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Estimating ideal points from UN General Assembly sponsorship data

Abstract: The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) represents a microcosm of global politics that offers a valuable snapshot of interstate relations and state preferences. In this context, roll-call votes and measures of voting affinity often receive the bulk of scholarly attention. However, even though techniques such as ideal point estimation have grown more sophisticated over time when applied to voting data, they remain grounded by an original selection bias that discards 2/3 of the UNGA yield. This share of disregarded output can prove highly informative if drafting and sponsorship procedures receive a closer look instead. This research note applies ideal point estimation to UNGA sponsorship data for the first time for every member from 2009 to 2019. It advances a cutting-edge approach to better estimate state preferences over a contested policy space, while correcting for the narrow focus of previous UNGA analyses on voting data. The results detect an underlying issue space that bears external validity with the inclination of states towards multilateralism.

Keywords: UNGA, sponsorship, ideal points

Introduction

Though less consequential in effecting substantive results than its counterpart, the UN Security Council, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is often regarded a microcosm of global politics offering a portrait of interstate relations and state preferences. In this context, roll-call votes have gathered the bulk of attention as supposedly the most concrete manifestation of preferences from member states amid UNGA procedures. Over the years, measures of group cohesion and bilateral affinity have been perfected to aggregate yay/nay (and abstain) counts into meaningful indices of interstate proximity, with spatial models representing the latest addition to this inventory.

Yet, for all their advances, such measures share key limitations, including excessive sensitivity to the behavior of the United States and also selection bias, with far-reaching implications. For one, though unquestionably important in the present international system, Washington remains a selective and sparse intervener at the UNGA and therefore not the most reliable benchmark to compare the scores of other countries. In addition, by focusing on voted resolutions, available indices disregard approximately 2/3 of all UNGA output. Both limitations can be compensated for if this neglected share of interstate relations is brought up front and center.

Indeed, during drafting stages, UNGA resolutions offer states several opportunities to demonstrate or withhold support in the form of sponsorship. They can become a promising source of empirical estimation of state preferences if properly unpacked. In fact, many topics enter and leave the UNGA agenda without ever sparking voted decisions, but the oscillations they experience in terms of how many and which countries supported them

reveal much about the inclination of states over the years.¹

This research note provides the first attempt to apply ideal point estimation to UNGA sponsorship data. Hence, it aims to incorporate the field's cutting-edge approach to estimating actor preferences in position-taking arenas, while also correcting for the narrow focus on votes by previous UNGA analyses. Our findings show that sponsorship reveals a similar policy space to votes, structured by a broad North vs. South division, despite noticeable differences in extreme values. Our scale also reveals itself more sensitive to the propensity of member states for isolation or multilateralism, as manifested by their total UNGA output.

The research note is structured as follows: first, we discuss the literature on votes and sponsorship at the UNGA; second, we review the arguments for using sponsorship as a source for ideal point estimation; third, we present our data and methods of choice; fourth, we display our analysis of co-sponsorship ideal points and compare these results with roll-call measures; and lastly, we conclude by summarizing the main findings and indicating some limitations as well as future prospects for the use of this novel approach.

1 State preferences at the UNGA: roll-call votes vs. sponsorship

1.1 Roll-call voting and selection bias

Empirical IR scholarship has turned to voting affinity as a leading proxy for shared substantive preferences between states, believing changes in voting patterns can be ascribed to changes in the underlying relationship between country dyads (e.g., Potrafke 2009; Carter

¹ See for instance Hecht's (2017) analysis of the rise and fall of the UNGA resolution on new and restored democracies.

and Stone 2015; Brazys and Dukalskis 2017; Adhikari 2019; Seabra and Sanches 2019). The challenge to infer preferences from such interactions is that preferences are distinct from the means deployed to achieve them. In other words, it is possible that actions by states may not necessarily be equal to their underlying interests. This obstacle is not trivial because preferences are not directly observable. Yet, progress can still be made if the institutional setting where strategic interactions occur is factored in (Frieden 1999).

Unfortunately, the inner workings of the UNGA have only been superficially tackled by the literature, which has dwelt primarily in voting outcomes (Peterson 2014, 224). Though some scholarship from the 1960s underscored that sponsorship could be a superior source of information on state preferences (Mower Jr. 1962; Keohane 1967; Alger 1966; Jacobsen 1969; Rai 1977), these research threads failed to spark much interest.

Despite its scholarly grip, UNGA voting is also curtailed by problems of sample size and selection bias. Aside from voting, resolutions can be adopted by consensus, by acclamation, without objection or without any vote (Peterson 2006, 54). Until the 1970s approximately half of resolutions were submitted to a vote, but this percentage decreased over time. Presently, less than 1/3 of the resolutions are voted upon, most stemming from repetitively divisive topics. Propositions dealing with disarmament or self-determination, for instance, are more likely to be voted upon than those on development or administrative issues (Häge and Hug 2016; Devin et al. 2020). Even though recent models have tried to control for agenda variations (Bailey et al. 2017), they still rely on roll-call data and perpetuate the sampling bias. Moreover, voting occasions can be manipulated (Gartzke and Schneider 2013, 46) and states might conceal their actual preferences behind public votes, e.g. out of fear of sanctions (Rosas et al. 2015), leading to further bias in estimations. In light of such challenges, a less constricted metric is required to draw more accurate depictions of UNGA

interactions.

