

PS 0500: United Nations

William Spaniel

<https://williamspaniel.com/classes/worldpolitics2018>

Outline

- Overview
- Veto power
- UNSC strategic voting
- UNSC bribery
- Rally 'round the flag effects
- General Assembly voting

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY

MINURSO

UNMIL

MONUSCO

UNICEF

UNMISS

ICC

ECOSOC



UNMOGIP

UNSC

IAEA

UNOCI

UNAMA UNSMIL

UNAMID

UNMIK

UNFICYP

UNISFA

UNESCO

UNDOF

UNIFIL

UNTSO

MINUSTAH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

UNSC



General Assembly

- Consists of everyone
- Researchers use it to measure how much states have in common

A Big But

- GA's votes are (mostly) non-binding
- Bid for Palestinian statehood passed 138-9 (41 abstentions)
 - But this only made Palestine equal to the Vatican

UNSC

- This is where the action is at!
- Anything important must go through the UNSC
- So we're going to focus on it





United Nations Space Command



unsc



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United Nations Space Command | Halo Nation | Fandom powered by ...

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[Unified Earth Government](#) · [UNSC Navy](#) · [UNSC Security Committee](#)

United Nations Security Council

www.un.org/en/sc/ ▼

The Security Council. Under the Charter, the Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It has 15 ...

[Members](#) · [Documents](#) · [Programme of work](#) · [Resolutions](#)



United Nations Security Council

Membership

Permanent Members



Membership

Permanent Members (Winners of WWII)



Membership

Permanent Members

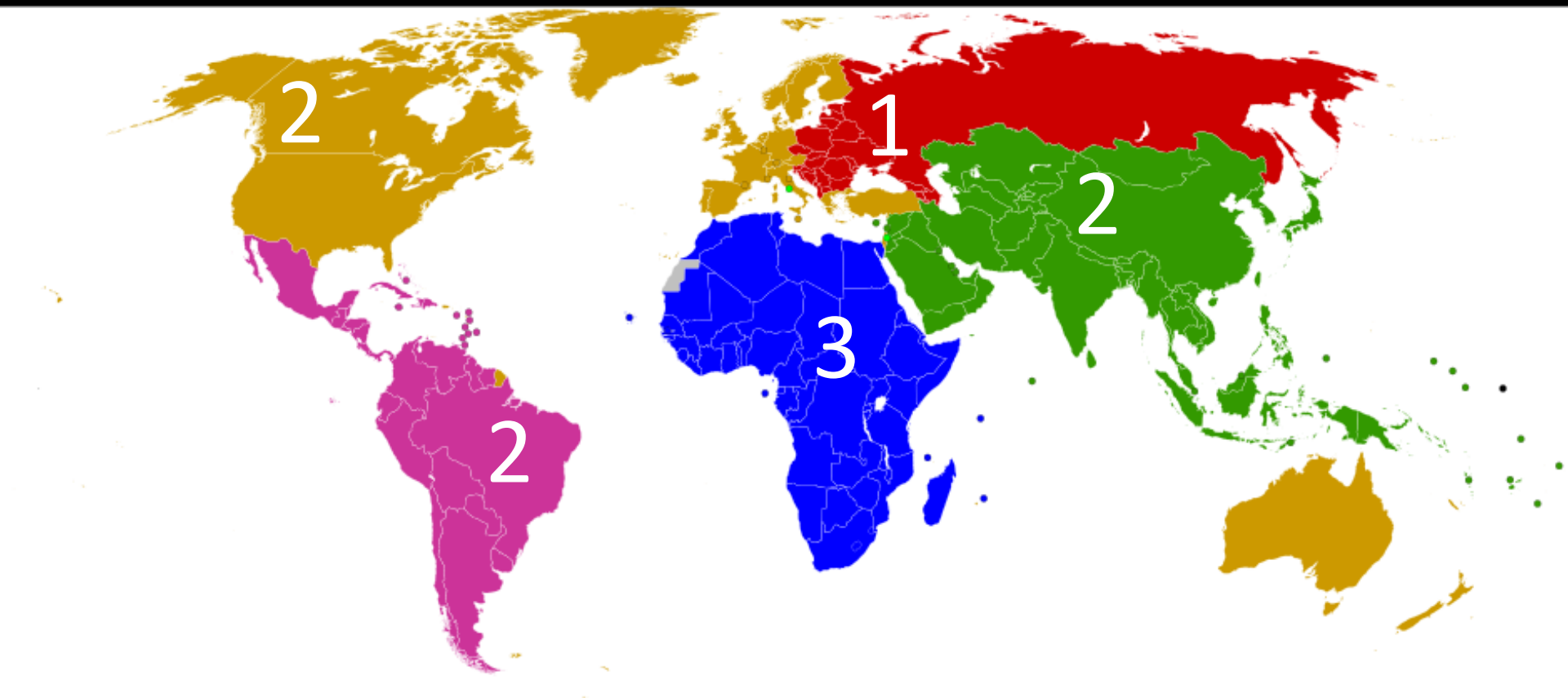


Non-Permanent Members (elected by regions for two year terms)



