

Figure 1. Disagreement subgame (at period τ).

then there is no observable militarized dispute—a key feature for our subsequent empirical analysis. In contrast, if A challenges, A is coded in the dispute data as the initiator, and B as the target.

We focus on an intuitive exposition of the results. All else equal, it is attractive to initiate a dispute when the cost is low. Hence $\alpha = Pr(K_A \leq \widehat{k_A}) = F_A(\widehat{k_A})$, where $\widehat{k_A}$ is the cost that makes A indifferent between a dispute today and having no dispute and proceeding to the next period:

$$\underbrace{p\frac{1}{1-\delta} - \widehat{k_A}}_{\text{Value of dispute}} = \underbrace{0 + \delta\, V_A^{\tau+1}}_{\text{Value of waiting}} \tag{1}$$

B can preempt dispute onset by conceding, and this is an attractive option when it faces a high cost should a dispute arise: $\beta = Pr(K_B > \widehat{k_B}) = 1 - F_B(\widehat{k_B})$, where

$$\underbrace{0}_{\text{Concession}} = \underbrace{\alpha\left((1-p)\frac{1}{1-\delta} - \widehat{k_B}\right)}_{\text{dispute}} + \underbrace{(1-\alpha)(1 + \delta\, V_B^{\tau+1})}_{\text{disagreement continues}} \tag{2}$$

Introducing UNSC Membership

We now introduce the prospect of UNSC membership so that we can evaluate how it influences our two key probabilities of interest: (1) the probability that A initiates a dispute, α, and, (2) the probability that B diplomatically concedes, β. We assume that there is an election to the UNSC between periods $\tau = 0$ and $\tau = 1$ and that one of the potential disputants is a likely candidate. We consider two scenarios, one where A is the likely candidate, and one where B is likely. Our formal results show how the probabilities α and β change when (1) there is a high chance that A or B will be elected in the near future and (2) A or B is actually a member of the UNSC. To incorporate UNSC election and membership into the baseline disagreement game we introduce four assumptions:

1. Governments and their adversaries anticipate when election to the UNSC is likely.
2. UNSC membership bestows financial advantage: If a nation is a member of the UNSC it receives a financial payoff worth ψ during period $\tau = 1$.
3. UNSC membership bestows diplomatic and possibly military support: $p^A > p > p^B$, where these variables represent the probability that nation A prevails in a dispute if, respectively, A is on the UNSC (p^A), neither nation is on UNSC (p), or B is on UNSC (p^B).

4. The UN membership dislikes UNSC members to be involved in crises:

    (a) Dispute involvement reduces probability of election to UNSC from q to q'.

    (b) Diplomatic cost, ρ, is imposed on UNSC members who initiate disputes.

Our first assumption is that governments have a sense of when it is their "turn" to be elected. About 80 percent of elections are uncontested (Vreeland and Dreher 2014, 125–126). Regions nominate exactly one candidate country per seat in these cases, and the required two-thirds majority vote in the UNGA serves as a rubber stamp.[3] Countries typically arrange several years in advance to run in these uncontested "clean-slate" elections, and a norm of turn-taking has developed. In about 20 percent of cases, additional candidates are nominated (often self-nominated). In these cases, it is difficult to predict who will win election. Still, quantitative analysis reveals that a turn-taking norm has a highly significant statistical association with election in all five UN regions (Dreher et al. 2014, 69–74). So, while some uncertainty exists, the assumption that governments can anticipate when they are likely to be up for election to UNSC has a solid empirical foundation.

Assumption 2—that elected UNSC members receive financial favors—is also well documented in the literature (cited above).

Assumption 3 introduces diplomatic favors. Should a dispute occur, powerful countries are more likely to support the position of elected UNSC members than would have been the case had they not been on the UNSC. This willingness to favor UNSC members might even extend to military support should the dispute escalate to conflict. The increase in diplomatic support and the increased chance of military support means that A is more likely to prevail should a dispute arise while serving on the UNSC: A wins the dispute with elevated probability $p^A > p$. In contrast, should a dispute arise when B is in the UNSC, then A's chance of success drops to $p^B < p$. We parameterize the level of help that UNSC members receive with λ.

Finally, assumption 4 posits that the UNGA—and specifically militarily powerful countries—do not like the elected UNSC members to become involved in disputes. We reflect this dislike in two ways. First, countries involved in disputes are less likely to win election. We assume that nation A is elected to the UNSC with probability q, but the probability of election drops to q' should A be in a dispute in period $\tau = 0$ (we treat the case

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[3]The five regions are Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, the Latin America and Caribbean Group (GRULAC), and the Western European and Others Group (WEOG). Regional nominations carry influence but are not binding—only a two-thirds majority vote of the UNGA can elect these members.

when B is a likely candidate analogously). This assumption is also well-grounded empirically (Dreher et al. 2014, 52–56, 75–76). Second, in much the same way as Leeds (2003) and Fang, Johnson, and Leeds (2014) argue that alliances restrict adventurism by junior partners, we assume that diplomatic pressure is imposed on UNSC members to discourage them from initiating a crisis. Given the central role of the UNSC in adjudicating international crises, powerful nations can be expected to pay attention to the foreign policy of nations elected to the UNSC and to apply pressure to limit the possibility of dispute. We model this effect as a cost ρ imposed on UNSC members if they initiate a dispute.

The impact of UNSC elections and membership

Our setup enables us to analyze the effects of the prospect of wining UNSC election as well as UNSC membership itself on dispute involvement. Above, we characterize the probability of dispute-initiation by A as α and concession by B as β. We now index these terms by period $\tau = 0$ or 1, and by the nation up for election to the UNSC (A or B). For the situation where A is in the UNSC, the analysis characterizes the equilibrium probabilities that A initiates (α^{A1}), and that B concedes (β^{A1}) in period $\tau = 1$. The analysis then proceeds, via backwards induction, to evaluate the dispute behavior of A and B at $\tau = 0$, prior to the UNSC elections (α^{A0} and β^{A0}). We use analogous notation for the situation where B is the likely UNSC candidate (α^{B1}, β^{B1}, α^{B0}, and β^{B0}).

In the Supplementary Appendix, we present a proposition for the basic disagreement game absent the possibility of UNSC membership and then a series of lemmas (1–9), which formally characterize how UNSC membership affects behavior within the disagreement game. Tables 1 and 2 (presented below) summarize the basic results.

The impact of UNSC membership depends on whether the diplomatic-support ("powerful friends") effect or the pacifying ("restraint") effect is stronger. The former factor refers to the extent that A's probability of prevailing in a crisis increases as a result of UNSC membership. We let λ reflect the extent that is greater than the baseline probability p. The

Table 1. Nation A as a potential candidate for UNSC election.

	Powerful friend effect dominates $p^A - p > (1 - \delta)\rho$	Restraint effect dominates $\lambda = 0$, $\rho > 0$
Prior to A's UNSC election		
Pr(B Concedes), β^{A0}	↓	? if $\psi = 0$; ↓ if ψ large
Pr(A Initiates), α^{A0}	↓	↑ if $\psi = 0$; ↓ if ψ large
Nation A in UNSC		
Pr(B Concedes), β^{A1}	↑	↓
Pr(A Initiates), α^{A1}	↑	↓

Table 2. Nation B as a potential candidate for UNSC election.

Prior to B's UNSC election	
Pr(B Concedes), β^{B0}	? if ψ small; ↑ if ψ large
Pr(A Initiates), α^{B0}	↑
Nation B in UNSC	
Pr(B Concedes), β^{B1}	↓
Pr(A Initiates), α^{B1}	↓

pacifying effect refers to the additional cost imposed on UNSC members, ρ, of initiating a dispute while serving on the UNSC.

The Potential Initiator (A) and UNSC Membership

We begin with the situation where nation A is a member of the UNSC and examine, alternatively, the diplomatic-support effect of a powerful friend and the pacifying restraint effect. Consider, first, the powerful friend mechanism: Should A initiate a dispute, it can anticipate diplomatic support from powerful nations that have an interest in its votes on the UNSC.

