Searching for Themes in a Chamber full of Noise?

How Language Affects United Nations' Actions and Decisions

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AU – African Union

E10 – Elected Ten Members of the UN Security Council

ICC – International Criminal Court

ICJ – International Court of Justice

IO – International Organization

IR – International Relations

ISIS/ISIL – Islamic State of Iraq and Syria / Islamic State of Iraq and the Levante

LDA – Latent Dirichlet Allocation

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

P5 – Permanent Five Members of the UN Security Council

QTA – Quantitative Text Analysis

UCDP – Uppsala Conflict Data Program

UDHR – Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UK – United Kingdom

UN – United Nations

UNGA – United Nations General Assembly

UNSC – United Nations Security Council

UNSG – United Nations Secretary-General

US – United States

WMD – Weapons of Mass Destruction

GLOSSARY

Audience Costs – First conceived by (Fearon 1994). Understood as third parties observing the promises and behavior of an actor. If an actor breaches prior commitment or stands to lose face, audiences are assumed to be able to punish such actors—thereby producing political costs. Such audiences can be domestic as well as foreign.

Consistency Pressure – Assumed to be a causal mechanism linking rhetoric with policy outcomes. Presumed to function on two levels: From state rhetoric towards action and from collective institutional rhetoric towards resolution outcomes. Forgoing consistency pressure is said to produce audience costs.

Elected Ten (E10) – Elected Council Members of the UN Security Council. Serving two years with no veto power. Voted on by the General Assembly. Immediate reelection is not possible.

Extra-Institutional Audience – Assumed to be third parties observing institutional debate & conduct. Can include elites of countries (Thompson 2010) but also domestic citizens (Chapman 2012).

Intra-Institutional Audience – Internal forum of an organizational body or quasi-independent institution within an international organization. Requires some sort of public debate. Applied to the UNSC, consisting of other Council Members sharing the pressure of the UN mandate.

Marketplace of Themes – Metaphor for the character of the public debates of the UN Security Council. Speaking states are thought of as buyers looking for a publicly defendable theme for action. The image of a marketplace is derived in contrast to a 'theater in world politics'.

Organizational Rhetoric – Mundane form of institutional communication. Can neither publicly motivate nor justify conduct.

Permanent Five (P5) – Permanent Council Members of the UN Security Council. Serving indefinitely and possessing de facto veto powers over outcomes as any action requires 9 out of 15 affirmative votes with the concurring votes of the P5.

Signal of Benign Intention – After (Thompson 2006, 3), assumed to be information carried through a decision-making process via the UNSC to third parties observing resolution outcomes—showing that proposed actions are legitimate. Here: Assumed to set in with a dominant theme during a debate.

The Unsayable in World Politics – Inspired by (Johnstone 2003) after (Schachter 1985). Egoistical pursuit of parochial interest is frowned upon in UN conduct. Therefore, states must justify their actions and positions on some other normatively defendable rubric.

Theme – A form of normative rhetoric in political conduct, justifying actions and positions. Can be used as a heuristic shortcut.

Unanimity – Property of institutional decision-making. Within the UN, assumed to be desirable because unanimous resolutions are said to be perceived as more legitimate (Hurd 2002; Krisch 2008) and meant to represent the will of the international community (Welsh and Zaum 2013). Requires 15 affirmative out of 15 votes.

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SUMMARY

Against a scholarly mountain of literature on the United Nations, it is astounding how profoundly little we know about the decision-making processes of its most powerful and secretive body, the UN Security Council. In particular, no study has systematically investigated the rhetoric in the Council and assessed its impact on actions and decisions in authorized resolutions. Since diplomats, lawyers, and policymakers held almost 80,000 speeches in public debates between 1995 and 2018 alone, one has to wonder, do these speeches matter? Do they affect intergovernmental decision-making procedures? Do they amount to anything in world politics? And if so, what is their effect? The lack of answers to these questions shows the need for a theory-driven systematic, and rigorous empirical investigation of Council rhetoric.