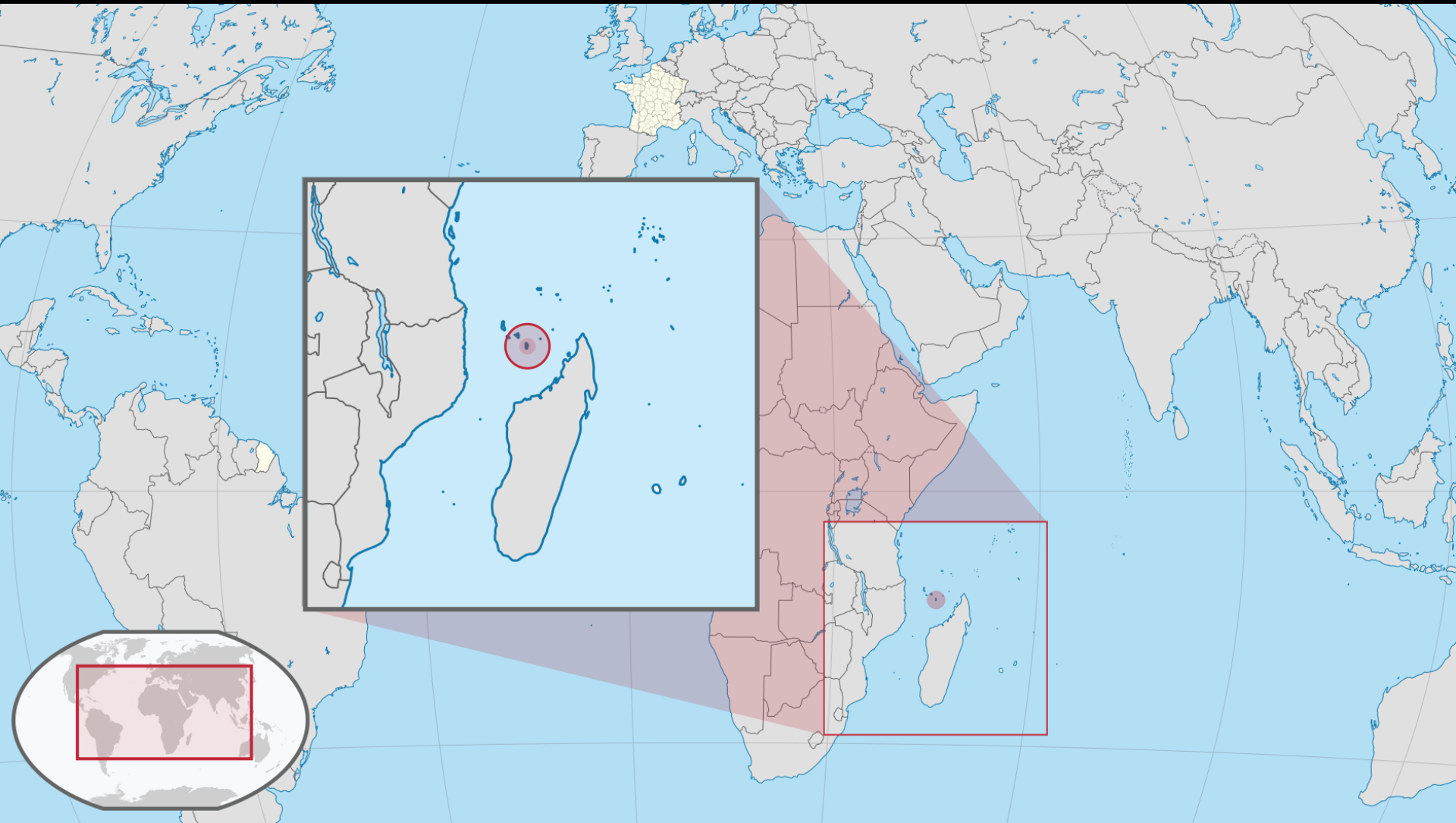
Nonpermanent Member Selection

- **Extremely opaque**
- Regional quotas

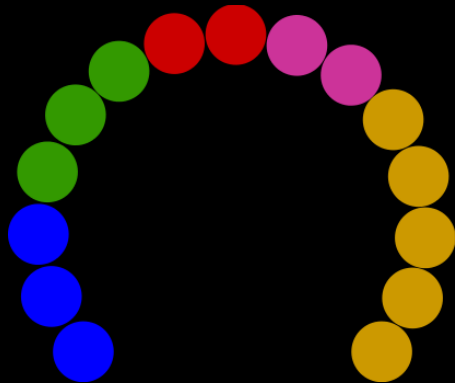




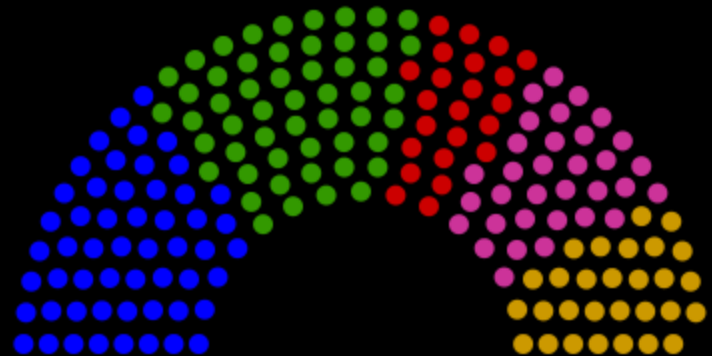




UNSC



UNGA



Nonpermanent Member Selection

- **Extremely opaque**
- Regional quotas
- “Arab swing state”

Nonpermanent Member Selection

- Nominees come from regional groups, but require 2/3rds approval from the GA
- Usually only one nominee per open slot

Uruguay and Armenia support each other at UN Security Council

🕒 18:50, 08.12.2014

Region: [World News](#), [Armenia](#)

Theme: [Politics](#)

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YEREVAN. – Uruguay and Armenia are working on various issues of international agenda, Uruguay Vice President Danilo Astori said during a joint press conference with Armenian parliament speaker Galust Sahakyan.

According to him, on many aspects the positions of

two countries are the same because they both build the policy based on highest human values.

Asked whether Armenia can respond to Uruguay for the latter's continued support in the international arena (Uruguay is the world's first state that recognized the Armenian Genocide – ed.), Astori said that Armenia supports the candidacy of Uruguay as a temporary member of UN Security Council in 2016-17.



📺 **Man falls out of his coffin during funeral in Indonesia**

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Uruguay, in turn, supports the candidacy of Armenia for 2032-33.