With an increased chance of prevailing, A is more likely to initiate a dispute. As a result, B has an increased likelihood of preemptively giving A what it wants. As we summarize in the lower left section of Table 1, when the powerful friend effect dominates the restraint effect, A's membership on the UNSC increases the probability of dispute initiation ($\alpha^{A1} > \alpha$) and increases the likelihood that B preemptively concedes ($\beta^{A1} > \beta$).

Now, stepping back to period $\tau = 0$, in anticipation of UNSC election, A is likely to be docile for two reasons. First, the powerful friend mechanism induces a power transition effect (Kim and Morrow 1992). Nation A will be more likely to prevail after election, and so bides its time. Second, if elected, A can expect to receive financial rewards, ψ, and initiating a dispute would jeopardize receiving these rewards. Hence, relative to the baseline, A is less likely to initiate a dispute when UNSC election is likely, and, as a result, B is less likely to concede diplomatically: $\alpha^{A0} < \alpha$ and $\beta^{A0} < \beta$. As we explain in detail below, these effects are magnified when nation A is relatively poor because it cares more about rewards ψ.

Consider next a setting where the restraint mechanism dominates: ρ is large and λ is small. The increased cost of starting a dispute, ρ, makes A less likely to initiate a dispute when on the UNSC: $\alpha^{A1} < \alpha$. Knowing it is less likely to be challenged, B has a reduced incentive to preemptively concede: $\beta^{A1} < \beta$ (although this effect is slightly offset by A being stronger, should A actually challenge).

So, the enhanced diplomatic support and restraint mechanisms generate competing effects. In order to distinguish between the different mechanisms, we investigate the impact of income. If the restraint mechanism is

at work, then its effects in the pre-election period should be stronger for poor nations than for rich ones.

When the restraint effect is strong (large ρ), then A and B face competing incentives in the pre-election period. Dispute involvement reduces the likelihood of UNSC election and hence access to financial rewards. Especially when nation A is poor and values the financial rewards of UNSC membership, it is unlikely to initiate a dispute in periods when it is up for election to the UNSC. Otherwise, it may lose election and forgo the financial rewards. For rich nations, missing out on increased aid and loans is relatively unimportant. So the prospect of UNSC election does little to discourage rich nations from dispute involvement. Indeed, rich nations might even preemptively start disputes; once on the UNSC, they will be discouraged from starting disputes (through cost ρ).

Indeed, when we turn to our empirical tests, the relative value of financial incentives plays an important role. If ψ is small, then, when the probability of election is high, A might have an enhanced likelihood of starting a dispute. In contrast, if A really values the possible financial rewards (large ψ), as might be the case if nation A is poor, then A is likely to be especially pacific in periods when it has a high likelihood of being elected. Poor nations are thus particularly unlikely to initiate disputes when up for election to the UNSC. The top right of Table 1 summarizes these settings.

Given the number of factors at play, it is useful to review the key effects: If the powerful friend effect is strong, A is likely to initiate a dispute when in the UNSC and likely to postpone any dispute initiation when it has a high probability of election. But if the restraint effect is large, then A is unlikely to initiate a dispute while on the UNSC. The relative importance of increased diplomatic support (λ) versus restraint (ρ) determines whether A is more or less likely to initiate a dispute while in the UNSC, and, hence, also whether B is likely to preemptively concede. The financial incentives associated with UNSC membership reduce the likelihood that A initiates a dispute when it has a high likelihood of election. This effect is expected to be stronger for poor nations—those that highly value financial rewards.

The Potential Target (B) and UNSC Membership

We turn next to the impact of UNSC membership for nation B. When nation B is on the UNSC, it is less likely to be targeted; B has powerful friends that are willing to support it. Since B makes a poor target, A is unlikely to initiate, and B is unlikely to preemptively concede. The cost ρ for starting a dispute while on the UNSC is less important when considering B because it is already happy with the status quo. In short, when B is on the UNSC, it is less likely to preemptively concede and less likely to be targeted by A: $\beta^{B1} < \beta$ and $\alpha^{B1} < \alpha$.

Next, we consider pre-election behavior. B becomes diplomatically more powerful once elected to the UNSC and this creates an incentive for nation A to initiate disputes prior to B being elected, $\alpha^{B0} > \alpha$. B's behavior, when it is likely to be elected, depends on the relative value of financial rewards. If B is rich and the financial rewards of UNSC membership are relatively unimportant (small ψ), then B's behavior reflects a trade-off between the increased likelihood of being targeted pre-election and a lower likelihood of being challenged once in the UNSC. Hence, the prospect that B might grow in power has an ambiguous effect before elections.

However, when B is poor and highly values the financial rewards (large ψ), the prospect of UNSC membership causes it to preemptively concede disagreements. Should B fail to concede diplomatically and A initiates, then B's probability of being elected to the UNSC is reduced (q to q'), and B might miss out on the financial rewards of the UNSC. To avoid such a loss, B can make concessions. Poor nations are more likely to make such concessions and are less likely to be targeted in disputes than are rich nations. Unfortunately, extant data do not allow us to directly study preemptive diplomatic concessions.

We do observe the onset of disputes when B does not preemptively concede and when A chooses to initiate: $Pr(Dispute) = (1 - \beta)\alpha$. The theory predicts that factors that increase α also tend to increase β, so, unfortunately, it is often difficult to determine whether the product $(1 - \beta)\alpha$ increases or decreases. However, we conjecture that under most circumstances, the impact of UNSC membership on A's behavior tends to be the dominant factor because both dispute initiation and concessions are relatively rare.[4]

The theory provides many hypotheses—some that current data sources do not allow us to test. Yet, in our empirical work below, we can test all of the following:

Hypotheses via the "powerful friends" mechanism:

1. Serving on the UNSC reduces the likelihood that a nation is the target in a militarized dispute.
2. Serving on the UNSC increases the likelihood that a nation initiates a militarized dispute.

Hypotheses via the "restraint" mechanism:

3. Dispute involvement reduces the likelihood of election to UNSC.
4. Serving on the UNSC reduces the likelihood that a nation initiates a militarized dispute.

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[4]For instance, the net effect increasing diplomatic support on the likelihood of a dispute is $\frac{Pr(Dispute)}{d\lambda} = (1 - \beta^{A1})\frac{d\alpha^{A1}}{d\lambda} - \alpha^{A1}\frac{d\beta^{A1}}{d\lambda}$, (3)

Since, disputes are rare $(1 - \beta^{A1}) > \alpha^{A1}$, the aggregate effect of λ is generally determined by the positive $\frac{d\alpha^{A1}}{d\lambda}$ term.

Hypotheses via financial incentives

5. Nations that are likely to be elected to the UNSC are pacific.
6. The reduction in belligerence in the pre-UNSC election period is greater for poor nations than for rich nations.

Data and Empirical Tests

Descriptive data (presented below) reveal a pattern where international disputes are notably lower for countries nearing election to the UNSC and serving on the UNSC. Of course, we need to account for potential confounders and address possible selection bias, but it is encouraging for our theory to see consistent evidence with only a cursory examination of the data.

Looking at specific examples, we see many cases of countries where countries discontinue dispute involvement (whether they were on the initiating or targeting side) prior to election to the UNSC, and remain pacific throughout their UNSC term.

Consider Argentina and Chile. The pair has a long history of conflict (Garrett 1985). However, eruptions of longstanding disputes tend to be postponed or avoided altogether when either is up for election or serving on the UNSC. In January 1958, for example, Chile initiated a dispute by building a lighthouse on Snipe, an uninhabitable islet near the southern tip of South America (Struthers 1985, 63–64).[5] After Argentina destroyed the lighthouse (Struthers 1985, 64), Argentina backed down and postponed the dispute (Garrett 1985, 89–90); they were up for UNSC election in October. Argentina then served on the UNSC (1959–1960), followed by Chile (1961–1962). During these years, there were no MIDs.