1.2 Co-sponsorship

Existing work on sponsorship draws chiefly from studies on the United States Congress. Three insights from this literature establish the link between sponsorship and actor preferences. First, sponsoring is antecedent. It occurs “before efforts by leaders or influential members to persuade members to change their positions and before any potential source of selection bias, including agenda control” (Desposato and Kearney 2011, 532; see also Wilson and Young 1997). This makes it a richer source to capture the issue-space than subsequent votes (Talbert and Potoski 2002). Secondly, it is dynamic. Studies on coalition building acknowledge such processes unfold across time: votes are preceded by sponsorship, which is preceded by signals from pivotal actors. Hence, it can be revealing to weigh actor participation based on the timing of their involvement (Kessler and Krehbiel 1996, 556). This presupposes a temporal dynamic that must be factored in. Lastly, sponsorship is a form of signaling. The decision to sponsor may reveal information about how an actor perceives the state of play and what message it seeks to convey in responding. These three claims are transportable to the UNGA setting, in the sense that, notwithstanding the differences between this body and other legislative arenas, sponsorship choices within it can be used to outline country profiles. Recent IR contributions relying on such premises can be highlighted. Smith (2017) and Drieskens et al. (2014) have surveyed collective resolutions by the European Union (EU) in human rights bodies. Sponsorship patterns have been used to gauge the cohesion between BRICS countries (Dijkhuizen and Onderco 2019) and regional powers and their neighbors (Mesquita and Seabra 2020). Hecht (2017) has focused on shifts in foreign policy

orientations connected to democratization, while Finke (2021) uses sponsorship data to compare the effect of regime type on trends of cooperation and conflict. Strides have also been made in applying network analysis to detect blocs and coalitions (Meyer and Hammerschmidt 2020). However, despite their relevance, many of these contributions sidestep the complexities of the process behind drafting resolutions. Consequently, some key dynamics, such as the role of formal groups, are left underspecified. Moreover, the aggregation of sponsorship data into indicators has hitherto relied on simple procedures (e.g. count frequency), when more sophisticated tools are available, such as ideal points estimation.

2 Ideal points and co-sponsorship

2.1 Overview of ideal points literature

Spatial models are based on the idea that individuals and their choices can be represented by ideal points. When actors decide between alternatives, they choose the one they feel the closest to. Since the development of NOMINATE (Poole and Rosenthal, 1985), ideal point estimation grew popular in parallel with other scaling procedures, such as W-NOMINATE (Poole et al., 2011), α -NOMINATE (Lo et al., 2013), Bayesian Item Response Theory (IRT) models (Clinton, Jackman and Rivers, 2004) and nonparametric procedures like Optimal Classification (Poole, 2005).

Political scientists have developed spatial theories of choice to explain a wide range of behavior and theoretical questions. These models have also been used to analyze the UNGA: Voeten (2000) demonstrated that the structure of conflict in the post-Cold War period was one-dimensional, with high stability in country position over time, across a

“Western vs. non-Western” continuum. Analyzing a sample of votes considered “important” by the United States, Voeten (2004) also showed that the ideal point gap between Washington and other countries had widened. Similarly, Bailey et al. (2017) estimated a dynamic model to account for shifts in the UN's agenda, making ideal points comparable across time. Bailey and Voeten (2018) also estimated a bidimensional model, finding a second political dimension, less stable than the first one, capturing initially a North-South conflict (mid-1960s to the mid-1980s), and later Middle East and human rights issues. The authors conclude that most of the relevant position-taking by states is adequately captured by a one-dimensional space, construed as satisfaction with the US-led international order. These estimates are now widely used by the literature as a measure of states’ preferences. However, the anchoring of these findings in the United States’ behavior also presents validity challenges. Though obviously a decisive actor in global politics at large, Washington’s centrality within the UNGA is less consensual. Bailey and Voeten (2018, 37) sustain that “most observers of the UN easily could describe a single dimension of conflict in which the United States anchors one end and a set of countries most opposed to it anchor another end”. But authors endorsing this image of preponderance are generally commenting on the UN as whole – Security Council and agencies included (e.g. Puchala 1983). In fact, most accounts that do focus on the UNGA end up documenting the wax and waning of American engagement (e.g. Smouts 2000; Datta 2009). As Milewicz and Snidal (2016) have demonstrated, other second-tier powers (G8, G20 countries) are nearly twice more active than the United States in multilateral treaty-making. Our data will show that Washington is a reluctant UNGA participant indeed, with a legislative footprint comparable to small island states.

Hence, while centering estimates on the “lonely superpower” (Voeten 2004) can

potentially sketch rivalries and affinities in the global order at large, it might also miss out on other meaningful dimensions of UNGA activity, leading to biased inferences. This has been hinted by Lauderdale (2010), who found that existing dimensional spaces have difficulty in explaining the behavior of important states, such as Russia and India. Coupled with the aforementioned problem of sample size, we have a strong case to derive ideal points from a broader empirical basis not tied *a priori* to United States policy.

2.2 *Benefits and shortcomings of estimating ideal points from sponsorship data*

Given that legislators can manifest their preferences by supporting bills, sponsorship has attracted scholarly attention as another opportunity to estimate ideal points. Talbert and Potoski (2002) used NOMINATE to compare ideal points estimated from co-sponsorship data and roll-call votes for the United States Congress, finding a higher dimensional structure from the former and identifying specific issues for each dimension.

Aleman et al. (2009), however, argue that NOMINATE is not an appropriate estimation method when using sponsorship. Sponsoring a bill is a decision that expresses positive support, but not sponsoring it may mean a rejection or no decision at all, due a lack of knowledge or interest. Even though supporting a bill indicates a preference for the proposed change from the status quo, not supporting a bill does not necessarily imply the opposite, i.e. preference for the status quo. This proves a problem in contexts where there is a small number of sponsors per bill. The authors estimate ideal points for the United States House of Representatives and the Argentine Chamber of Deputies by implementing Principal Component Analysis (PCA). When comparing results from ideal points estimated by co-sponsorship data and roll call votes, they found higher dimensionality for the former, but not as high as Talbert and Potoski's findings. The authors also find a strong correlation

between ideal points estimated from both kinds of data in both countries.

Desposato et al. (2011) issue a stronger warning in estimating ideal points from sponsorship data. Comparing how well W-NOMINATE and PCA recover valid values from simulated data, under different assumptions about the data-generating process of not sponsoring a bill, the authors show that the performance of both methods varies, generating reasonable estimates in some but not all circumstances. With an adequate number of bills, PCA and W-NOMINATE recover ideal points estimates highly correlated with true simulated values and aptly detect levels of polarization. On the other hand, both models perform poorly in identifying the median legislator, measuring party cohesion, and dimensionality.