To this end, I conducted confidential background interviews with senior UN diplomats from P5 and E10 Member States. I developed—by revisiting a particularly productive research vein called 'the deliberative turn' in International Relations (IR) theory—a novel theoretical framework that sees a so-far understudied role for the public Security Council debates. Most of the extant literature assumes that the only vital UN audience must be external to the institution; I, however, contend that there is an important *intra-institutional audience,* and this audience consists of other UNSC Member states. Specifically, I argue that in public Security Council debates, Member States engage in intra-institutional signaling. Against the notion that these debates are a form of 'theatre' were essentially cheap talk is spoken, I conceive the rivaling image of a *marketplace of themes*. Because states have to justify their actions and positions on something other than their parochial interests—as this behavior is frowned upon and barred by the Charter—states search for a type of normative rhetoric that can justify their position as legitimate and why their proposed action should deserve the support of the international community. Such normative rhetoric, I argue, is *thematic*—it is meant as a hermeneutic shortcut signaling benign intention—thus, alerting states to the worthiness of support. So, rhetoric spoken in public debates is meaningful as repeating a theme can signal a public understanding of a crisis or conflict, increasing the chances for a unanimous outcome.

Crucially, a signal of benign intention can only be reached if enough Member States repeat a given theme over days, weeks, or even months, bringing it to dominance. Dominant themes are desirable for institutional decision-making because they signal to the P5, who are leading the resolution-drafting process, that states understand a given conflict in the same light and that there is enough momentum to table a resolution for a vote and, consequently, for adoption.

Importantly, however, repeating a theme, and engaging in normative talk, is not without consequences. Because there is, indeed, another external audience assumed to observe the actions and behavior of Member States, states behave as if it was important to be consistent in their words and actions. This consistency, I term

consistency pressure, it is my theorized causal mechanism in this dissertation connecting rhetoric with outcomes. Consistency pressure functions on two levels; between individual words and action and collective rhetoric and institutional action. Adhering to this *consistency pressure* is important, as otherwise, states have to accept audience costs, imperiling their own credibility in the world and the status of the institution to which they belong. Through the causal mechanism of consistency pressure, rhetoric can affect the decision-making outcomes of an international organization.

Over time, specific rhetoric and specific actions create the expectation that if another conflict comes on the UN agenda and states talk similarly about it, they must choose the same type of intervention. In other words, through the consistency of rhetoric and actions, institutional *precedents* of decision-making are created. Through the use of sparse secondary literature and by manually reading more than a hundred UNSC resolutions and I identify six distinct themes with precedent character. These have been used time and again to publicly motivate action and justify decisions.

Thus, in my dissertation, much weight is placed on the occurrence and the repeating of dominant themes as a tool to investigate the public decision-making process of the Security Council. Accordingly, I investigate two research questions.

a) Why do some themes become dominant?
b) What is the effect of dominant themes?

My analysis then investigates and tries to explain the occurrence of dominant themes and their impact in *three exemplary domains* of institutional decision-making. First, across UN agenda items (and their debates) from 1995-2018. Second, in the domain of voting and unanimity production. Third, in the issue area of civil conflict management—arguably the hardest case for rhetoric in UN conduct, as the looming power of the P5 should go a long way in explaining outcomes here, thus potentially mitigating the role of rhetoric and the E10.

I do this by relying on state-of-the-art methods of computational computer linguistics. In particular, I combine semi-supervised textual machine-learning (seeded-LDA) with Hirschman-Herfindahl-Indexes from macroeconomics to measure my six distinct types of themes and two kinds of mundane organizational rhetoric. My textual machine-learning model is comprehensive—it maps all types of UN language precisely and exhaustively. Its validity scores come close to human intuition (F1 score of 0.81). This model is the first data contribution of my dissertation—next to an original UNSC voting data set with over 28,000 country resolution votes and an original database for UNSC conflict resolution debates and actions (next to an original UNSC resolution corpus). These data will hopefully be a huge asset for future studies of international organizations, rhetoric, and peace and conflict literature in particular. In my three empirical chapters, I further harness a series of important contributions.