Chile initiated a separate MID—called the Laguna del Desierto incident—in October 1965 by sending national police to defend disputed territory (Mares 2000, 4–5).[6] The conflict escated when Argentine forces killed one of the Chilean officers and arrested other officers (Parish 2006, 165).[7] Days later, Argentina freed them and they returned to Chile.[8] Argentina was elected to the UNSC weeks later, and Chile initiated no disputes against Argentina during the first year of the term.

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[5]This incident is part of century-long conflict known as the Beagle Channel Dispute. See Struthers (1985); francisco Rojas (1985); Garrett (1985).

[6]See https://romeroyah.wordpress.com/2008/04/06/la-invasion-argentina-de-laguna-del-desierto-en-1965/.

[7]See also (Thies 2001, 416) and https://romeroyah.wordpress.com/2008/04/06/la-invasion-argentina-de-laguna-del-desierto-en-1965/. Also see https://www.lanacion.com.ar/opinion/carta-de-lectores/cartas-de-lectores-nid650038/.

[8]See https://romeroyah.wordpress.com/2008/04/06/la-invasion-argentina-de-laguna-del-desierto-en-1965/. See also (165–167 Parish 2006; Thies 2001, 423).

Table 3. Election to UNSC and prior dispute involvement.

	(1) Election	(2) Election	(3) Election	(4) Election	(5) Election	(6) Election
Normalized time since UNSC	−0.123	−0.129	−0.122	2.178***	2.159***	2.182***
	(0.112)	(0.113)	(0.112)	(0.251)	(0.250)	(0.251)
Turn due	0.630**	0.639***	0.628**	0.0974	0.118	0.0923
	(0.192)	(0.192)	(0.192)	(0.255)	(0.255)	(0.255)
Seats/valid candidates	10.80***	10.90***	10.86***	44.13***	44.17***	44.27***
	(2.875)	(2.899)	(2.866)	(12.65)	(12.68)	(12.65)
Dispute $_t$	0.0426			−0.0213		
	(0.155)			(0.170)		
Dispute $_{t-1}$	−0.0769			−0.138		
	(0.158)			(0.172)		
Initiator		−0.230			−0.304	
		(0.209)			(0.222)	
Initiator $_{t-1}$		0.0981			−0.0110	
		(0.199)			(0.217)	
Target		0.357*			0.361$^+$	
		(0.179)			(0.196)	
Target $_{t-1}$		−0.489*			−0.487*	
		(0.211)			(0.228)	
Civil War $_t$	−0.242	−0.233	−0.243	−0.216	−0.190	−0.230
	(0.308)	(0.307)	(0.307)	(0.333)	(0.332)	(0.332)
Civil War $_{t-1}$	−0.412	−0.407	−0.418	−0.468	−0.476	−0.481
	(0.312)	(0.312)	(0.311)	(0.337)	(0.338)	(0.336)
Polity	0.0751	0.0722	0.0783	0.0396	0.0284	0.0557
	(0.207)	(0.207)	(0.206)	(0.320)	(0.320)	(0.319)
log(Population)	0.438***	0.446***	0.436***	−1.441***	−1.432***	−1.451***
	(0.0520)	(0.0522)	(0.0504)	(0.282)	(0.282)	(0.281)
log(GDPpc)	0.204**	0.207**	0.203**	0.741***	0.733***	0.742***
	(0.0692)	(0.0690)	(0.0687)	(0.201)	(0.201)	(0.200)
Observations	5974	5974	5974	4779	4779	4779
Country FE	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y

Standard errors in parentheses.
$^+p < 0.10$; $^*p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{***}p < 0.001$

Now, Chile did target Argentina in August 1967 while Argentina still enjoyed the protection of powerful friends as a member of the UNSC, but the targeting was mild: a Chilean patrol boat encountered an Argentine sailboat fishing in Chilean waters, and the Argentine vessel was forced to leave the area (Struthers 1985, 66). Days later, the ship returned under the protection of Argentine patrol boats (Struthers 1985, 66). In November, Argentina fired on a Chilean patrol boat (the Quidora) and Chile called on the United Kingdom to arbitrate. But the United Kingdom demured, "claiming that now was not the proper time to arbitrate" (Struthers 1985, 68). Conflicts between Chile and Argentina continued to erupt, but when Argentina served on the UNSC again in 1971–1972, there were none. A series of disputes in the late 1970s brought the countries close to war (Garrett 1985, 85). This was a period when neither country served on the UNSC.

Other interesting examples span all continents and are scattered throughout the history of the UNSC. With space considerations in mind, we point to the following as worthy of future research: Spain in the late 1970s and

Table 4. Count model of MID and the likelihood of election to UNSC (Pr(Elected to UNSC) based on model 3 of table 3).

	(1) MID	(2) Initiator	(3) Target	(4) MID	(5) Initiator	(6) Target
UNSC	−0.675***	−0.962***	−0.527***	−0.423***	−0.605***	−0.314*
	(0.0975)	(0.136)	(0.119)	(0.105)	(0.147)	(0.130)
Pr(Elected UNSC $_{t+1}$)	−3.632***	−4.813***	−2.882***	−2.116**	−3.593***	−1.625$^+$
	(0.618)	(0.814)	(0.765)	(0.738)	(1.028)	(0.896)
Pr(Elected UNSC)	−4.854***	−5.047***	−4.646***	−3.041***	−2.831*	−3.194**
	(0.711)	(0.933)	(0.900)	(0.855)	(1.224)	(1.064)
Power	0.0851***	0.0429	0.139***	0.0634	0.205*	0.0446
	(0.0233)	(0.0304)	(0.0273)	(0.0824)	(0.104)	(0.0952)
Polity	−0.695***	−1.009***	−0.533***	−0.299**	−0.474**	−0.192
	(0.0662)	(0.0901)	(0.0847)	(0.111)	(0.148)	(0.140)
log(Population)	0.466***	0.644***	0.422***	−0.331*	−0.320	−0.408*
	(0.0244)	(0.0334)	(0.0305)	(0.145)	(0.224)	(0.186)
log(GDPpc)	0.179***	0.189***	0.105***	−0.305***	−0.168$^+$	−0.508***
	(0.0247)	(0.0343)	(0.0311)	(0.0718)	(0.0990)	(0.0910)
P5 Ally	0.0724	0.190**	0.0391	−0.0535	−0.0183	−0.181$^+$
	(0.0462)	(0.0619)	(0.0587)	(0.0809)	(0.0989)	(0.104)
Observations	6988	6988	6988	6905	5987	6537
Country FE	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y

Standard errors in parentheses
$^+ p < 0.10$; $^* p < 0.05$; $^{**} p < 0.01$; $^{***} p < 0.001$

early 1980s; Uganda in the late 1970s and again in the 2000s; Angola in the 2000s; Philippines in the 2000s; and Jordan in the 2010s.

Turning to systematic analysis of the data (Alastair 2023), we examine dispute involvement between 1951 and 2014 at the monadic and dyadic levels using MID data (Jones, Bremer, and Singer 1996; Palmer et al. 2021; Maoz et al. 2021).[9] These data code when nation A initiates a MID against nation B. At the monadic level, we examine the association between UNSC membership and dispute initiation (taking the role of nation A) as well as whether a nation is targeted (taking the role of nation B). We also consider directed-dyad pairs of nations and examine the association between UNSC membership and the likelihood that nation A initiates a dispute against nation B.