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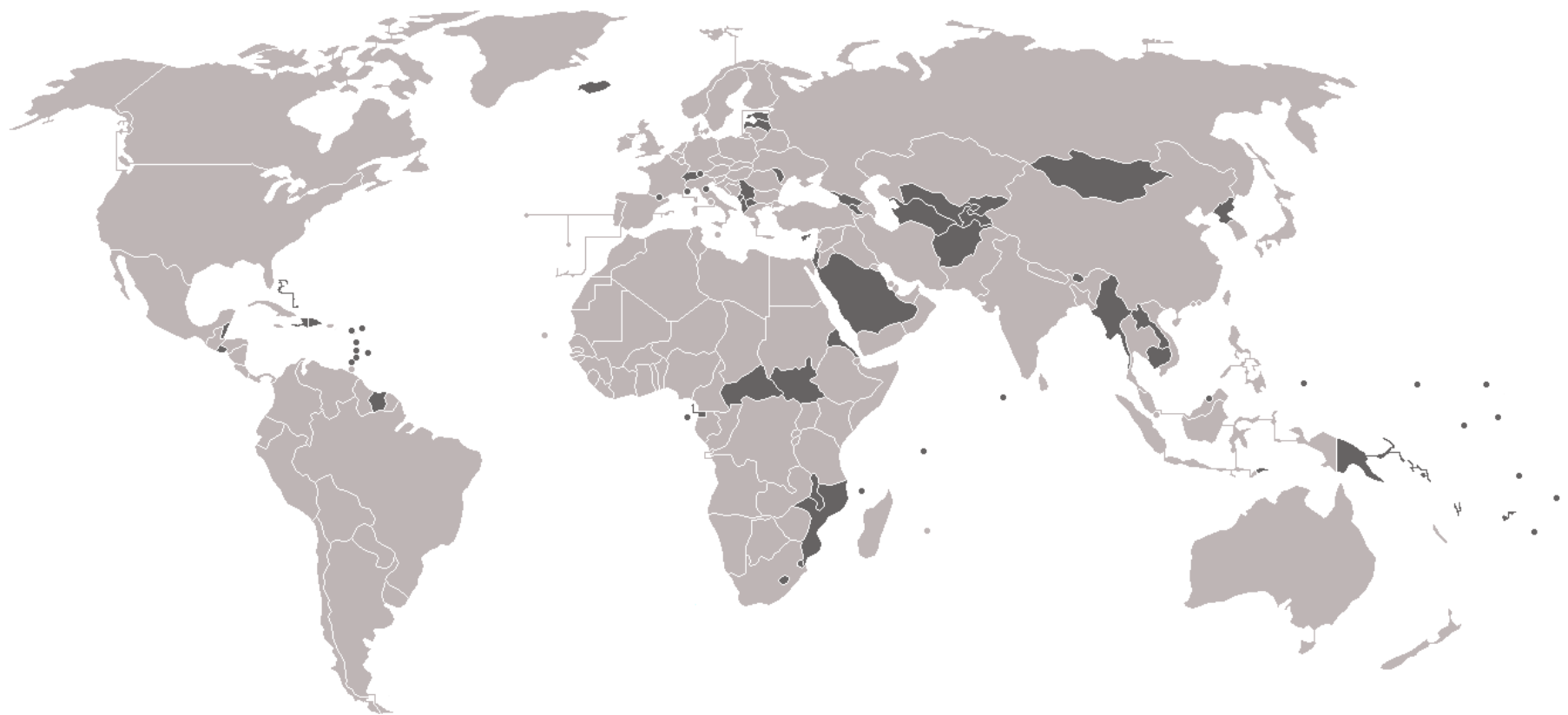
Most

Nonpermanent Member Selection

- Africa closely follows a turn-taking norm, Nigeria exempted
- Other regions defer more frequently to powerful and populous countries

Most Frequent Members

- 11 times: Japan
- 10 times: Brazil
- 9 times: Argentina
- 7 times: Colombia, India, Pakistan
- 6 times: Canada, Italy



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- Overview
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- UNSC bribery
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UNSC Voting Rules

- Nine affirmative votes needed to pass a resolution
- Five permanent members all have veto power
 - The votes could be 14-1 and still fail if the 1 is the United States
 - Frequent for resolutions involving Israel
 - Abstentions allowed
 - A 14-0 vote passes the resolution

Why Veto Power?

- The permanent members are all really strong militarily
- For the UNSC to continue to exist, the militarily strong actors have to get their way

Why Veto Power?

- The permanent members are all really strong militarily
- For the UNSC to continue to exist, the militarily strong actors have to get their way
 - Otherwise, they would yell “screw the rules” and leave the building immediately
 - This happens anyway (Iraq in 2003)

Trivia Time!

UNSC Resolution 82 authorized a United Nations intervention in the Korean War. Why didn't the Soviet Union exercise its veto power?

- a) The USSR believed that Kim il-Sung was corrupt.
- b) The USSR didn't understand that its veto power prevented the UNSC from becoming the United States' puppet.
- c) The Soviet ambassador was an American spy.
- d) The Soviet ambassador got up late and missed the vote due to New York City traffic.

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(Which) China(?)

- China “won” World War II, but was a gigantic mess
- Chinese Civil War started in 1927 and didn’t finish until 1950

(Which) China(?)

- China's permanent seat went to the *Republic of China* (ROC) in 1945
- But ROC retreated to Taiwan in 1950

(Which) China(?)

- Soviet Union thought the *People's* Republic of China (PRC)—the winner of the war—should win the seat
- U.S. didn't care. And they have veto power!



We're
boycotting!



We're
boycotting!

Cool story,
bro!

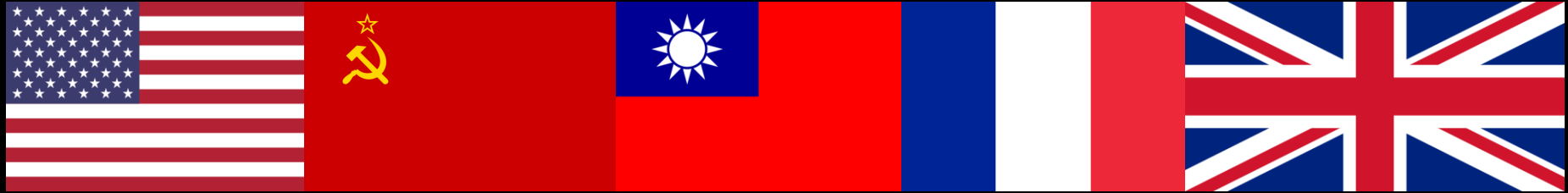


Worst. Plan. Ever.