First, I discover, to my strong surprise, that unanimity does not have a curvilinear relationship with dominance—in the sense that moderate to high levels promote unanimity (and low and very high levels decrease the likelihood of unanimity). Instead, unanimity and dominance form a U-curve shape in the Security Council. This finding suggests that unanimity is highly likely on two poles: Either on low dominance so that a number of themes are present during a debate and states can pick and choose their preferred normative rubric to justify actions or positions. Or, unanimity is most likely on high thematic dominance produced by the participation of the E10. The latter finding strongly supports the assumption made in my theory chapter that a *signal of benign* intention can only be reached when the E10 repeat a dominant theme. Importantly, however, individual justification and consistency seem to trump collective justification and consistency, as there are many more resolution-debates with a divided marketplace of themes and high unanimity.

Interestingly, I also find that not each theme produces unanimity equally well. The rhetoric of human rights always divides the Council, even when becoming dominant at the behest of the E10. The rhetoric of women and children, on the contrary, increases the associated likelihood of unanimity tremendously when shared by the E10. Speculating on this finding, I offer two inductive explanations. First, women and children is a cause 'where everybody can get behind'; this could allow human rights critical states to be seen towards working for something 'morally valuable' without wandering into the politically charged nature of human rights. Or, states are unintentionally receptive to a theme of women and children because they have victimized these groups as particularly vulnerable. The latter interpretation underscores critical UN scholarship criticizing diplomats for adding the suffix "-and children", to women in the UN, thereby infantilizing them and robbing them of agency. Importantly, my second empirical chapter demonstrates that without including rhetorical and participatory variables, we are working with an incomplete picture of how unanimity is created in the Council.

However, some prominent parts of my theoretical framework have also been falsified. Therefore, this doctoral thesis resembled an intensive learning process, reverting some original expectations. To begin, through the use of background interviews, I assumed that the P5 could not overbear in a debate and push a dominant theme time and again, as the E10 would understand this behavior as grand power imposition and would reject such proposals. The empirical analysis, while showing the theorized direction, was not statistically significant.

In, arguably, the most important domain of Council action, that is, in civil conflict management, analyzed in my final empirical chapter, I discovered strong evidence for some parts of my theoretical framework but had to falsify other segments. While each type of thematic rhetoric is statistically significantly associated with at least *one type* of Council action, no theme affects all intervention types. After assessing all the evidence, I offer an inductive explanation of this finding, suggesting that there is something 'as a logical' sell in the UNSC debates and speakers cannot frame a theme without partly constraining their rhetoric to fit a conflict and intervention type, as otherwise, their behavior seems contrived or dishonest.

To my dismay, neither does dominance promote the choice of Council action nor does the participation of the E10 matter towards the resolution of a civil conflict. The E10 only matter for the procurement of unanimity in the Council but are largely inconsequential for the resolution of civil conflicts (with the exception of calling for aid from the entire UN Membership). Thus, against my hope, my dissertation leaves the burgeoning literature on the importance of the E10 with mixed and rather disillusioning evidence.

Nevertheless, rhetoric is a statistically highly significant predictor for the types of Council action in civil conflict management against a host of alternative explanations, control variables in a series of panel regressions (and in 19 additional model specifications in the appendix). This is a significant finding for the scholarly community. Alerting them to the importance of incorporating linguistic variables into the study of world politics.

Lastly, my dissertation finds systematic (albeit correlational) evidence that rhetoric may not only promote but also prevent intervention. A rhetoric of women and children can do both: Increase the associated likelihood of military intervention and, at the same time, decrease the associated chances of mass sanctions. This finding suggests that rhetoric can not only spur institutional decision-making but may become a roadblock in its way. Thus, instead of debating whether rhetoric matters, future IR research should investigate under which conditions thematic rhetoric is conducive to promoting action or a hindrance to authorization.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Angesichts der umfangreichen wissenschaftlichen Literatur über die Vereinten Nationen ist es erstaunlich, wie wenig wir über die Entscheidungsprozesse des mächtigsten und geheimnisvollsten Gremiums der Vereinten Nationen, des UN-Sicherheitsrats, wissen. Insbesondere gibt es keine Studie, die systematisch die Rhetorik im Rat untersucht und ihre Auswirkungen auf Handlungen und Entscheidungen in autorisierten Resolutionen analysiert. Da Diplomaten, Juristen und politische Entscheidungsträger allein zwischen 1995 und 2018 fast 80.000 Reden in öffentlichen Debatten gehalten haben, stellt sich die Frage: Haben diese Reden Relevanz? Beeinflussen sie zwischenstaatliche Entscheidungsverfahren? Und wenn ja, was bewirken sie? Das Fehlen von Antworten auf diese Fragen zeigt die Notwendigkeit einer theoriegeleiteten, systematischen und rigorosen empirischen Untersuchung der Ratsrhetorik.