The MID dataset is complicated because of multilateral events. The monadic level analyses use nation-year observations and code the number of MID involvements and whether the nation's MID involvement is on the side of the initiator or target (labeled, "MID," "Initiator," and "Target," respectively). For the dyadic analyses, the unit of analysis is the directed dyad-year. Specifically, each observation is based on a pair of nations, A and B, for each year from 1951 to 2014. The generic observation within these directed-dyad data is AB_t, which refers to nation A and nation B in year t. If a MID occurs where nation A is on the initiator's side (in any role, as an original initiator, or as a joiner) and nation B is on the target's

[9]Specifically we use Dyadic MID Data 4.01 and MIDIP 5.0 downloaded from https://correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/MIDs on 2/21/2021.

side (in any role), then we code the observation as Dispute = 1 (and 0 otherwise). We also code a variable "Originator" equal to 1 if A and B are involved in a MID as the original initiator-target nations (for coding details, see Palmer et al. 2021).[10]

In our sample of directed-dyad years between 1951 and 2014, there is a maximum of 2,470,510 observations, with 3,314 observations where Dispute = 1. For much of the analysis, however, we focus on "politically-relevant" dyads, defined as dyads that share a border or are separated by less than 25 miles of water (Stinnett et al. 2002). Robustness tests show that our results hold for different contiguity criteria and all possible directed dyads (see Table G.4).

UNSC membership data come from Vreeland and Dreher (2014). We measure a nation's "Power" using the COW composite power indices (Singer, Bremer, and Stuckey 1972). The dyadic analyses include measures of Force Ratio $= \frac{Power_A}{Power_A + Power_B}$ and its quadratic term to control for power asymmetries. Regime type is measured using Polity (Democracy-Autocracy), re-scaled between 0 and 1. In dyadic analyses, we also include the product Polity A * Polity B to account for the effect of joint democracy (Russett 1994). Following Gibler (2009), we code whether nations have an alliance and whether either is allied with a P5 member. We also control for GDP/capita and population (Coppedge et al. 2021).

Descriptive Data and Preliminary Results

Figure 2 illustrates the central empirical finding. For the set of politically-relevant dyads, the graphs show the percentage of dyads involved in MIDs as a function of UNSC involvement (Table G.1 shows the data in tabular form). The upper panel shows dispute involvement on side A, the initiator's side. The dashed line shows involvement as the original initiator of the dispute (not as a joiner). The lower panel shows the analogous dispute involvement for side B, the target. The horizontal axis shows a nation's UNSC involvement: The first and last points show the baseline case of no UNSC involvement. The points labeled Election-2 and Election-1 correspond to two years and one year before UNSC election. The point labeled Election corresponds to UNSC election year. UNSC1 and UNSC2 are the first and second years on the council, and postUNSC1 and postUNSC2 are the two years following a term.

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[10]In coding Dispute, we treat each MID as a separate observation when there are multiple disputes within a year (with a single dyad-year observation when there is a single MID or no MID). Restricting the analysis to a single dyad-year does not materially alter the results. In coding Originator, we consider a single observation for each directed dyad-year.

(a) Side A: Dispute Initiators
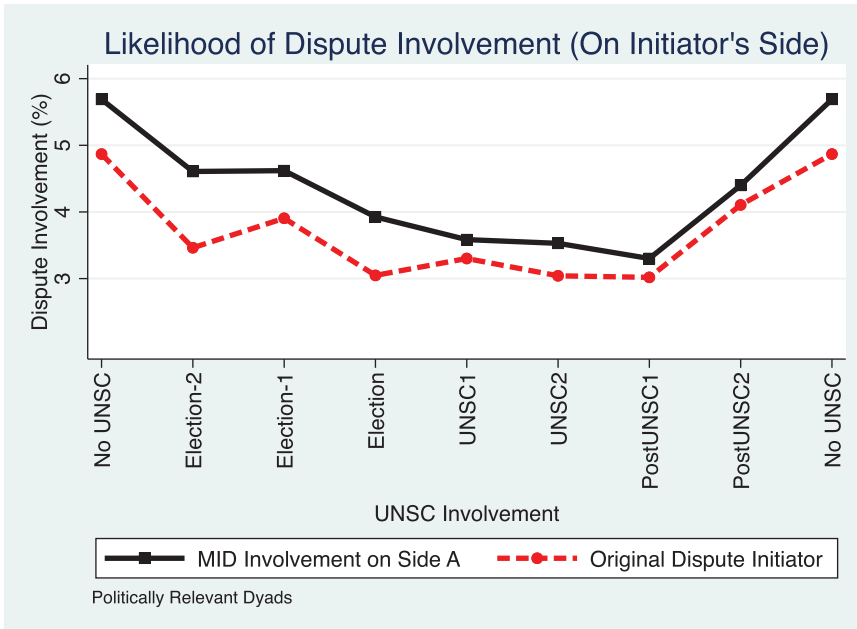
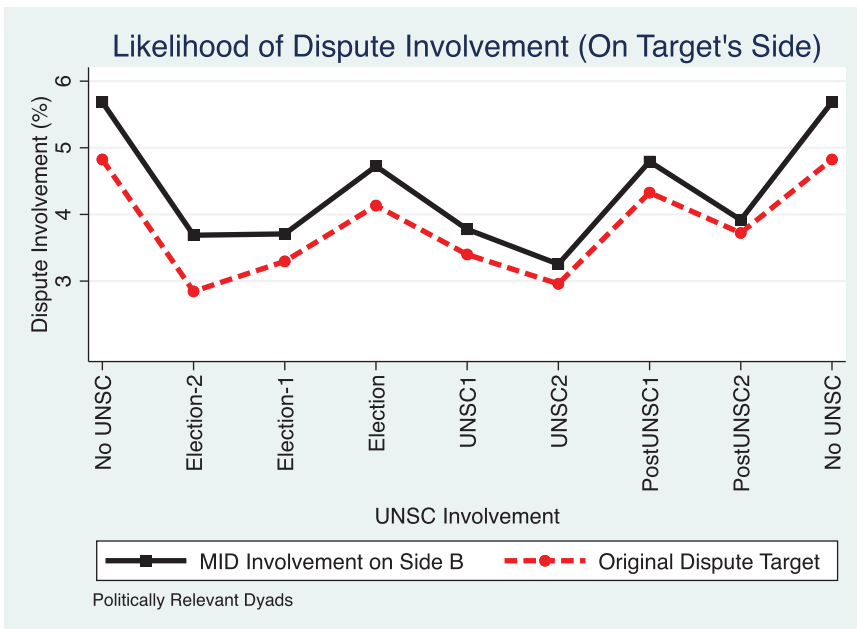

(b) Side B: Dispute Target

Figure 2. UNSC involvement and the occurrence of militarized disputes for political relevant directed dyads (nations with common border or separated by less than 25 miles of water). (a) Side A: dispute initiators. (b) Side B: dispute target.

In the upper panel, nations have nearly a 6% baseline chance of being on the initiator side of a dispute. In the years preceding its term on the UNSC, the prevalence of dispute initiation declines, and during its time on the UNSC the likelihood of dispute is around 3.5%. Two years after serving, however, the likelihood of involvement climbs back to approach the baseline level again. Consistent with our theory, the pattern suggests both a selection effect and an inherent UNSC effect.

Turning to targets, the lower panel shows a slightly more complex pattern. The baseline rate declines from 6% to just below 4% in the two years before election before rising slightly during the actual election year. During its term on the UNSC, a nation is less likely to be targeted (3–4%). After its term is over, a nation's likelihood of being targeted rises up towards the baseline level of nearly 6%. The patterns in Figure 2 support our basic theoretical predictions. While on UNSC, powerful friends make a nation an unattractive target. The relatively low rate of dispute involvement prior to election suggest nations try to avoid conflict so as not to harm their electoral prospects. However, the slight elevation in risk in the election year is indicative of preemptive disputes by A before B has powerful friends.

These descriptive patterns support our key hypotheses, but we need to address potential selection bias and confounding variables as we proceed with our analysis.

Selection onto the UNSC

Previous studies of UNSC membership identify a number of key factors associated with UNSC election (Bueno De Mesquita and Smith 2010; Dreher et al. 2014; Vreeland and Dreher 2014). This research has found that richer and more populous countries are more likely to win UNSC election. Important for our study, Dreher et al. (2014, 75–76) further find that countries involved in international or civil conflict are less likely to win election.

