United Nations General Assembly Voting Data

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# Variables raw UNGA dataset

**rcid** – roll call vote id RCID, can be matched with ICPSR id until 1985. Ids>9000 are the emergency special sessions not in the original ICPSR dataset.

**Resid** – New roll-call vote id, number is sequential within sessions (session + 3 digit sequential numve)

**ccode**- COW country code

**member**- Is country a member of the United Nations?

**vote** – Vote choice

1 – Yes

2 – Abstain

3 – No

8 – Absent

9 – Not a member

**Country**- three letter abbreviation, country name

**Countryname** – UNGA session

**year-** year of vote

**session**- UN Session (1-73): Note that sessions typically run from September-December but there are typically some votes that take place in the following year.

date – date of vote

**unres** – UN Resolution number. This does not always correspond to the actual UN resolution number before 1985 due to inconsistencies in the original ICPSR data.

**amend**- whether the vote was on an amendment

**para-** whether the vote was on a paragraph rather than an entire resolution

**short**- short description

**descr** – longer description

**important**- Vote identified as important by U.S. State Department report Voting Practices in the United Nations. **NOTE: not available for all years!!!!!**

**Issue codes**: These are based on searches in descriptions. They have been subjected to a rudimentary visual check but they may not be 100% accurate,

ME: Votes relating to the Palestinian conflict (19%)

NU: Votes relating to nuclear weapons and nuclear material (13%)

DI: Votes relating to arms control and disarmament (16%)

CO: Votes relating to colonialism (18%)

HR: Votes relating to human rights (17%)

EC: Votes relating to (economic) development (9%)

# Codebook Ideal Point Estimates

**year** – **NOTE THAT YEARS RESPOND TO SESSIONS RATHER THAN CALENDAR YEARS. OCCASIONALLY SOME VOTES TAKE PLACE THAT RUN INTO JANUARY OR EVEN THE SPRING OF THE NEXT CALENDAR YEAR. MOST VOTES OCCUR IN THE FALL OF A CALENDAR YEAR.**

**ccode** COW country code

**Ideal Point**: Calculated as in Bailey, Michael A., Anton Strezhnev, and Erik Voeten. "Estimating dynamic state preferences from United Nations voting data." Journal of Conflict Resolution 61.2 (2017): 430-456. The ideal point has mean 0 and standard deviation 1.

**Q0-Q100** Quantile estimates from the posterior. Q50 is the esitimate of the median.

# Dyadic Data (undirected)

**WE provide agreement scores for comparability. Please consult the above publication for why these agreement scores should not be used in cross-section time series analysis. The ideal points are not dyadic but you can compute absolute distances between the ideal points of countries.**

**Agree** – Voting similarity index between ccode1 and ccode2 in a given sesson – computed using 3 category vote data (1 = “yes” or approval for an issue; 2 = abstain, 3 = “no” or disapproval for an issue.) - Abstention is counted as half-agreement with a yes or no vote

Ccode 1 and ccode2: COW country codes

Idealpoint.x: Ideal point estimate ccode1

Idealpoint.y Ideal point estimate ccode2

IdealPointDistance: Absolute Ideal point distance

Nvotes.x and Nvotes.y: number of votes for ccode1 and ccode2 in a given session

# Changes Compared to Earlier Release

**The major change is that we now include votes on amendments and paragraphs post 1990. If you wish to exclude those votes, you can select out the votes where para==1 or amend==1.**

# Sources

This dataset builds on various datasets assembled by other scholars. I thankfully acknowledge Erik Gartzke, Dong-Joon Jo, Soo Yeon Kim, Adis Merdzanovic, and Bruce Russett for graciously making their data available. Erik Gartzke has also performed valuable checks on possible discrepancies between this and previously released data. E-mail correspondence with Dong-Joon Jo has also been most valuable. Of course, none of these individuals bear responsibility for any errors that remain. Please [contact me](mailto:voeten@gwu.edu) for any inaccuracies you may encounter. What follows is a list of sources used to assemble the dataset.

* Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR*). United Nations Roll Call Data, 1946-1985* [Computer file]. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [producer and distributor], 1982.
* Gartzke, Erik and Dong-Joon Jo. *UN General Assembly Voting* V3.0 January 2002. <http://dss.ucsd.edu/~egartzke/>
* Jo, Dong-Joon. *Dundas Dataset.* Used in: Jo, Dong-Joon. 2000. “Power Resources and Influence at the UN General Assembly.” *Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Northeastern Political Science Association*.
* Schopen, Lynn; Newcombe, Hanna; Young, Chris; Wert, James, *Nations on Record: United Nations General Assembly Roll-Call Votes (1946-1973)*. Oakville-Dundas, ON: Canadian Peace Research Institute, 1975. (and subsequent supplements).
* Kim, Soo Yeon; Russett, Bruce, "The new politics of voting alignments in the United Nations General Assembly." *International Organization*. Aut 1996, 50, (4), 629 - 652.
* Various UN Resources including the *Official Records to the Proceedings of the United Nations General Assembly, UNBISNET*: <http://unbisnet.un.org/>, and UN documentation on-line: <http://www.un.org/documents/resga.htm>.

# Notes on Comparability with Previous DataSets

      *Sessions 1-26 (1946-1971):* All resolutions from the plenary sessions ICPSR dataset as cleaned up by Gartzke and Jo were used. In addition to this, 56 votes from emergency special plenary sessions were added (from the ICPSR). Most of these relate to important international events, in particular the formation of the state of Israel (1947/48), the Suez crisis (1956), Hungary (1956), the Congo (1960) and the Six-Day war (1967). In other years, votes from special sessions are already in the Gartzke and Jo data. The codebooks from the ICPSR formed the basis for the roll-call descriptions and resolution numbers. In case of missing information, UNGA official records were consulted. Several resolution numbers, especially in sessions 20 and 21, are still missing.

      *Sessions 27-29 (1972-1974):* In comparison to the Gartzke and Jo and ICPSR data, I have eliminated all the committee votes, that were included in these years, but not in other years of the dataset (meaning amongst others that the number of votes in these years was much larger than in other years in the ICPSR data). The codebooks from the ICPSR formed the basis for the roll-call descriptions and resolution numbers.

      *Sessions 30-39 (1975-1984):* Same votes as in Gartzke and Jo and ICPSR.

      *Sessions 40-51 (1985-1996):* I used *UNBIS* to add the votes that were missing from the Gartzke-Jo dataset, but were in their codebook. I deleted all the votes that were adopted unanimously. This creates some notable differences as in the Gartzke-Jo data all UN members were coded as voting in favor of unanimous resolutions, even if these states were not present at any vote during a UNGA session (this applies to 26 country-years where this dataset records no valid vote choices during a session and the Gartzke-Jo data has valid choices only on unanimous votes). The votes were compared to those assembled by Kim and Russet. The Gartzke-Jo codebook was used as the basis for vote descriptions/resolutions. In addition, we used the original text of resolutions (see hyperlinks in dataset). In general, the long descriptions in this period are perhaps somewhat less extensive than in previous years, but the text of the resolutions is easily accessible through the hyperlinks.

      *Votes on Amendments, Paragraphs, and Unsuccessful Resolutions.* The ICPSR (and Gartzke/Jo) data miss votes on amendments since 1975, votes on paragraphs since 1978 and votes on unsuccessful resolutions since 1985. We are working to correct this. I should observe that in the years 1988-1992 there were no resolutions that failed (there were 2 in 1987) and cursory checking of recent years confirms that resolutions rarely fail in the plenary session. Amendment and paragraph votes are more numerous: we identified 93 between 1987 and 1989. In a future version of this dataset, we will add these. We do add dichotomous variables that identify votes on paragraphs (627) and amendments (287) in the earlier years. Please note that these are identified through searches of the descriptions and thus may contain errors.       *Sessions and years.* Sessions do not always fall in one year. In the Gartzke/Jo dataset, the variable year really measures session. A researcher who wants to aggregate by year thus has to make a choice. The database provides exact dates for each vote.

# Acknowledgements

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# Citation

Bailey, Michael A., Anton Strezhnev, and Erik Voeten. "Estimating dynamic state preferences from United Nations voting data." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61.2 (2017): 430-456.

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