Considering these peculiarities, we proceed to present our co-sponsorship data and how ideal points were derived from it.

3 Data and methods

3.1 Overview of the dataset

The *UN General Assembly Sponsorship Dataset* (Seabra and Mesquita 2022) compiles information on draft co-sponsorship from the UN Digital Library (<https://digitallibrary.un.org/>) for all UNGA draft resolutions for the past ten years (2009-2019, or sessions 64 to 73)². Our main interest in these data was not the textual content of these documents, but their metadata, especially authorship. The version of each L-Document (i.e. whether it was a root document, a revision or addendum) was also observed in order to sequence related documents into a single entry.

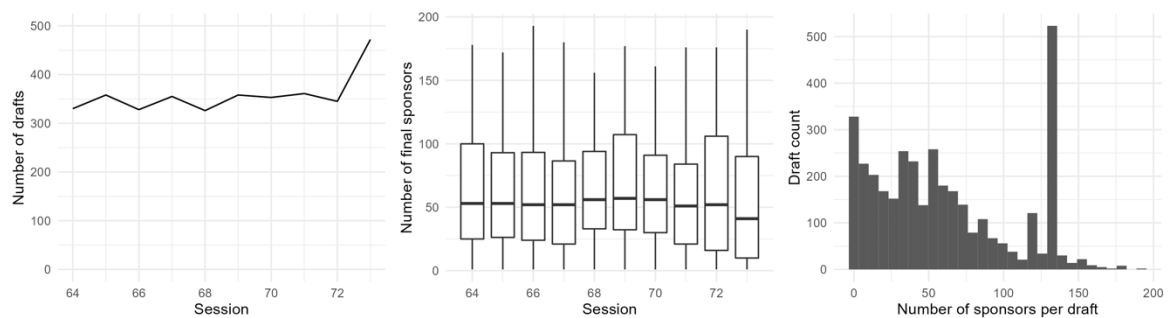
The dataset encompasses UNGA output for all 193 member states plus Palestine, totaling

² Available at: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/MPQUE2>

3,586 individual L-Documents. As these include both root documents and subsequent revisions, they can be sequenced in a total of 2,518 drafts, which will comprise our main unit of observation. The data also discriminate how soon or late sponsors joined a draft resolution. We used this information to construct two measures of support: binary and weighted. The binary variable indicates whether or not a country sponsored a given piece at all during the drafting stage. The weighted version is a measure of relative priority, wherein joining early (e.g. as the original sponsor) yields a higher weight, while joining last – for instance, after successive revisions and addenda – leads to a lower score. The benefit of discriminating early from late support can be found in the former being expected to convey a stronger authorial attachment on the part of the country – and hence a clearer manifestation of its preferences (Kessler and Krehbiel 1996; Seabra and Mesquita 2022). For this research note, we coded priority as follows: 3 for original authorship, 1 for joining only at the last available opportunity, 2 for all cases in-between, and 0 for no co-sponsorship. In the following, binary values were used for descriptives, while weighted scores were utilized in ideal point estimation.

UNGA co-sponsorship dynamics were stable during the period under analysis: the total number of drafts presented at each session was approximately 250 and the mean number of co-sponsoring countries per draft was 60 or more. These amounts are depicted in Figure 1: the left plot indicates the number of drafts per session, the center plot the mean number of sponsors per session, and the right plot shows, for all 10 sessions combined, the number of sponsors per draft. As the histogram indicates, the bulk of UNGA drafts incited around 60 co-sponsors, even though several also had the support of a larger group of 120-130 states (i.e. the G77).

Figure 1. Number of UNGA drafts per session (left), mean number of sponsors per session (center), and number of sponsors per draft (right).



3.2 Estimation procedure

We use sponsorship data to estimate ideal points for countries at each session applying the IRT model developed by Martin and Quinn (2002). This model allows ideal points to change over time with a random walk prior variance parameter. While the original implementation (Martin et al. 2011) uses standard Markov Chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) methods, scholars have developed extensions to reduce computational time. That is also the case for Kubinec’s implementation (2019), coupled with other advantages: it handles new distributions, thus allowing for different kinds of data other than binary outcomes, and it also models missing data.³

4 Analysis: Comparing roll-call and sponsorship ideal points

4.1 Comparison with roll-call ideal points

We compared the ideal points estimated via sponsorship with the Bailey et al. (2017) data,

³ We use the package *idealstan*, available at: <https://github.com/saudiwin/idealstan>

which estimates ideal points based on roll-call votes. We chose this metric for our comparison because it is the most widely used index in current UN scholarship. Hence, Bailey et al.'s data can provide a familiar point of reference against which the specificities of sponsorship ideal points can be easily highlighted. However, this direct comparison also requires caution: Bailey et al. estimate their ideal points controlling for agenda change, fixing ideal points for bills with repeated content, while our dynamic IRT model is susceptible to agenda changes at UNGA. Consequently, some differences should be attributable to different estimation methods and not to the different empirical basis (votes vs. co-sponsorships). Country scores for the 2009-2019 period using both approaches are contrasted in Figures 2 and 3.

Figure 2. Correlation between roll-call and co-sponsorship ideal points.