Previous work also finds evidence for a turn-taking norm. Dreher et al. (2014) use a variable measuring how many years a country has been "waiting" to win election, normalized by the number of other eligible countries in the region. In the absence of an actual official list of candidates (which does not exist, according to contacts at the United Nations), this factor is the appropriate measure for us to consider.

Table 3 presents estimates of the associations between the above factors and the likelihood of election to the UNSC. We analyze our monadic dataset of (a maximum of) 6,011 country-year observations using a simple logit

model (columns 1–3) and conditional logit model (columns 4–6) to address country fixed effects.[11]

Consider first the influence of conflict, the key variable of interest for our study. In contrast to previous studies, we disaggregate civil and international conflict, and we further disaggregate international disputes by initiators and targets. We also consider both the year before election $(t - 1)$ and the year of election.

We find that initiating international disputes is not associated with UNSC election, but being targeted is associated. Interestingly, the direction of the relationship flips across $t - 1$ and t. Countries targeted in the year before elections are less likely to be selected, but countries targeted during the election year are more likely to be selected. We take the $t - 1$ finding as evidence consistent with our preemptive strike argument. An adversary can reduce the chances that a country wins UNSC election as that country's turn approaches. The UNGA does not wish to elect a country embroiled in a dispute. However, preemptively striking during the election year, by which time most candidates have already declared their candidacy, actually increases that country's likelihood of winning election—perhaps because such preemptive strikes are too transparent to be effective. As for civil conflict, we find no statistically significant association.

The next set of key variables for our analysis include *Normalized Time Since UNSC*, *Turn Due*, and *Seats/Valid Candidates*. *Normalized Time Since UNSC* measures the number of years a country has been eligible for UNSC election divided by the number of other eligible regional candidates. This variable captures how long a nation has "waited" to serve, weighted by the number of opportunities to serve (seats) and the number of others also waiting. *Turn Due* is a dichotomous measure coded 1 if *Normalized Time Since UNSC* is equal to or greater than 0.9, indicating that the country's "turn" is due, or nearly due, (and 0 otherwise). *Seats/Valid Candidates* is the number of seats a country is eligible for, divided by the number of other eligible candidates.[12]

In the pooled logit models, we find a strong positive association between *Turn due* and UNSC election, while we find the same for *Normalized Time Since UNSC* in the conditional logit models. *Seats/Valid Candidates* is an important control because seats are not available in all years for all regions, and it has the expected positive relationship with UNSC election. A particular nation might well be the presumptive nominee for the next Eastern European region seat, for example, but will have zero probability of being

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[11]For a nonstandard model that closely reflects the UNSC election process, see Dreher et al. (2014).
[12]Asia and the GRULAC have two seats; one is elected each year. The WEOG has two seats, both elected during even-numbered years. The single seat for Eastern Europe is elected during odd-numbered years. Africa has three seats, with candidates elected in even-numbered years, and candidates for the other two elected in odd-numbered years.

elected in an even year because the UNGA elects Eastern European countries only in odd years.

This analysis tests our hypotheses about UNSC election and also helps us to address selection bias as we proceed below. We use the estimates in model 3 of Table 3 (which excludes dispute involvement) to generate the predicted probability of UNSC election in the current year t or the following year $t + 1$. In analyses of the impact of the likelihood of UNSC election on dispute involvement, we use a two-year window of Pr(Elected UNSC) and Pr(Elected UNSC$_{t+1}$).

MIDs: Analysis of Monadic Data

Table 4 presents a series of Poisson count models that estimate the association between UNSC membership and militarized disputes, controlling for election probability, at a monadic level.[13] Columns 1 and 4 present results when the dependent variable is the number of MID involvements in each year. Columns 2 and 5 present results when the dependent variable is the number of MID initiations where the nation was the original initiator of a dispute. Columns 3 and 6 present results with the dependent variable is the number of dispute involvements where the nation was the original target. The specifications in columns 4–6 include country fixed effects. All models include controls for time trends (year, year^2, and year^3), Power, Polity (normalized 0–1), population, GDP/capita, and alliance with any P5 member.

The coefficient estimates for UNSC membership are negative throughout the models and significant at the 0.05 level (or stronger) throughout. The results show that nations are less likely to be targeted while on the UNSC, which provides support for the powerful friends mechanism. Interestingly the P5 Ally variable, which codes for whether the nation has an alliance with a P5 member, also supports this conclusion. The presence of a P5 ally indicates that a nation has a powerful friend in its corner on a long-term basis, rather than simply for the two years of the UNSC term. The significant positive coefficient in model 2 suggests that being a P5 ally increases the initiation of crises, while the negative P5 Ally coefficient in model 6 suggests an allied nation is less likely to be targeted. The estimates in the other models are insignificant.

The coefficient estimates for UNSC membership for the initiation specifications (models 2 and 5) show that nations are less likely to initiate disputes while on the UNSC. This result suggests that the restraint

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[13]While negative binomial regressions yield similar results, results suggest that modeling over-dispersion is unnecessary. The estimate of the dispersion parameter in the equivalent negative binomial specification of model 1 is $\alpha = 0.95$, which is statistical indistinguishable from 1. We also obtain similar results from logit specifications.

Table 5. Count model of MID involvement and the likelihood of election to UNSC interacted with wealth (Pr(Elected to UNSC) based on model 3 of Table 3).

	(1) MID	(2) Initiator	(3) Target	(4) MID	(5) Initiator	(6) Target
UNSC	−0.766***	−1.071***	−0.676***	−0.471***	−0.705***	−0.405**
	(0.101)	(0.141)	(0.125)	(0.109)	(0.155)	(0.135)
Pr(Elected UNSC $_{t+1}$)	−13.55**	−5.041	−12.66*	−14.50*	−14.33$^+$	−10.55
	(5.260)	(6.385)	(6.385)	(5.948)	(8.178)	(7.303)
Pr(Elected UNSC $_{t+1}$)*log(GDPpc)	1.089*	0.0661	1.087	1.361*	1.257	0.994
	(0.551)	(0.740)	(0.670)	(0.629)	(0.885)	(0.772)
Pr(Elected UNSC)	−27.96***	−28.83***	−37.27***	−21.71***	−31.83***	−28.93***
	(5.693)	(7.350)	(6.998)	(6.519)	(8.966)	(7.980)
Pr(Elected UNSC)*log(GDPpc)	2.437***	2.487***	3.428***	1.999**	3.121***	2.712***
	(0.579)	(0.752)	(0.710)	(0.665)	(0.927)	(0.813)
Power	0.0899***	0.0494	0.146***	0.0275	0.171	0.000377
	(0.0235)	(0.0306)	(0.0276)	(0.0836)	(0.105)	(0.0968)
Polity	−0.691***	−1.004***	−0.520***	−0.270*	−0.439**	−0.161
	(0.0666)	(0.0906)	(0.0855)	(0.111)	(0.148)	(0.140)
log(Population)	0.499***	0.673***	0.468***	−0.210	−0.166	−0.235
	(0.0253)	(0.0345)	(0.0316)	(0.148)	(0.228)	(0.192)
log(GDPpc)	0.0523	0.0915$^+$	−0.0578	−0.411***	−0.316**	−0.614***
	(0.0352)	(0.0496)	(0.0436)	(0.0767)	(0.108)	(0.0959)
P5 Ally	0.0477	0.175**	0.00502	−0.0807	−0.0506	−0.208*
	(0.0467)	(0.0625)	(0.0596)	(0.0812)	(0.0993)	(0.104)
Observations	6988	6988	6988	6905	5987	6537
Country FE	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y

Standard errors in parentheses.
$^+p < 0.10$; $^*p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{***}p < 0.001$

mechanism dominates the powerful friends mechanism with respect to a UNSC member's decision to initiate a dispute. The combined effect—of the "powerful friends" effect reducing targeting and the "restraint" mechanism limiting initiation—reduces aggregate dispute involvement (models 1 and 4).