- U.S. starts proposing hugely pro-American resolutions
- The UNSC does its bidding
- Soviet Union realizes its mistake and ends its boycott after eight months

Membership

Permanent Members (Original)



Membership

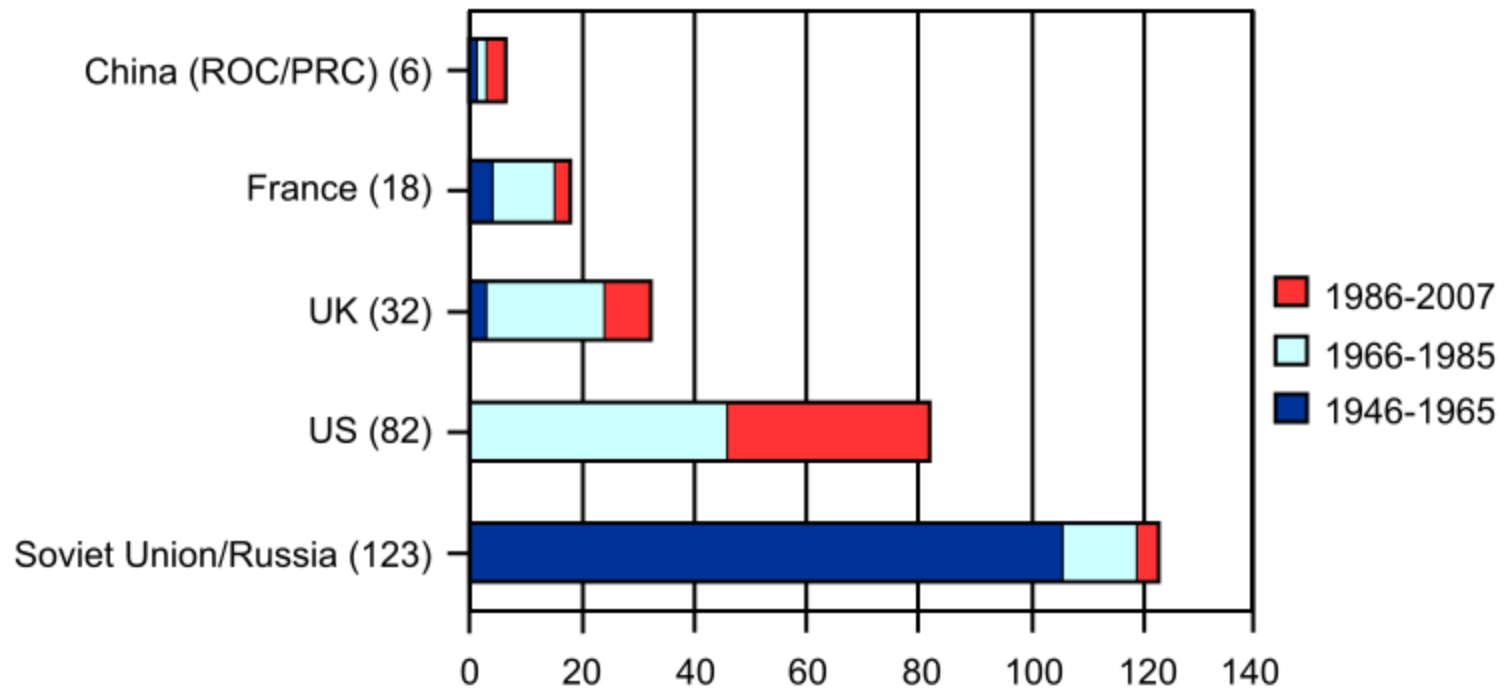
Permanent Members (Nixon Goes to China, 1971)



Membership

Permanent Members (Soviet Union splits, 1991)





By the Numbers

- Cold War (1945-1990): 687 resolutions
- Post Cold War (1990-today): 1500 resolutions
 - Twice the resolutions in about half the time!

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Trivia Time!

In discussing the current civil war in Syria, China often mentions the “disastrous” UNSCR 1973, which authorized military action against Libya. How did China vote on 1973?

- a) Yes.
- b) No.
- c) Abstain.
- d) The Chinese ambassador was got up late and missed the vote due to New York City traffic.

Why?

1. China made a mistake.
2. Something more nefarious is going on.

Insincere Voting

- UNSC members must consider the effects of a “yes” vote versus a “no” vote
- Tacit approval of a resolution may be better than no resolution

Benefits of a Resolution

- Having UNSC authorization leads to more inclusive alliances and cheaper costs to fight
 - But this often comes at the cost of scope
 - UNSC authorized action may be limited

Quick Definition

- Outside option: the best available plan of action if the primary option fails to work