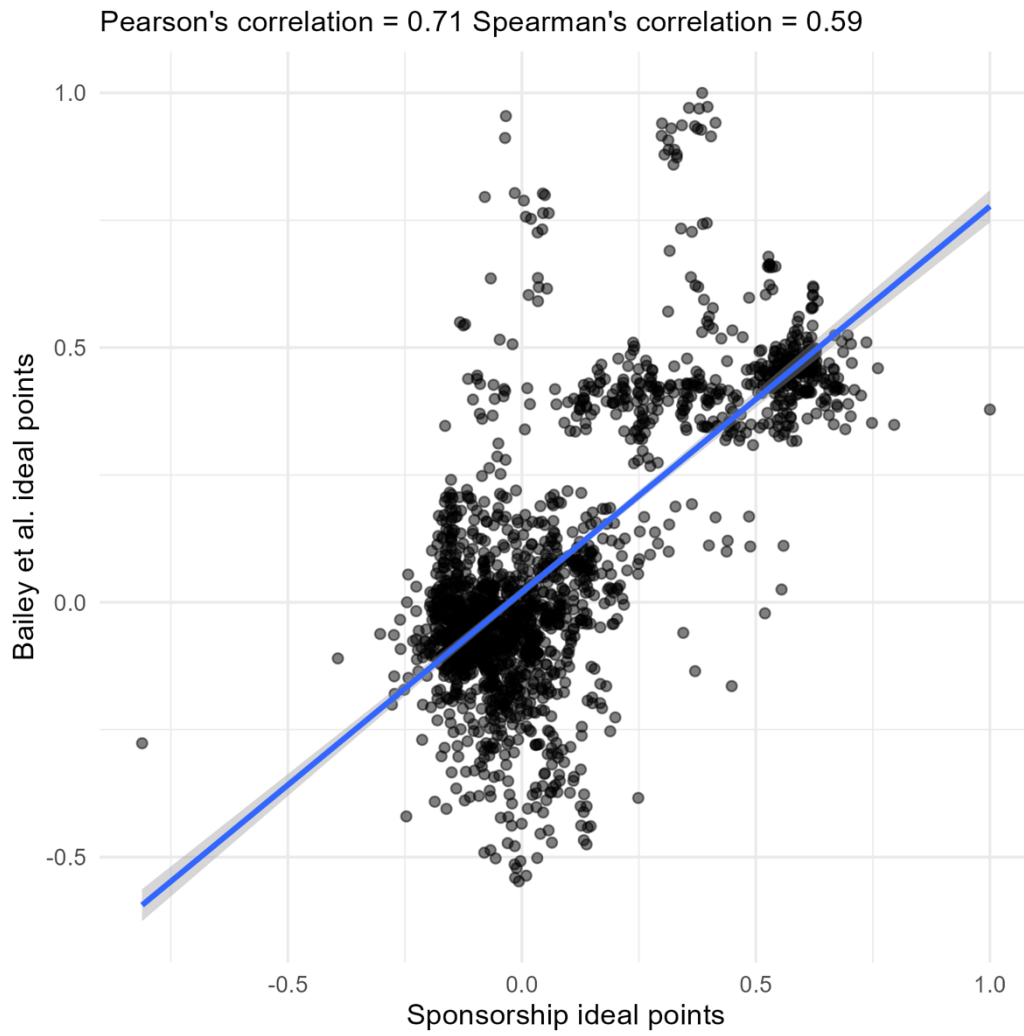
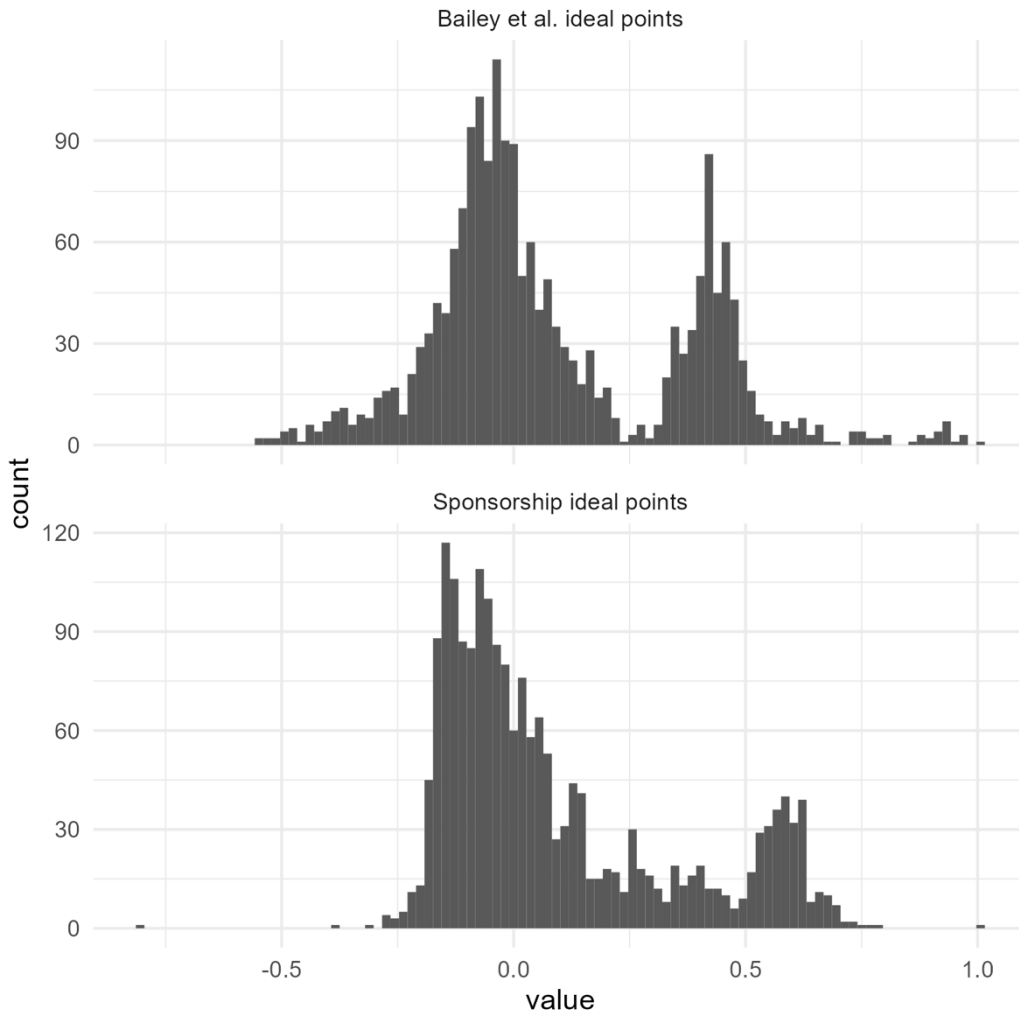


Figure 3. Histograms of roll-call vs. co-sponsorship ideal points.