Zu diesem Zweck führte ich vertrauliche Hintergrundgespräche mit hochrangigen UN-Diplomaten aus den P5- und E10-Mitgliedstaaten. Unter Rückgriff auf eine besonders produktive Forschungsvene, die so genannte „deliberative Wende" in der Theorie der Internationalen Beziehungen (IB), entwickelte ich einen neuartigen theoretischen Rahmen, der den öffentlichen Debatten im Sicherheitsrat eine bislang wenig untersuchte Rolle zuweist. Der Großteil der vorhandenen Literatur geht davon aus, dass das einzige wichtige UN-Publikum außerhalb der Institution liegt; ich behaupte jedoch, dass es ein wichtiges *intrainstitutionelles Publikum* gibt, und dieses Publikum besteht aus anderen UNSC-Mitgliedstaaten. Insbesondere argumentiere ich, dass die Mitgliedstaaten in den öffentlichen Debatten des Sicherheitsrats intrainstitutionelle Signale aussenden. Gegen das vorherschende Bild, dass diese Debatten eine Form von „Theater" sind, in dem im Wesentlichen billiges Gerede gesprochen wird, stelle ich das konkurrierende Bild eines *Marktplatzes der Themen* auf. Da die Staaten ihre Handlungen und Positionen mit etwas anderem als ihren Partikularinteressen begründen müssen - da dieses Verhalten in der Charta verpönt und verboten ist -, suchen sie nach einer Art normativer Rhetorik, mit der sie ihre Position als legitim begründen und begründen können, warum ihre vorgeschlagenen Maßnahmen die Unterstützung der internationalen Gemeinschaft verdienen. Eine solche normative Rhetorik, so argumentiere ich, ist *thematisch* - sie ist als hermeneutischer Shortcut gedacht, die eine wohlwollende Absicht (im engl. signal of benign intention) signalisiert und damit andere Staaten darauf aufmerksam macht, dass sie Unterstützung verdient. Rhetorik in öffentlichen Debatten ist also sinnvoll, da die Wiederholung eines Themas ein öffentliches Verständnis einer Krise oder eines Konflikts signalisieren kann, was die Chancen auf ein einstimmiges Ergebnis erhöht.

Entscheidend ist, dass ein Signal der wohlwollenden Absicht nur erreicht werden kann, wenn genügend Mitgliedstaaten ein bestimmtes Thema über Tage, Wochen oder sogar Monate hinweg wiederholen und dieses damit Dominanz verleihen. Dominante Themen sind für die institutionelle Entscheidungsfindung wünschenswert, da sie den P5, die bei der Ausarbeitung der Resolution

federführend sind, signalisieren, dass die Staaten einen bestimmten Konflikt in einem einheitlichen Licht sehen und dass genügend Momentum vorhanden ist, um eine Resolution zur Abstimmung und folglich zur Verabschiedung zu bringen.