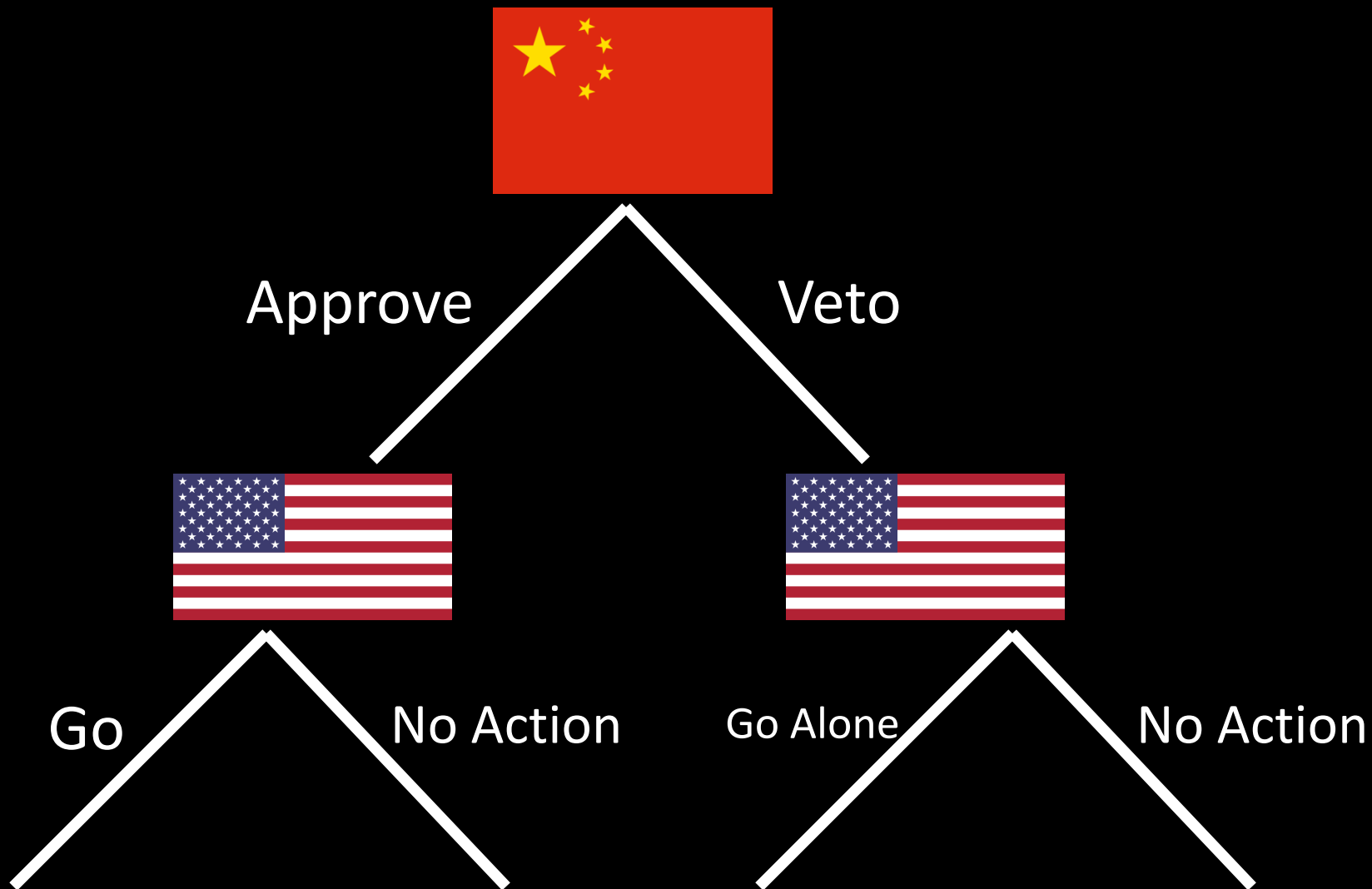
When Outside Options Are Good

United States

1. UNSC authorized action (cheaper, even if more limited)
2. Unilateral action (more expensive, but still worthwhile)
3. No action

China

1. No action
2. UNSC authorized action (limited in scope)
3. Unilateral American action (broad in scope)





Veto



Go Alone

No Action

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Veto



Go Alone



Approve



Go

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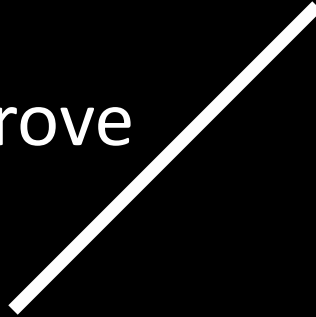
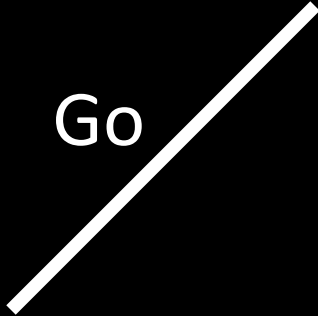
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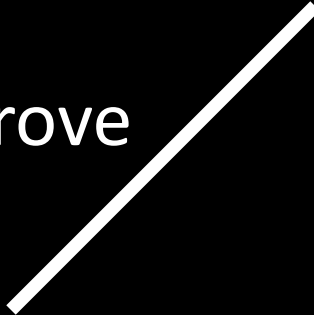
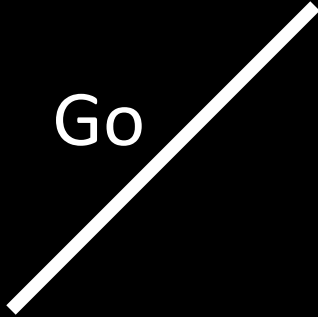
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Approve



Go



Insincere Voting

- Vetoing the proposal causes the U.S. to take more extreme action
- Tacit approval is better