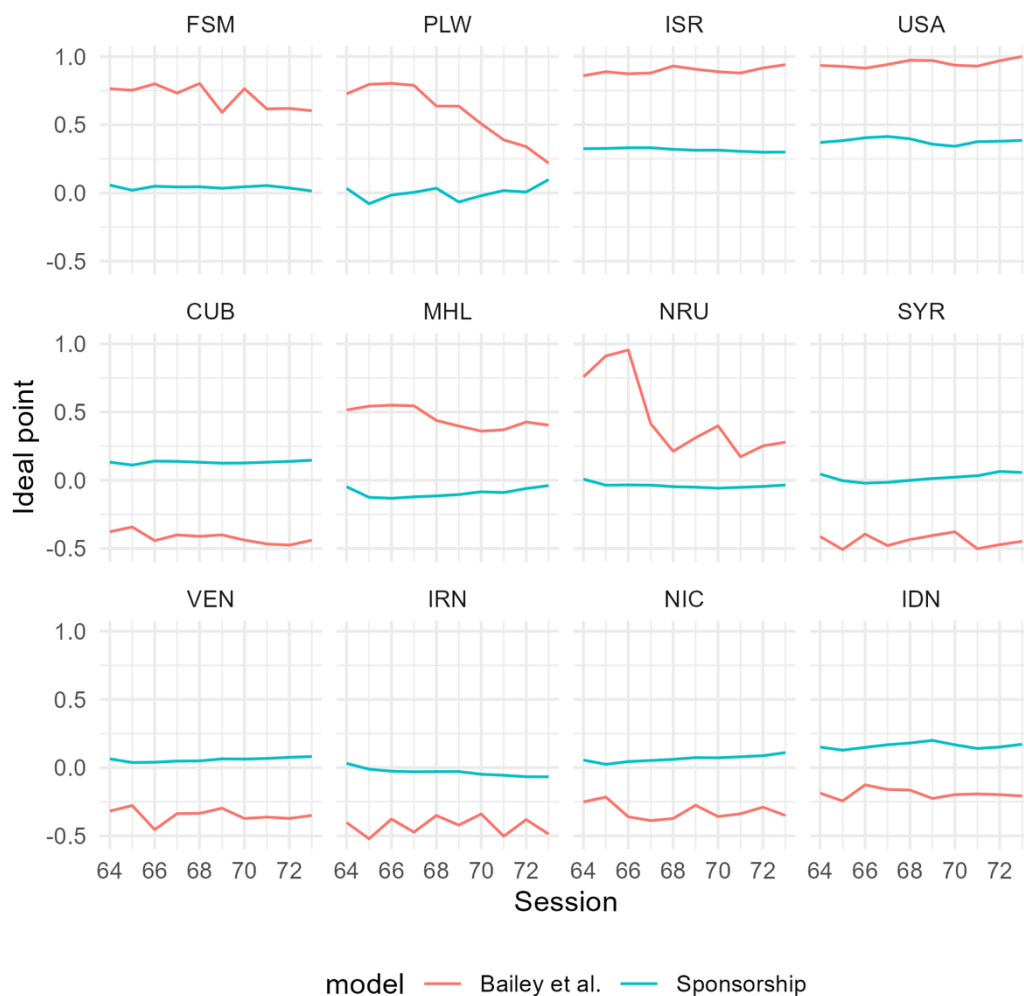
The comparison reveals both indices are similar. The main pattern evidenced in both is a dichotomization between a larger group, which scores negative values, and a smaller group registering positive values. This dimension of conflict has been substantively interpreted in past roll-call voting studies as a West vs. the Rest fault-line (Voeten 2000), or as satisfaction with the US-led liberal order (Bailey et al. 2017), and it might apparently dictate sponsorship practices as well. Similar to votes (cf. Bailey and Voeten 2018), sponsorship was also adequately captured by a one-dimensional conflict space.⁴

⁴ Aggregate Proportional Reduction in Error (APRE) is 0.6 for 2009-2019 with one dimension. Adding more dimensions does not improve the model significantly.

Yet, an important distinction calls for some nuance. While votes outline two clear-cut groups, co-sponsorships reveal a more dispersed intermediate segment, taking up values between 0 and 0.5. As seen in Figure 2, this middle section strongly deviates from the roll-call pattern: some of Bailey et al.'s extreme positive values receive a moderate rating, while a small portion of the countries scoring as low as -0.5 in votes is also drawn to this middle position. Substantively, this implies that some countries considered strong supporters of the US-led liberal order and a fraction of its detractors (as per their voting practices) are actually closer to one another (in terms of their sponsorship behavior).

As shown in Figure 4, an inspection of the countries which had the most divergent voting vs. sponsorship ideal points reveals that some of the extreme pro-liberal order countries are small island states, such as Micronesia, Nauru, and the Marshall Islands. Even Israel and the United States itself are significantly downgraded with regard to their co-sponsorship practices.