Es ist jedoch wichtig zu erwähnen, dass die Wiederholung eines Themas, die normative Rhetorik, nicht ohne Folgen bleibt. Da es in der Tat ein weiteres externes Publikum gibt, von dem angenommen wird, dass es die Handlungen und das Verhalten der UNSC Mitgliedstaaten beobachtet, verhalten sich die Staaten so, als ob es wichtig wäre, in ihren Worten und Handlungen konsequent zu sein. Diese Konsistenz, die ich als *Konsistenzdruck* bezeichne, ist der von mir in dieser Dissertation theoretisierte kausale Mechanismus, der Rhetorik mit Ergebnissen verbindet. Der Konsistenzdruck wirkt auf zwei Ebenen: zwischen individuellen Worten und Handlungen und kollektiver Rhetorik und institutionellem Handeln. Die Einhaltung dieses Konsistenzdrucks ist wichtig, da die Staaten andernfalls sog. audience costs in Kauf nehmen müssen,was ihre eigene Glaubwürdigkeit in der Welt und den Status der Institution, der sie angehören, gefährdet. Durch den kausalen Mechanismus des Konsistenzdrucks kann Rhetorik die Entscheidungsergebnisse einer internationalen Organisation beeinflussen.

Im Laufe der Zeit schaffen eine bestimmte Rhetorik und bestimmte Handlungen die Erwartung, dass, wenn ein anderer Konflikt auf die Tagesordnung der UNO kommt und die Staaten ähnlich darüber sprechen, sie sich für die gleiche Art von Intervention entscheiden müssen. Mit anderen Worten: Durch die Konsistenz von Rhetorik und Handlungen werden institutionelle Präzedenzfälle für die Entscheidungsfindung geschaffen. Anhand der spärlichen Sekundärliteratur und der manuellen Lektüre von mehr als hundert Resolutionen des UN-Sicherheitsrats habe ich sechs verschiedene Themen mit Präzedenzfallcharakter identifiziert. Diese wurden immer wieder verwendet, um öffentlich zum Handeln zu motivieren und Entscheidungen zu rechtfertigen.

Daher wird in meiner Dissertation großes Gewicht auf das Auftreten und die Wiederholung dominanter Themen gelegt, um den öffentlichen Entscheidungsprozess des Sicherheitsrats zu untersuchen. Dementsprechend untersuche ich zwei Forschungsfragen.

a) Warum werden bestimmte Themen dominant?

b) Was ist die Wirkung dominanter Themen?

In meiner Analyse untersuche ich das Auftreten dominanter Themen und ihre Auswirkungen in drei exemplarischen Bereichen der institutionellen Entscheidungsfindung und versuche sie zu erklären. Erstens in der UN-Agenda (und ihren Debatten) von 1995-2018. Zweitens im Bereich der Abstimmung und der Herstellung von Einstimmigkeit. Drittens im Bereich der zivilen Konfliktbewältigung - dem wohl schwierigsten Fall für Rhetorik im UN-Verhalten, da die sich abzeichnende Macht der P5 die Ergebnisse in diesem Bereich weitgehend erklären dürfte, wodurch die Rolle der Rhetorik und der E10 möglicherweise abgeschwächt wird.

Ich stütze mich dabei auf modernste Methoden der Computerlinguistik. Insbesondere kombiniere ich semi-supervised textual machine-learning (seeded-LDA) mit Hirschman-Herfindahl-Indizes aus der Makroökonomie, um meine sechs verschiedenen Arten von Themen und zwei Arten von alltäglicher Organisationsrhetorik zu messen. Mein sprachliches Machine-Learning-Modell ist, institutionell gesehen, allumfassend - es bildet alle Arten von UN-Sprache präzise und vollumfänglich ab. Seine Validitätswerte kommen menschlicher Intuition nahe (F1-Wert von 0,81). Dieses Modell ist der erste Datenbeitrag meiner Dissertation - neben einem originalen UNSC-Abstimmungsdatensatz mit über 28.000 Länder Abstimmungen und einer neuartigen Datenbank für UNSC-Konfliktresolutionsdebatten und -aktionen. Diese Daten werden hoffentlich eine große Bereicherung für zukünftige Studien über internationale Organisationen, Rhetorik und insbesondere Friedens- und Konfliktliteratur sein. In meinen drei empirischen Kapiteln generiere ich eine weitere Reihe von akademischen Beiträgen.