The prospect of election to the UNSC (*Pr*[Elected UNSC] and *Pr*[Elected UNSC$_{t+1}$]) also reduces the likelihood of dispute involvement. The models include variables indicating the probability of election to the UNSC in the current and following year (derived from model 3 of Table 3). We include the probability of election to the UNSC over two years because differences in the number of seats available to particular regions mean that nations can experience radically different probabilities of UNSC election between successive years.[14] Nations up for election to the UNSC are less likely to be involved in disputes. Perhaps not surprisingly, the reduction in dispute involvement is stronger for initiation than targeting, as nations have more direct control over the decision to start a dispute.

Note that these variables can be thought of in the Heckman (1979) selection framework. The Heckman model addresses selection bias by controlling for the likelihood that a nation is in the sample—in our context, winning UNSC election. Two-step Heckman models use the inverse Mills

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[14]If we include an indicator for the two years following UNSC membership, this post-UNSC variable is generally insignificant; its inclusion does not substantively alter the estimates for other variables.
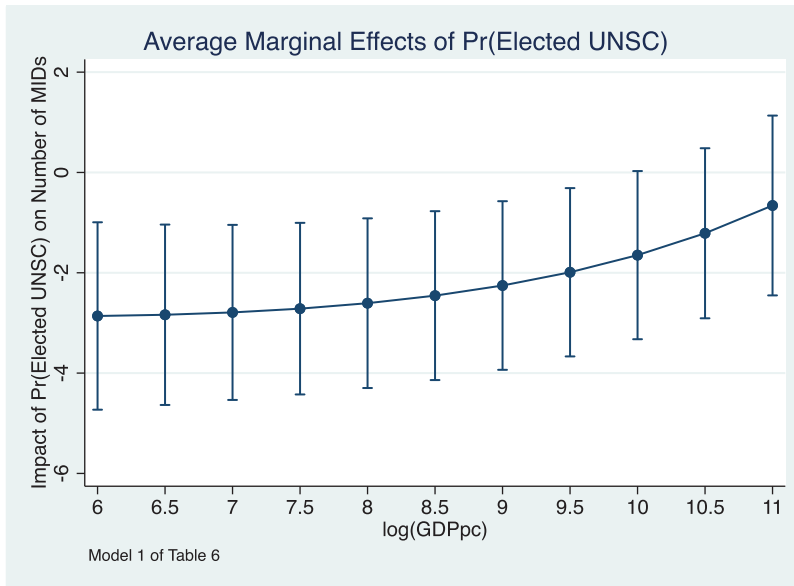
Figure 3. Impact of probability of election to UNSC on number of militarized dispute involvements at difference levels of wealth (based on model 1 of Table 5).

ratio (IMR) of the estimate of likelihood of being in the sample. We instead use election probability with good reason. For years when a region has no available seat, the probability of election for that region's countries is zero, and the IMR is undefined. Where the IMR is defined, it is correlated with probability of UNSC election at $\rho > 0.99$. Moreover, the probability measure has a straightforward substantive interpretation.

Table G.2, in the Supplementary Appendix, examines the robustness of these results using different estimates of probability of UNSC election. We re-estimate the probability of election on a region-by-region basis, and we also use estimates from Dreher et al. (2014). We find broadly similar patterns.

The results in Table 4 suggest that standing for UNSC election induces nations to avoid disputes. The financial incentives mechanism predicts that nations that highly value the monetary rewards of UNSC membership are likely to be particularly pacific. Testing this argument in Table 5, we interact the predicted probabilities of UNSC election with log(GDP/capita). Consistent with the financial incentives mechanism, the pacifying effect of likely election to UNSC is diminished by income. To put this in substantive terms, we compare a poor and a rich nation (10th and 90th percentile) at a low and high probability of election to the UNSC ($p = 0$ and $p = .15$) while holding other variables are their means. When the probability of election is low the probability of a single MID is 0.24 and 0.26 for the poor and rich nation respectively. When the probability of election is high, the

comparable probabilities of a single MID are 0.04 and 0.17. For both rich and poor nations, the prospect of UNSC election reduces the likelihood of dispute involvement, but the reduction is substantially larger for poor nations. Figure 3 provides visualization of this result by graphing the coefficient estimates for the variable *Pr*(Elected UNSC) at different levels of income.

To further explore this idea, we consider poor autocracies. Compared to democrats, autocratic leaders are known to use unearned income for their personal benefit. In the Supplementary Appendix, Table G.3 examines the impact of being jointly (1) non-democratic (Polity less than 0.75 on the normalized 0 to 1 scale) and (2) below the median GDP/capita. Those analyses show that poor non-democracies are more likely to be pacific when they are likely to be elected to UNSC compared with either rich or democratic nations. Governments that extract the most benefit from financial rewards are especially likely to avoid disputes when they are likely candidates.

The results of the analysis of the monadic data support our theoretical predictions concerning UNSC membership and elections. Specifically, they suggest that, with respect to potential initiators in UNSC, the pacifying effect is stronger than the support effect. Elected UNSC members are also less likely to be targeted. Nations likely to win UNSC election are also less likely to be involved in disputes; poor nations are particularly likely to avoid disputes when they are likely UNSC candidates.

MIDs: Analysis of Directed-Dyadic Data

We now assess the theoretical results with dyadic data. At this level of analysis, we can include control variables for both sides of a directed dyad. Table 6 presents the main results. In columns 1 and 2, we code the dependent variable 1 if the AB directed dyad is involved in a MID where A is on the initiator's side and B is on the target's side (and zero otherwise). In columns 3 and 4, we code the dependent variable 1 only if nation A is the original initiator and B is the original target (and zero otherwise).

Regarding conflict initiation, we estimate that UNSC membership has a robustly negative association (see negative coefficients for *UNSC A*). The relationship is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, or stronger, throughout the models. We take this as evidence of the restraint mechanism.

We also estimate a negative relationship between dispute initiation and the likelihood of UNSC election: *Pr(Elected UNSC A)* and *Pr(Elected UNSC A_{t+1})*. As above, the estimated probability of UNSC election comes from model 3 of Table 3. The relationship is statistically significant at the 0.05 level or stronger throughout. We take this as evidence that countries do

Table 6. Occurrence of disputes, UNSC membership and the likelihood of election.

	(1) Dispute	(2) Dispute	(3) Originator	(4) Originator
UNSC A	−1.240***	−0.879***	−1.105***	−0.812***
	(0.296)	(0.226)	(0.208)	(0.242)
UNSC B	−0.674**	−0.492*	−0.516**	−0.421$^+$
	(0.240)	(0.213)	(0.196)	(0.227)
Pr(Elected UNSC A$_{t+1}$)	−6.574***	−5.648**	−6.684***	−5.664**
	(1.678)	(1.953)	(1.487)	(2.184)
Pr(Elected UNSC A)	−8.380***	−7.014**	−8.795***	−8.927**
	(2.062)	(2.470)	(1.779)	(2.811)
Pr(Elected UNSC B$_{t+1}$)	−4.120*	−3.743*	−3.409*	−3.266
	(1.902)	(1.873)	(1.600)	(2.056)
Pr(Elected UNSC B)	−4.005	−3.736$^+$	−4.436*	−5.330*
	(2.464)	(2.173)	(1.847)	(2.453)
Force Ratio	3.049*	2.569	2.566***	1.140
	(1.296)	(2.422)	(0.743)	(2.632)
Force Ratio^2	−1.464	1.678	−1.218*	2.013
	(0.987)	(2.139)	(0.603)	(2.320)
Polity A	0.295	−0.462	0.444*	−0.553
	(0.382)	(0.321)	(0.219)	(0.353)
Polity B	0.135	−0.741*	0.479*	−0.584$^+$
	(0.389)	(0.313)	(0.223)	(0.333)
Polity A * Polity B	−1.350*	0.0291	−1.706***	0.188
	(0.645)	(0.471)	(0.362)	(0.511)
log(Population) A	0.310$^+$	−0.814$^+$	0.303***	−0.257
	(0.167)	(0.458)	(0.0860)	(0.525)
log(Population) B	0.476**	0.565	0.388***	0.553
	(0.153)	(0.430)	(0.0872)	(0.491)
log(GDPpc) A	0.0466	−0.269$^+$	0.0980	−0.157
	(0.160)	(0.142)	(0.0696)	(0.158)
log(GDPpc) B	0.00909	−0.787***	−0.0775	−0.762***
	(0.141)	(0.141)	(0.0690)	(0.160)
P5 Ally A	0.511$^+$	−0.387	0.870***	−0.0415
	(0.272)	(0.250)	(0.177)	(0.279)
P5 Ally B	−0.0392	−0.0715	−0.218	−0.0521
	(0.281)	(0.272)	(0.170)	(0.315)
Alliance	−0.100	−0.114	−0.234$^+$	−0.236
	(0.192)	(0.197)	(0.123)	(0.222)
Observations	21,541	9303	21,490	8344
Dyads		204		184
Dyad FE	N	Y	N	Y