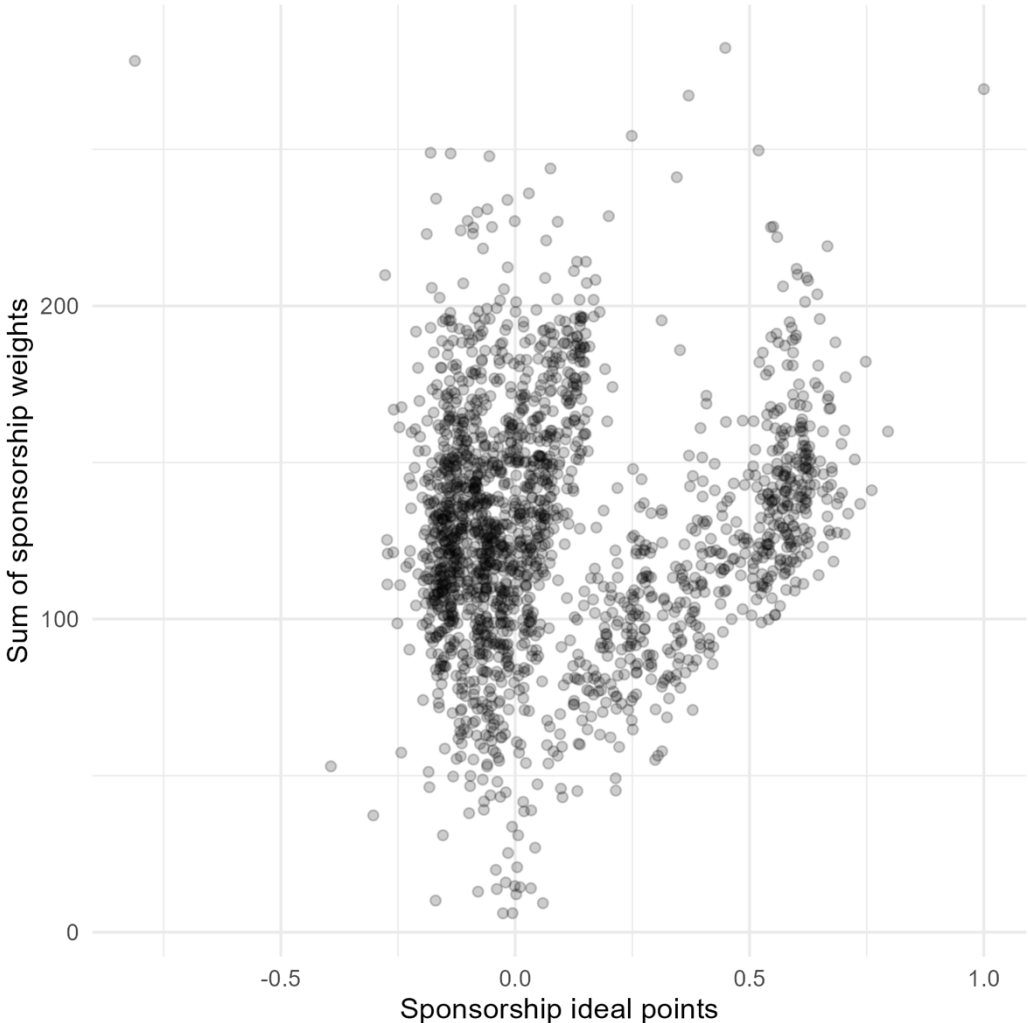
Figure 4. Countries with the most diverging scores.



The moderate score attributed to the United States leads to conclude that the underlying dimension in sponsorship cannot be satisfaction with the US-led liberal order alone. Other factors must account for differences in state practices with regards to sponsorship. The position of small island countries offers some insights into this intermediate group. Panke (2013; 2014) underscores that smaller countries are less capable to keep up with the plethora of UN activities due to the costs of maintaining large delegations in New York, and also due to the frequency of political instability back home. Hence, it is possible that poorer countries are unable to engage regularly with drafting procedures and sponsor fewer drafts each session. This, in turn, could drive their estimated ideal points towards zero. The US

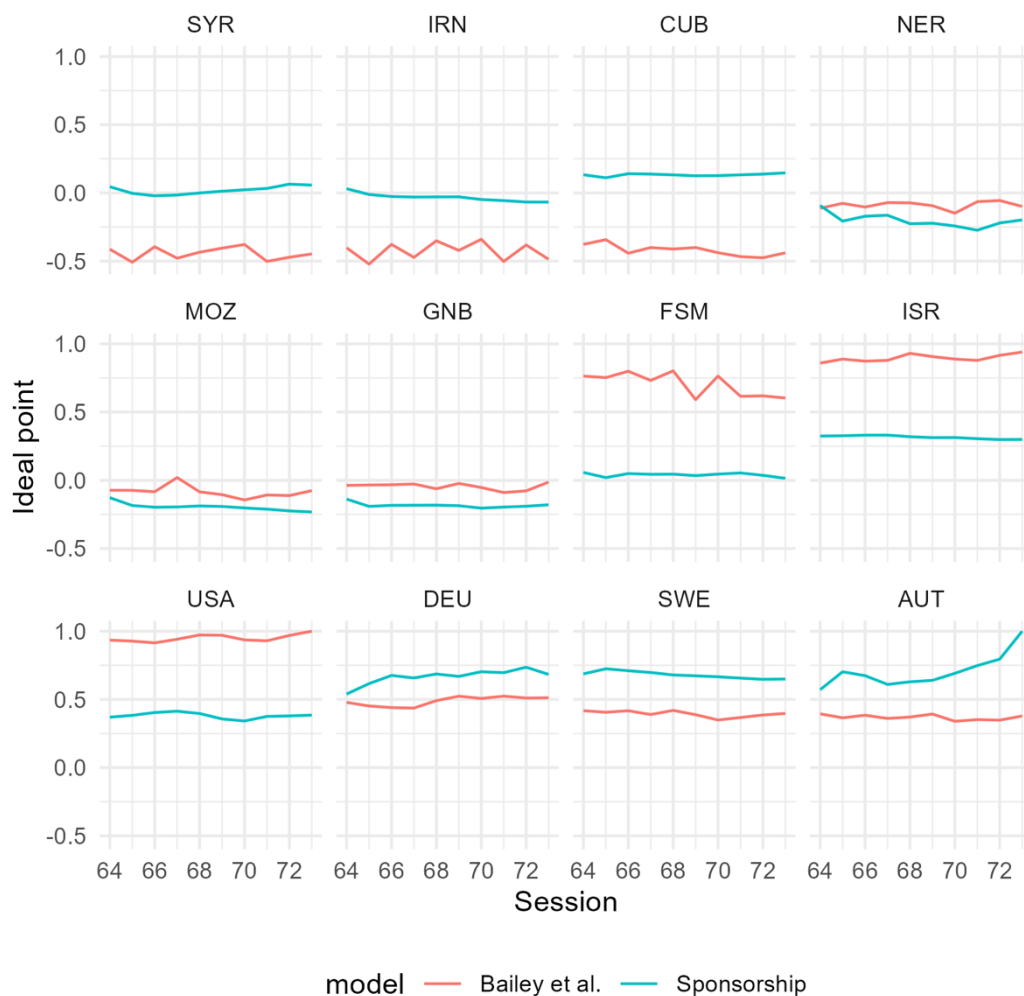
and Israel are not unstable, small actors, but they are nonetheless selective in UNGA participation: while the average member state sponsored around 875 drafts in the 10-year period, the US and Israel only subscribed to 575 and 465, respectively, a number not too different from Liechtenstein (588) or Kiribati (489). Figure 5 probes this relation by plotting ideal points scores against the sum of total sponsorships, weighted by priority. The V shape demonstrates that countries co-sponsoring few drafts are classified closer to zero in the ideal point scale; as members increase their drafting activity, they are sorted in either positive or negative values.