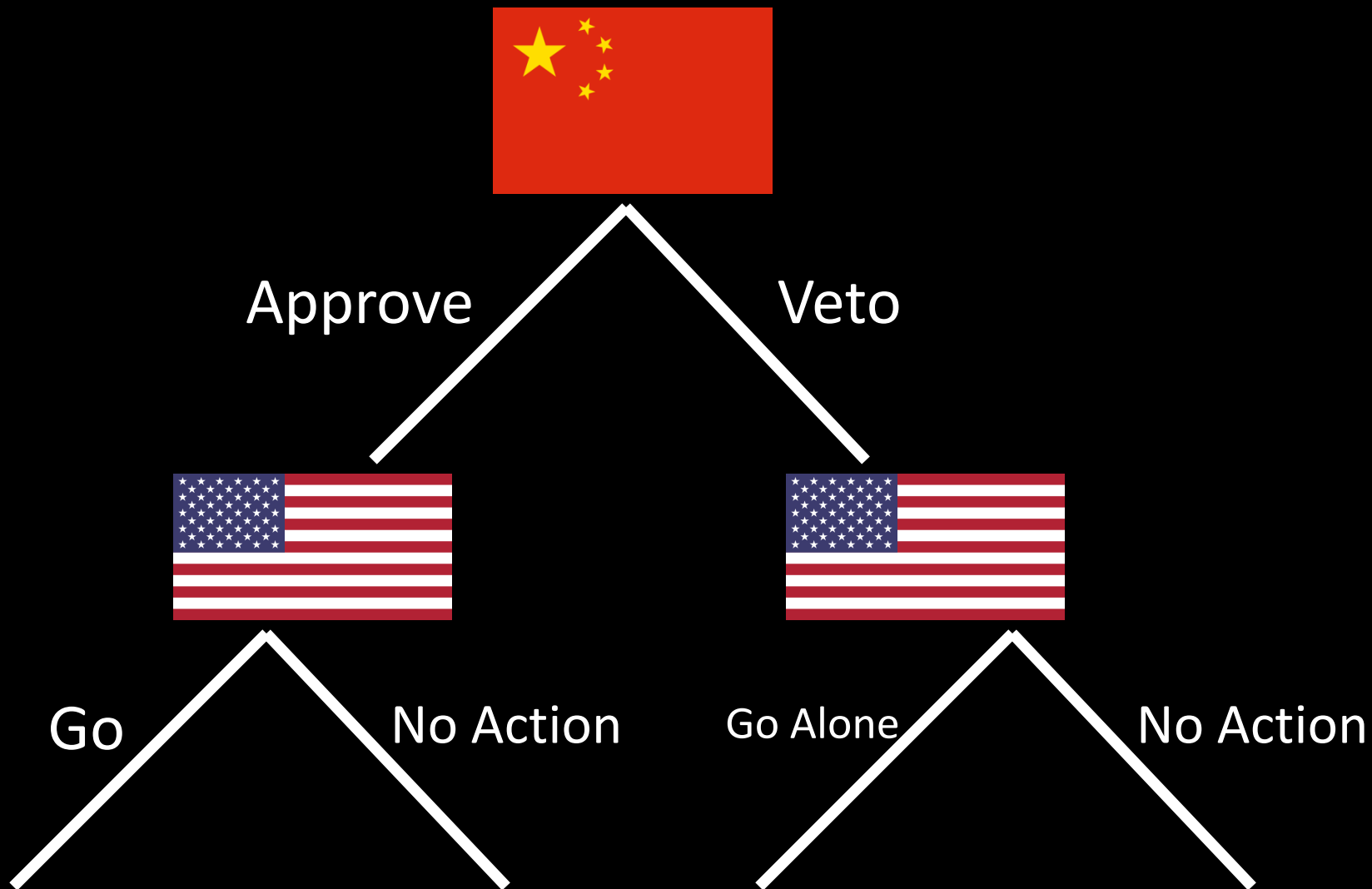
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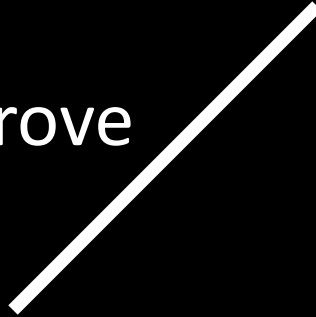
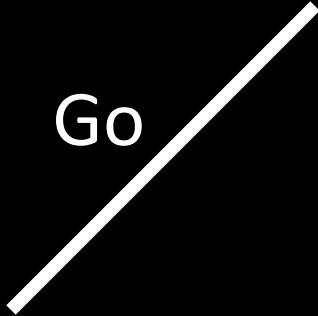
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Go





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Veto



No Action

Outside Options Matter

- When U.S.'s outside options are bad, China votes sincerely
- When they are good, China votes insincerely

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Unanimity

- Most UNSC resolutions have unanimous support
 - For resolutions 1901-2000, all but nine passed 15-0-0

Why?

1. States just love to get along
2. Resolutions only get brought up to vote if they will pass unanimously
3. Something more nefarious is going on

Bribery!

- How much does U.S. foreign aid increase when a state serves a two-year term on the Security Council?

Bribery!

- How much does U.S. foreign aid increase when a state serves a two-year term on the Security Council?
 - 59%!

The Primary Theory

- States do not feel too strongly about most issues on the docket
- The United States bribes the non-permanent members for their support

Potential Objections

- Correlation does not imply causation
- There is ongoing debate on whether the United States is truly bribing members

The Bribery-Lite Theory

- Cash exchanges aren't bribes but rather an expression of gratitude from the United States

The More Nuanced Argument

- The U.S. rarely punishes for non-compliance
- The “bribes” are just payments hoping to buy goodwill

The Counter Argument

- Being on the Security Council makes your needs more salient, and thus aid increases benignly

The Counter Argument

- Being more active in the international community both makes serving on the Security Council more likely and increases foreign aid

The Everything Argument

- These theories are not mutually exclusive
- Even if bribery does occur, the 59% figure vastly inflates the actual effect

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Rally 'Round the Flag

- The tendency for leaders' approval ratings to shoot up during a time of crisis



Dilemma

- Citizens want to support their leaders during crises when it is in the national interest
- But principal-agent problems

Information Asymmetries

- National leaders know whether a crisis is legitimate
- Citizens do not have access to that intelligence and are thus in the dark

Role of the UNSC

- Other states on the UNSC don't suffer from this information asymmetry
- Thus, they provide third-party verification of the authenticity of the crisis

UNSC Vote

- Vote yes? Crisis is real
- Vote no?
 1. Crisis is a sham
 2. Crisis is real but other countries are biased

Theory in Practice

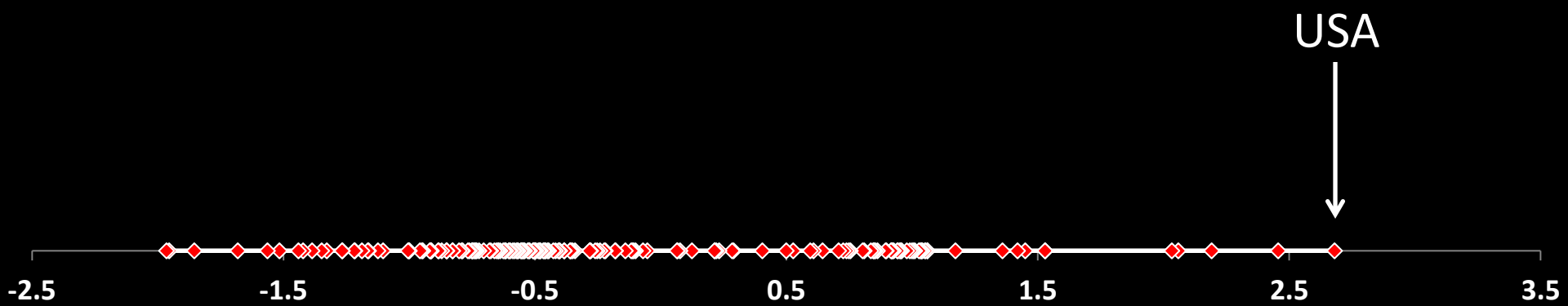
- Controlling for other factors, presidents under crisis receive 9% greater rallies with UNSC support than without

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Calculating Preferences

- UNGA votes are on the public record
- We can track these votes to create a “left-right” spectrum just like in domestic politics
 - Right: Loves the liberal order
 - Left: Not so much



2012

Closest to U.S.