Standard errors in parentheses
$^+p < 0.10$; $^*p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{***}p < 0.001$

not want to lose out on the financial incentives of UNSC membership and so they avoid initiating conflict.

Turning to targets, again we estimate a negative association throughout our models (see the negative coefficients for *UNSC B*). The relationship holds throughout the models at the 0.10 level of confidence, or stronger. We take this as evidence of the powerful friends mechanism: if by chance an elected UNSC member should make enemies, then they would become the enemies of powerful countries. And thus adversaries fear targeting UNSC members.

The association is weaker for the likelihood of winning election to the UNSC: *Pr(Elected UNSC B)* and *Pr(Elected UNSC B$_{t+1}$)*. Still, the estimated relationship is negative, and is consistent with the theoretical argument

that when highly likely win UNSC election, nations are willing to make concessions to avoided being targeted in disputes. It appears that this desire to avoid being targeted in a dispute prior to election has greater effect than nation A's incentive to preemptively challenge before nation B increases in diplomatic strength from being on the UNSC. Consistent with power transition theory, B appears to be able to make sufficient concessions to avoid preemption by A (Chadefaux 2011; Powell 1999).

As expected, the control variables predict that MIDs are more likely between nations with relatively equal power and less likely between a pair of democracies. The main results are not sensitive to the definition of politically-relevant dyads (nations with a common border or separated by less the 25 miles of water). Supplementary Appendix Table G.4 presents results using alternative definitions of contiguity, restricting the analysis to dyads where both nations are UN members, and looking at all possible directed dyads. These analyses tell the same story: When a nation is likely to be elected to the UNSC or a nation is a member of the UNSC, it is less likely to initiate disputes and less likely to be targeted.

The financial incentives mechanism predicts a stronger pacific effect for poor countries because their governments especially value the financial rewards associated with UNSC membership. In Table 7, we interact the measures of predicted probability of UNSC election with log(GDP/capita). As with the monadic analysis, the coefficient estimates on the UNSC probability variables are negative while the coefficient estimates for the interaction terms are positive. For rich nations, the pacifying effect of being a likely UNSC candidate is much smaller than it is for poor nations. Note that while a number of the individual coefficients are statistically insignificant, joint hypothesis tests show that the UNSC probability variables and their interactions with income are jointly statistically significant. Paralleling the approach in the monadic analyses, Table G.3 in the Supplementary Appendix shows poor autocracies are particularly pacific when they have a high probability of being elected to UNSC. As we would expect, the effect is stronger for initiators than targets: potential initiators can make a unilateral decision not to initiate when likely to be elected to UNSC, while targets have to appease all potential initiators with concessions.

Negotiated Concessions

We now turn from analysis of all politically-relevant dyads to a smaller set of rivalrous dyads with repeated disputes (Diehl, Goertz, and Gallegos 2021). The powerful friends mechanism predicts that if UNSC members receive increased diplomatic (and potentially military) support, then disputes are more likely to be resolved in a favor of UNSC members. We

Table 7. Occurrence of disputes, wealth, UNSC membership and the likelihood of election.

	(1) Dispute	(2) Dispute	(3) Originator	(4) Originator
UNSC A	−1.308***	−0.945***	−1.143***	−0.803**
	(0.314)	(0.237)	(0.215)	(0.250)
UNSC B	−0.747**	−0.550*	−0.564**	−0.467$^+$
	(0.255)	(0.224)	(0.204)	(0.239)
Pr(Elected UNSC A $_{t+1}$)	5.258	−8.630	−1.370	−16.05
	(11.26)	(16.12)	(13.01)	(18.52)
Pr(Elected UNSC $_{t+1}$)*log(GDPpc) A	−1.270	0.411	−0.562	1.208
	(1.258)	(1.851)	(1.421)	(2.136)
Pr(Elected UNSC A)	−22.48	−29.79$^+$	−18.21	−9.747
	(15.63)	(17.05)	(14.13)	(19.70)
Pr(Elected UNSC)*log(GDPpc) A	1.477	2.616	1.002	0.147
	(1.621)	(1.896)	(1.500)	(2.213)
Pr(Elected UNSC B $_{t+1}$)	−17.40	−26.63	−7.658	−24.69
	(15.42)	(16.47)	(13.94)	(17.85)
Pr(Elected UNSC $_{t+1}$)*log(GDPpc) B	1.537	2.672	0.519	2.517
	(1.696)	(1.823)	(1.513)	(1.987)
Pr(Elected UNSC B)	−28.33$^+$	−33.10$^+$	−21.33	−33.30$^+$
	(14.54)	(17.80)	(14.91)	(19.48)
Pr(Elected UNSC)*log(GDPpc) B	2.666$^+$	3.347$^+$	1.850	3.216
	(1.523)	(1.899)	(1.574)	(2.099)
Force ratio	3.039*	2.712	2.546***	1.143
	(1.303)	(2.423)	(0.745)	(2.633)
Force ratio^2	−1.425	1.608	−1.189*	2.118
	(0.981)	(2.137)	(0.604)	(2.320)
Polity A	0.328	−0.429	0.462*	−0.544
	(0.388)	(0.321)	(0.220)	(0.354)
Polity B	0.166	−0.726*	0.494*	−0.585$^+$
	(0.394)	(0.312)	(0.223)	(0.333)
Polity A * Polity B	−1.400*	0.0617	−1.731***	0.223
	(0.646)	(0.471)	(0.363)	(0.512)
log(Population) A	0.317$^+$	−0.803$^+$	0.309***	−0.267
	(0.173)	(0.460)	(0.0877)	(0.523)
log(Population) B	0.509**	0.673	0.405***	0.689
	(0.155)	(0.432)	(0.0886)	(0.493)
log(GDPpc) A	0.0352	−0.385*	0.0807	−0.212
	(0.191)	(0.170)	(0.0905)	(0.189)
log(GDPpc) B	−0.131	−0.971***	−0.154$^+$	−0.934***
	(0.180)	(0.158)	(0.0897)	(0.178)
P5 Ally A	0.514$^+$	−0.414$^+$	0.873***	−0.0744
	(0.279)	(0.251)	(0.177)	(0.280)
P5 Ally B	−0.0449	−0.0859	−0.223	−0.0543
	(0.288)	(0.274)	(0.171)	(0.316)
Alliance	−0.0798	−0.0381	−0.221$^+$	−0.180
	(0.193)	(0.199)	(0.123)	(0.224)
Observations	21,541	9303	21,490	8344
Dyads		204		184
Dyad FE	N	Y	N	Y

Standard errors in parentheses.
$^+p < 0.10$; $^*p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{***}p < 0.001$

exploit data from Huth and Allee (2002a) (see also Allee and Huth 2006; Huth and Allee 2002b) on the size of concessions in territorial dispute negotiations. For each negotiation episode of a territorial dispute these data code whether nation A made no concession, limited or some concessions, or major concessions. There is an analogous variable that codes the level of concessions by nation B. We focus only on the difference between these

Table 8. Difference between challenger and target concessions during negotiations of territorial disputes.