Figure 5. Ideal points vs. sum of weighted co-sponsorship.



Turning our attention to the extreme values of both roll call and sponsorship ideal points, we see reduced overlap among states. As shown in Figure 6, the extreme positive values in Bailey et al. are given to states highly supportive of US-leadership (United States, Israel) while extreme negative points are awarded to stringently revisionist states (Syria, Iran, and Cuba). The highest ideal points for sponsorship dynamics, in turn, belong to European states, while the lowest belong to an assorted set of countries from the Global South, specially Africa (Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau). The latter are not hardcore revisionists; instead, their shared trait is participating in large UN caucuses, such as the African Group, during the period under analysis. This evidence suggests that sponsorship ideal points are affected chiefly by the priority scores and the total volume of UNGA output of each group. The rise in Austria's score, for instance, coincides with its leadership of the EU group.

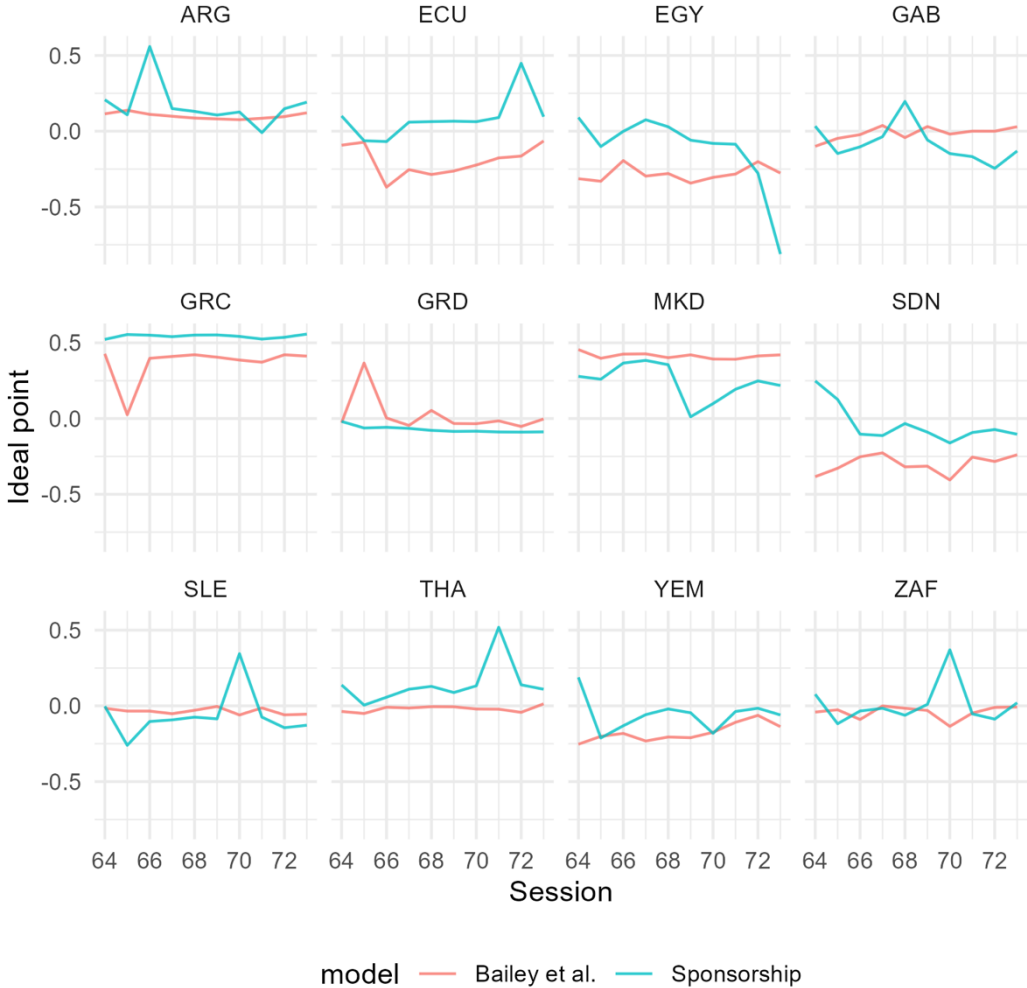
Figure 6. Extreme values for roll-call and co-sponsorship ideal points.