Erstens entdecke ich zu meiner Überraschung, dass Einstimmigkeit und Dominanz nicht in einem kurvenlinearen Verhältnis zueinander stehen - in dem Sinne, dass ein mittleres bis hohes Niveau die Einstimmigkeit fördert (und ein niedriges bis sehr hohes Niveau die Wahrscheinlichkeit der Einstimmigkeit verringert). Stattdessen bilden Einstimmigkeit und Dominanz im Sicherheitsrat die Form einer U-Kurve. Dieses Ergebnis legt nahe, dass Einstimmigkeit an zwei Polen sehr wahrscheinlich ist: Entweder bei geringer Dominanz, so dass eine Reihe von Themen während einer Debatte präsent sind und die Staaten ihre bevorzugte normative Rubrik auswählen können, um Aktionen oder Positionen zu rechtfertigen. Oder die Einstimmigkeit ist am wahrscheinlichsten bei hoher thematischer Dominanz, die durch die Teilnahme der E10 entsteht. Die letztgenannte Feststellung stützt die in meinem Theoriekapitel aufgestellte Annahme, dass ein Signal der wohlwollenden Absicht nur erreicht werden kann, wenn die E10 ein dominantes Thema wiederholen. Wichtig ist jedoch, dass individuelle Rechtfertigung und Konsistenz die kollektive Rechtfertigung und Konsistenz zu übertrumpfen scheinen, da es viel mehr Resolutionsdebatten mit einem geteilten Marktplatz von Themen und hoher Einstimmigkeit gibt.

Interessanterweise stelle ich auch fest, dass nicht jedes Thema gleich gut Einstimmigkeit erzeugt. Eine Rhetorik der Menschenrechte spaltet den Rat immer, selbst wenn sie auf Betreiben der E10 dominant wird. Eine Rhetorik der Frauen und Kinder hingegen erhöht die Wahrscheinlichkeit der Einstimmigkeit enorm, wenn sie von den E10 geteilt wird. Für diesen Befund biete ich zwei induktive Erklärungen an. Erstens sind Frauen und Kinder ein Anliegen, hinter dem „jeder stehen kann“, was es menschenrechtskritischen Staaten ermöglichen könnte, sich für etwas „moralisch Wertvolles“ einzusetzen, ohne sich in die politisch aufgeladene Natur der Menschenrechte zu begeben. Oder die Staaten sind ungewollt empfänglich für das Thema Frauen und Kinder, weil sie diese Gruppen als besonders verletzlich dargestellt haben. Die letztgenannte Interpretation unterstreicht die kritische UN-Forschung, die Diplomaten dafür kritisiert, dass sie Frauen „-und Kinder“ infantilisieren und ihrer Handlungsfähigkeit berauben.

Zusammenfassend, zeigt mein zweites empirisches Kapitel, dass wir ohne die Einbeziehung rhetorischer und partizipatorischer Variablen ein unvollständiges Bild davon haben, wie Einstimmigkeit im Rat hergestellt wird.

Allerdings wurden auch einige wichtige Teile meines theoretischen Rahmens falsifiziert. Daher glich diese Dissertation einem intensiven Lernprozess, bei dem einige ursprüngliche Erwartungen revidiert wurden. Zunächst bin ich durch Hintergrundgespräche davon ausgegangen, dass die P5 in einer Debatte nicht übermächtig werden und ein dominantes Thema immer wieder durchsetzen können, da die E10 dieses Verhalten als Großmachtgehabe verstehen und solche Vorschläge ablehnen würden. Die empirische Analyse zeigte zwar die vermutete Richtung, war aber statistisch nicht signifikant.

In dem wohl wichtigsten Handlungsbereich des Rates, dem zivilen Konfliktmanagement, das ich in meinem letzten empirischen Kapitel analysierte, fand ich starke Belege für einige Teile meines theoretischen Rahmens, musste aber jedoch auch andere Segmente falsifizieren. Während jede Art von thematischer Rhetorik statistisch signifikant mit mindestens einer Art von Ratsmaßnahmen verbunden ist, wirkt sich kein Thema auf alle Interventionsarten aus. Nach Auswertung aller Daten biete ich eine induktive Erklärung für dieses Ergebnis an, die darauf hindeutet, dass in den Debatten des UN-Sicherheitsrats etwas als „logisch" verkauft werden muss und dass Sprecher kein Thema freihals framen können, ohne ihre Rhetorik zumindest teilweise auf einen Konflikt- und Interventionstyp anzupassen, da ihr Verhalten sonst gekünstelt oder unehrlich erscheint.