	(1) Concessions	(2) Concessions	(3) Concessions	(4) Concessions	(5) Concessions	(6) Concessions
Prior UNSC A	−0.196*	−0.271**	−0.933*	−0.235*	−0.273**	−1.042*
	(0.0949)	(0.0947)	(0.426)	(0.103)	(0.102)	(0.438)
Year of election A	−0.115	−0.0428	−0.487	−0.122	−0.0385	−0.488
	(0.129)	(0.127)	(0.580)	(0.137)	(0.135)	(0.589)
UNSC A	−0.161$^+$	−0.153	−0.691$^+$	−0.210*	−0.177$^+$	−0.850*
	(0.0890)	(0.0937)	(0.415)	(0.0973)	(0.0999)	(0.430)
Post UNSC A	−0.0240	−0.0880	−0.136	−0.0458	−0.0987	−0.213
	(0.0887)	(0.0889)	(0.404)	(0.0953)	(0.0939)	(0.415)
Prior UNSC B	0.0740	0.00502	0.304	0.0482	−0.0163	0.200
	(0.0933)	(0.0951)	(0.425)	(0.100)	(0.101)	(0.438)
Year of Election B	0.117	−0.0661	0.508	0.0904	−0.0610	0.375
	(0.115)	(0.115)	(0.525)	(0.122)	(0.120)	(0.533)
UNSC B	0.154$^+$	0.0843	0.705$^+$	0.156	0.0924	0.670
	(0.0930)	(0.0967)	(0.419)	(0.106)	(0.106)	(0.450)
Post UNSC B	0.113	−0.0217	0.446	0.0574	−0.0583	0.206
	(0.0878)	(0.0922)	(0.400)	(0.0987)	(0.102)	(0.431)
Polity A	−0.0313	0.140	0.0319	−0.0444	0.261	0.0423
	(0.0946)	(0.244)	(0.424)	(0.123)	(0.271)	(0.530)
Polity B	−0.122	−0.0683	−0.538	−0.103	−0.0317	−0.514
	(0.102)	(0.205)	(0.480)	(0.116)	(0.259)	(0.520)
Polity A * Polity B	0.0812	−0.444	0.185	0.0830	−0.516	0.158
	(0.180)	(0.312)	(0.829)	(0.202)	(0.357)	(0.889)
Force Ratio	0.404	−1.117	1.467	0.588	−0.672	2.861
	(0.350)	(1.533)	(1.648)	(0.570)	(1.801)	(2.572)
Force Ratio ^{2}	−0.0668	1.553	0.0327	−0.0289	1.465	−0.0288
	(0.350)	(1.357)	(1.628)	(0.431)	(1.536)	(1.937)
log(Population) A				−0.0324	−0.374	−0.209
				(0.0528)	(0.228)	(0.237)
log(Population) B				0.0384	0.314	0.232
				(0.0549)	(0.240)	(0.248)
log(GDPpc) A				0.0115	−0.196	−0.0436
				(0.0472)	(0.130)	(0.213)
log(GDPpc) B				−0.0553	0.264*	−0.155
				(0.0512)	(0.127)	(0.232)
Observations	519	519	519	443	443	443
Method	OLS	OLSw.FE	Ordered − logit	OLS	OLSw.FE	Ordered − logit
FE	N	Y	N	N	Y	N

Standard errors in parentheses.
$^+p < 0.10$; $^*p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{***}p < 0.001$

variables (although our findings are similar if the two are considered separately).

Table 8 presents models that assess the net size of negotiated settlements in territorial disputes. Models 1 and 4 present results from OLS regressions, models 2 and 5 include dyad fixed effects, and models 3 and 6 present results from ordered logit models. All models include UNSC membership of A and B, level of democracy in A and B, joint democracy, and the relative power of the states. Models 4–6 control for income and population.

Consistent with theoretical expectations, the results show that concessions are tilted towards UNSC members. The estimated coefficient on the UNSC A variables is negative, indicating that A makes small net concessions when on the UNSC. In contrast, the coefficient estimate for UNSC B

is positive, indicating that A makes larger net concessions when B is on the UNSC. The magnitude of the association is equivalent to about a third of the standard deviation in the variance of net concessions.

Table 8 also accounts for pre- and post-UNSC membership. The coefficient estimates on Prior UNSC A (1 or 2 years away from UNSC election) are consistently negative, indicating that nation A is able to exploit the expectation that it is likely to grow in diplomatic strength to leverage greater net concessions. The analyses find no significant effect for the year of election or after a nation exits the UNSC. The sample size is small and the estimates are likely biased by selection effects because governments chose when to conduct negotiations. However, the evidence provides some support for the powerful friends mechanism: UNSC members are diplomatically stronger, and in ongoing disputes they appear to be able to leverage this advantage to obtain more favorable agreements.

Conclusion

We propose two countervailing forces that emerge from the election of countries to the UNSC. On the one hand, we consider a "powerful friends" or "support" effect, which derives from the favors that elected UNSC members can request from powerful countries that seek their political influence on potentially important resolutions. They can become protégé states with enhanced diplomatic clout.

On the other hand, powerful states—as well as the rest of the world—recognize the potentially destabilizing effects of temporarily bestowing such diplomatic leverage on a country. They want to elect reliable countries, countries that are not going to be carried away. Powerful countries do not seek to become embroiled in conflicts initiated by elected UNSC members, despite what these elected UNSC members might wish. Thus, we further explore a "restraint" or "pacifying" effect, whereby the UNGA is less likely to elect bellicose countries, and powerful countries impose costs if a UNSC member provokes conflict.

The strategic setting is complicated because of these countervailing forces, and many of our hypotheses depend on which of the two dominates. Still, most of our theoretical results point towards reduced conflict, especially if the restraint effect dominates. Empirically, we indeed find evidence of reduced conflict. Yet, the empirical setting is also complicated. While most of the empirical literature on the UNSC can safely treat UNSC elections as exogenous to their key dependent variables of interest, this assumption does not hold with respect to interstate conflict. The descriptive pattern in the data suggests an inherent effect of UNSC membership. Dispute propensity drops in the run up to UNSC elections, drops further

during the two-year term on the UNSC, and then begins to rebound upwards when countries step down from the UNSC. An inherent effect of UNSC membership also accounts for why our results hold in more rigorous analyses, which control for propensity to win election, as well as time trends and country and dyad fixed effects. That said, our theoretical perspective accounts for, and indeed hypothesizes, a selection effect, and we would conclude that the overall drop in conflict results both from selection and inherent UNSC membership effects.

Our study contributes to a rich literature on the connection between UNSC elected membership and financial favors. We suggest that there may be other forms of favors that UNSC members request and powerful countries grant. Our work also provides a unique perspective on the theory of power transitions. Much of this literature considers how a militarily powerful country may react to the rise of a potential rival—with a focus on great powers. Small countries do not normally experience a rapid transition in military power. Yet, as we argue here, this is exactly what happens when countries are elected to the UNSC. Our study thus provides a theoretical framework through which to study power transition theory in the context of small countries, which experience a temporary enhancement of their power before returning to their more typical levels. Our model and data suggest that power transitions need not provoke conflict systematically, as long as powerful third-party countries hold the rising power in check.

Finally, our study represents an example of surprising consequences that can arise from shaping and reshaping global governance in the context of international institutions. The founders of the United Nations sought to secure the participation of the world's most powerful countries on the most important arm of the institution, the UNSC. Yet, they recognized that for legitimacy, some voice for the rest of the world was necessary. The membership for this voice was expanded in 1966, when the number of elected members was changed from six to ten. Similar discussions continue today, as more countries call for representation in a range of institutions. We hope that the lessons of this paper are informative for such discussions. We highlight the importance of paying attention to security externalities that might result from the founding and reform of international institutions.

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