Lastly, it is informative to compare countries and years when votes and co-sponsorship scores take opposing directions. Figure 7 presents a selection of countries which registered diverging tendencies on both metrics for certain periods. Countries that had intense voting variation, such as Greece and Grenada, present stable co-sponsorship behavior. The remaining states in the plot come largely from the Global South and display, on occasion, ascending trends in co-sponsorship scores as well as an opposing inclination in terms of roll-call ideal points, and vice-versa. Such moments coincide with periods when these countries assumed chairmanship of UN coalitions, e.g., the G77, the African Group. The augmented activity within such groups apparently drove co-sponsorship scores towards

extreme values, irrespective of voting activities.

Figure 7. Countries with diverging trends in roll-call and co-sponsorship ideal points.



In summary, the results indicate that the dimension of contestation singled out by co-sponsorship is mainly determined by the volume of drafts issued and the priority ascribed by each co-sponsor. Activity by UN groups, specially highly productive groups, affects these results directly, since the total volume of drafts shared by group members is elevated, and chairmanship protocol consistently places certain countries as lead sponsors of this output. The extreme ends of our ideal point scale therefore reflect the division between large

multilateral groups in the UN, with G77 countries placed at one extreme, EU countries at the other, and states with small participation at the UNGA in the middle. In other words, if a country registers an increasingly positive score, this implies a more voluminous UNGA output in association with European states. In contrast, if a score turns negative, it means more drafts in cohort with countries of the Global South.

5 Conclusion

This research note advanced the first attempt to apply ideal point estimation to sponsorship data at the UNGA. By applying a dynamic IRT model to data from 2009 to 2019, we estimated the positions of all members for a one-dimensional issue space. Although the final scores were similar to those obtained via roll-call voting, we uncovered one key distinction: Bailey et al.'s readings displayed satisfaction with the US-led liberal order at the core of UNGA inferences, while co-sponsorship in fact draws attention to the polarization of large multilateral groups such as the G77 and the EU.

This finding bears both potential and limitations. Concerning its potential, it is noteworthy that the contrast between the EU and the G77 is not a frequent feature of UNGA analyses, except for studies limited to human rights controversies (Hug and Lukács 2014). UNGA literature and empirics have been instead far more focused on the United States. But as our results ascribe greater emphasis on total UNGA activity, European democracies come ahead of Washington given the latter's selectivity. The measure might therefore be appropriated as a possible proxy for *a country's inclination towards multilateralism*. If total activity within the UNGA is considered a sign of how much effort a state invests in garnering support in global arenas, it is possible to distinguish Western countries with strong multilateral inclination (such as European states) from more isolationist members (the

United States or Israel). This falls in line with Milewicz and Snidal’s (2016) definition of “multilateral powers” as more steadfast animators of multilateral cooperation than Washington. Likewise, within the Global South, a distinction can be made between isolated countries (Syria) and multilateral actors (Cuba), despite a shared revisionist agenda. As demonstrated by Goddard (2018), this difference in isolation or connectedness of dissatisfied actors decisively impacts their decision to resort to violence or diplomacy in pursuing their claims. Previous indices have failed to capture the sociability of member states. Constructivist studies, for instance, have focused on institutions as proxies for socialization (Bearce and Bondanella 2007), when it is nonetheless possible to be a longstanding UNGA member and still insist in isolation. This variation in group orientation is an important moderating factor in socialization hypotheses and further reinforces the relevance of our findings. Correlation tests further reveal that sponsorship ideal points covary with other proxies for multilateral activity – a tendency not followed strongly by ideal points from votes.⁵ Hence, the benefits and shortcomings of our approach in comparison to previous data can be summarized as in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary comparison between roll-call and sponsorship ideal points

	Roll-call votes ideal points	Sponsorship ideal points
Empirical base	Voted resolutions	Draft resolutions
Omitted materials	Non-voted resolutions	Drafts not submitted/sponsored by member states
Agenda changes	Controlled	Not controlled
Dimensionality	One-dimensional	One-dimensional
Polarization	United States (and allies) vs.	EU vs. G77

⁵ Sponsorship ideal points (in absolute values) reach 0.56 Pearson correlation coefficient with the KOF Political Globalization Index (-0.34 if absolute values are considered), while Bailey et al.’s points register 0.27 (0.19 for absolute). The KOF index aggregates information on embassies and NGOs in the country, participation in UN peacekeeping missions, membership in international organizations, treaty ratification and treaty partner diversity (Gygli et al. 2019).

	the Rest	
Substantive interpretation	Satisfaction with the US-led international liberal order	Inclination towards multilateralism
Heuristic limitations	The United States as a polar benchmark remains a selective UNGA participant	Scores strongly overdetermined by group dynamics

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Some limitations, however, demand further attention. First, strong association between ideal points and group activity diminishes the usefulness of an entirely new index, since a country's position can be safely predicted by merely consulting its group membership. Second, tallying the volume of drafts is not informative of the weight or importance of such initiatives. Indeed, a UN group might churn several collective drafts over the years, all of little to no substance. Even though our approach included measures of priority to ascribe relevance, the results invite further work to separate ritualistic repetition from meaningful cooperation. Lastly, the strong effect of group affiliation over ideal point scores renders the metric rather static. Given the persistence of group dynamics, countries tend to present the same scores for long periods of time. This approach might therefore result inadequate if the aim is to capture the effects of short-term changes (cf. Mattes et al. 2015).

Shortcomings notwithstanding, this first attempt to apply ideal points estimation techniques to sponsorship hints at some promising future inquiries. For instance, drafts can be grouped by thematic committee to verify whether all topics have the same dimensionality, or if coalitions and fault-lines change according to the issues in question. Moreover, dimensionality changes during drafting can be observed more closely, to verify whether documents start out more contentions and multifaceted, and afterwards negotiations succeed in winnowing the propositions to a more uniform political dimension. The dataset employed in the current study is actionable for such queries as it contains

information on agenda items, thematic committees, and order of sponsorship. In pursuing this agenda, empirical UN scholarship might therefore be able to reveal new facets of states preferences in multilateral arenas.

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