Closest to U.S.

1. Israel

Palau

2. Canada

Micronesia

3. United Kingdom

Nauru, Marshall Islands

4. France

5. Australia

6. Czech Republic

7. Latvia

8. Lithuania

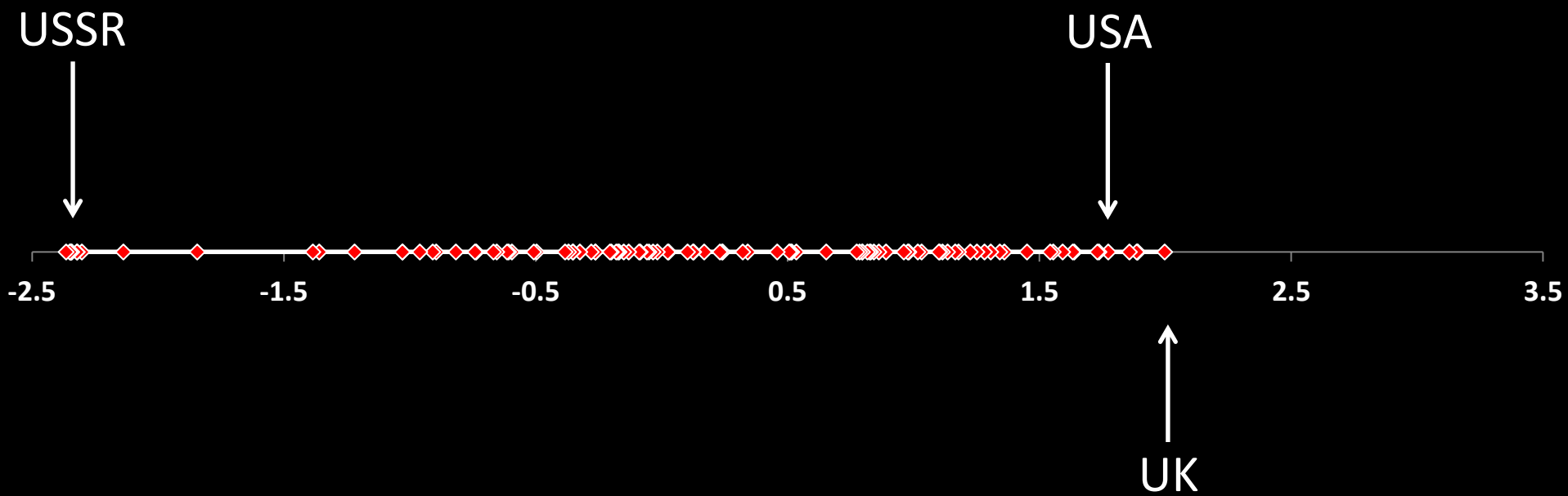
9. Slovakia

10. Estonia

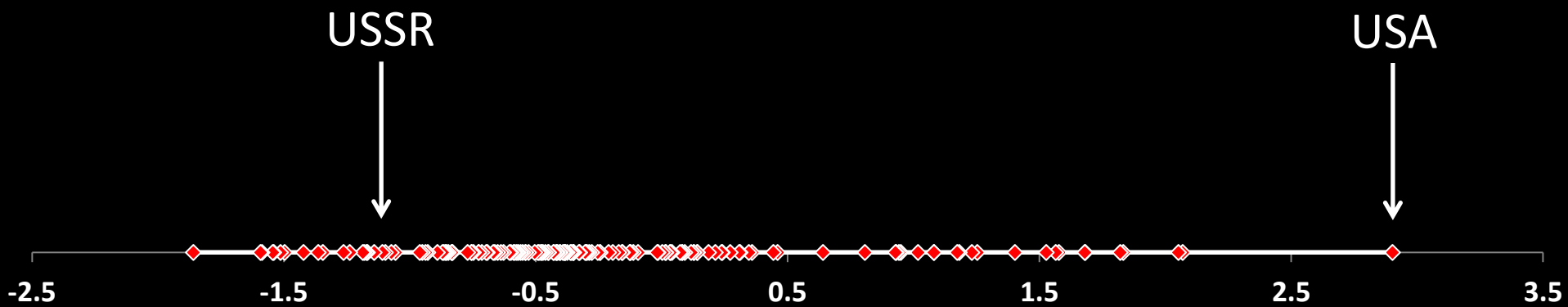
Furthest from U.S.