Zu meiner Enttäuschung, musste ich feststellen, dass weder Dominanz die Wahl der Maßnahmen des Sicherheitsrats befördert, noch die Beteiligung der E10 für die Lösung eines zivilen Konflikts von Bedeutung sind. Die E10 sind nur für die Erlangung von Einstimmigkeit im Rat von Bedeutung, sind aber für die Lösung ziviler Konflikte weitgehend bedeutungslos (mit Ausnahme der Bitte um finanielle Hilfe durch die gesamte UN-Mitgliedschaft). Entgegen meiner Hoffnungen verlässt meine Dissertation also die aufkeimende Literatur zur Bedeutung der E10 mit gemischten Erkenntnissen.

Nichtsdestotrotz ist Rhetorik ein statistisch hochsignifikanter Prädiktor für die Arten von Ratsmaßnahmen im zivilen Konfliktmanagement gegenüber einer Vielzahl alternativer Erklärungen und Kontrollvariablen in einer Reihe von Panel-Regressionen (und in 19 zusätzlichen Modellspezifikationen im Appendix). Dies ist eine wichtige Erkenntnis für die wissenschaftliche Gemeinschaft. Meine Forschung macht daher darauf aufmerksam, wie wichtig es ist, sprachliche Variablen in die Untersuchung der Weltpolitik miteinzubeziehen.

Schließlich findet meine Dissertation systematische (wenn auch korrelative) Belege dafür, dass Rhetorik Interventionen nicht nur fördern, sondern auch verhindern kann. Eine Rhetorik der Frauen und Kinder kann beides bewirken: Sie erhöht die Wahrscheinlichkeit einer militärischen Intervention und verringert gleichzeitig die Wahrscheinlichkeit von Massensanktionen. Dieses Ergebnis deutet darauf hin, dass

Rhetorik nicht nur institutionelle Entscheidungen vorantreiben, sondern auch zu einem Hindernis auf dem Weg dorthin werden kann. Statt darüber zu diskutieren, ob Rhetorik wichtig ist, sollte künftige IB-Forschung daher untersuchen, unter welchen Bedingungen thematische Rhetorik handlungsfördernd oder -hemmend ist.

PART 1

Theory & Framework

Chapter 1 - Introduction

The United Nations Security Council[1] has stood the test of time. Throughout its existence and qua its Charter, the Council faced and solved numerous inter, intra, and transnational conflicts. Much scholarly work has been written about how the Council deals with these conflicts (Bosco 2014; Einsiedel, Malone, and Ugarte 2015; Sievers and Daws 2014). Why and when they come on the Council's agenda (Binder and Golub 2020; Frederking and Patane 2017); why some conflicts never make it to the Council (Allen and Yuen 2020; Binder 2015); whose interests matter when sending in peacekeepers (Allen and Yuen 2022; Gilligan and Stedman 2003); and what explains the duration of eventual peace (Hultman, Kathman, and Shannon 2016). Many studies delved deeper into the measure of peacekeeping, explaining how peacekeeping has changed over time (Tardy 2011) and what explains the use of force in peacekeeping operations (Howard and Dayal 2018) when peacekeeping and peacebuilding fail (Autesserre 2009; 2019), and, if and, when it tends to be effective (Fortna 2004; 2008; Hegre, Hultman, and Nygård 2019). Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that the UN works closer to its mandate and less to the permanent five (P5) interests than commonly assumed (Beardsley and Schmidt 2012).

Against this mountain of scholarly work, however, little attention has been devoted to the question of how the Council talks, reflects, and negotiates threats to peace. This is particularly startling, as negotiations—and quite literally diplomatic rhetoric—are a quintessential building block from observing a crisis to its eventual intervention. Without rhetoric and negotiation, no crisis can be discussed as a Security Council agenda item, and without agenda debate, no threat to peace can ever be resolved (Billerbeck 2020).