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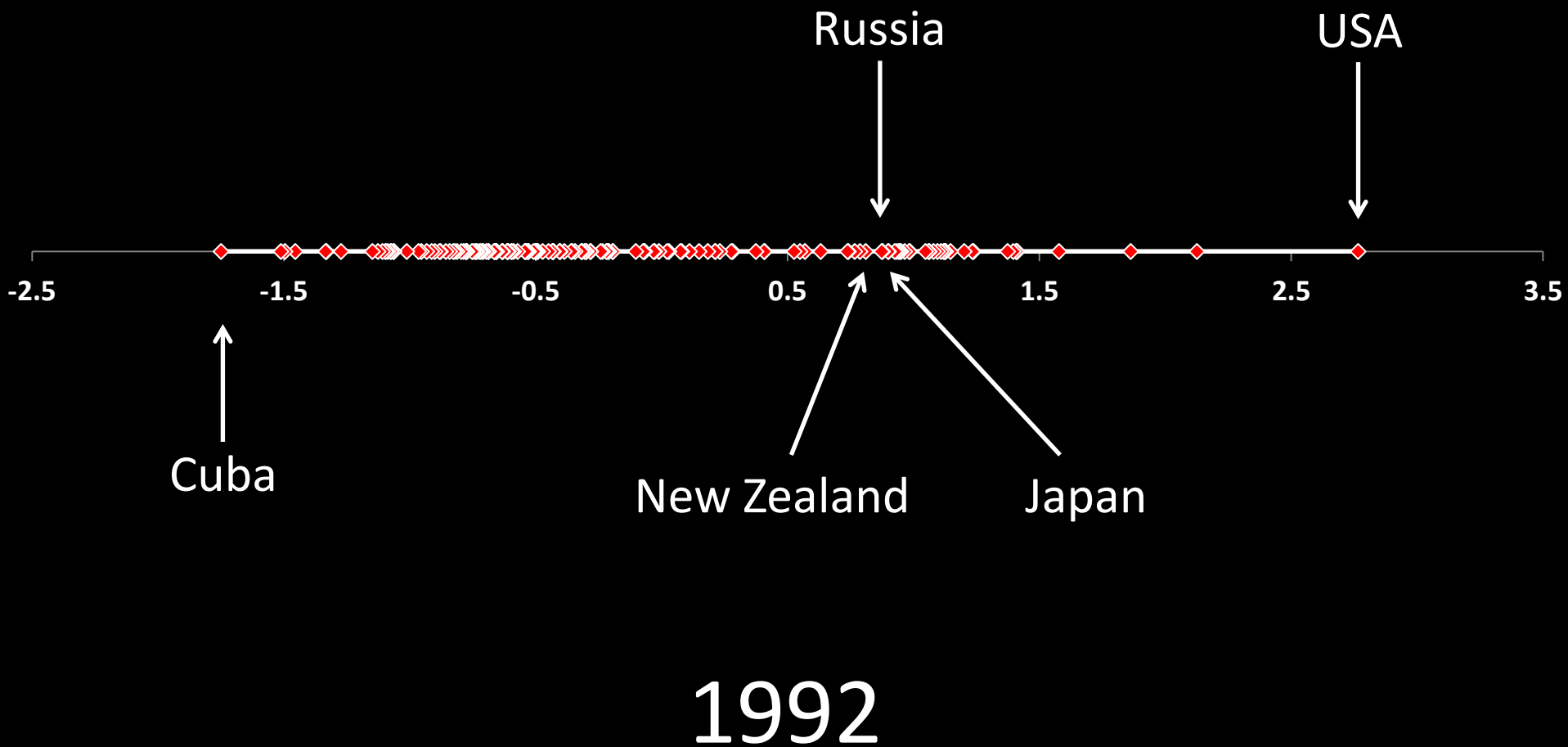
- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| 1. North Korea | 6. Nicaragua |
| 2. Iran | 7. Egypt |
| 3. Syria | 8. Bolivia |
| 4. Cuba | 9. Oman |
| 5. Venezuela | 10. Zimbabwe |

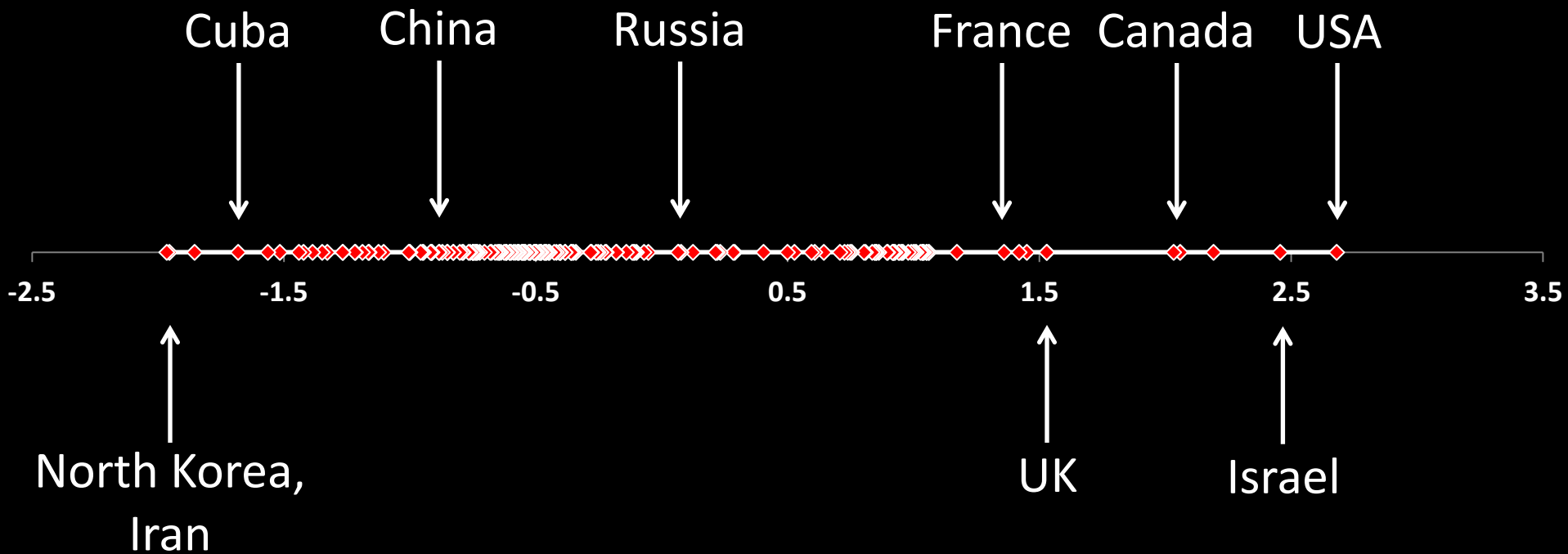


1962



1988





2012

Key Takeaway

- State preferences are not identical
- Seems obvious, but IR scholars believed for decades that all states were essentially identical except for size and power