This lack of scholarly attention is also contrasted by the fact that from 1995 to 2018 alone, UNSC member states gave almost 80,000 public speeches on threats to peace and security (Schönfeld et al. 2019). If one were to add up all individual speeches to a single document, one would arrive at a paper containing more than 200 million words, somewhere between 400,000 and 800,000 pages. Considering the time it takes to draft these speeches—including backchannel discussions and double-

[1] Sometimes abbreviated to UNSC or SC. Throughout my writing I might sometimes simply refer to it as "the Council".

checking with home governments—diplomats, lawyers, and policymakers spend an astonishing amount of time on speech crafting. Given this enormous effort, one has to wonder, do these speeches matter? Do they amount to anything? Do they have an impact on international security politics? And if so, what is their effect?

The lack of answers to any of these questions brings to light an astonishing realization: Although the organization has been running for more than 75 years, we know profoundly little about its inner decision-making processes (Gifkins 2021, 2). The few studies that take UN debates and rhetoric seriously (Eckhard et al. 2021a; Kentikelenis and Voeten 2020; Schönfeld et al. 2019) see the real value of rhetoric in its function for post hoc justification and, thus legitimation, either for interventions or the institution as a whole (Binder and Heupel 2015; Claude 1966; Coleman 2017; Hauenstein and Joshi 2020; Zürn 2018, 70–77). By default, such studies assume that the most vital audience for the UN must be *extra-institutional*.

I.1 Scholarly Gap and Research Questions

Against this scholarly background, my dissertation advances two arguments. First, public UN debates are also a vehicle for an *intra-institutional* audience—consisting of other UNSC member states. To arrive at a common understanding of how a crisis ought to be perceived and justified, states are searching for a *dominant theme* embedded in a Security Council debate to look for a signal of benign intention—indicating the worthiness of intervention. Second, the dominant theme of Security Council debates affects the actions and decisions of the UNSC. Crucially, rhetoric affects the likelihood of unanimity in institutional decision-making and the kinds of interventions carried out in UNSC resolutions.

For some international relations (IR) scholars, these might be absurd claims. In their view, the UNSC functions much like a venue, where powerful member states meet only to advance their parochial interests (Bosco 2009; Mearsheimer 1994; Waltz 2000). While these scholars are correct that member states *can* use the Council as a forum to advance their national interests, they—often erroneously—discard any diplomatic talk spoken in the Council as mere cheap talk. For them, rhetoric in the Council clothes actions and decisions that would have happened regardless of any talk (Sandholtz and Stone Sweet 2004, 256).

While such accounts sometimes overemphasize parochial interests, which are said to dominate the institution, they point towards an important insight; there are power politics at play in the Council that stem from a prestigious group of actors that transcends all modes of communication. These are the so-called permanent five (P5)[2]. The P5 hold their seats at the Council indefinitely (Sievers and Daws 2014, 125). While every other member state has to face an election and rotate to gain a seat—serving for two short years—the P5 enjoy the privilege of political longevity, allowing them to steer the course of the Council in a long-term manner.

Moreover, the Charter of the United Nations bestows the P5 with an effective veto. The Council needs nine out of fifteen affirmative votes to pass a resolution, *with the concurring votes of the permanent five* (Sievers and Daws 2014, 295). Anecdotally, the immense power of the P5 is perhaps best represented by the fact that no Security Council resolution has ever been overturned by a majority of the Elected members when the P5 were all in favor (see the footnote of: Chapman 2012, 25). [3]

These two facts, the perpetuity of Membership and a veto option contribute to an elite pact within an elitist group (Voeten 2005). As a result, this immense level of institutional inequality makes the Security Council quite the 'strange political animal' in the arena of world politics. On the one hand, the Council—imbued with enormous amounts of authority (Zürn, Tokhi, and Binder 2021, 436)—is supposed to defend international peace and security impartially, as sovereign equality arguably forms the backdrop of the Council (Viola 2020, 188).[4] On the other hand, however, the particular nature of voting power makes it unlikely that "alike cases are treated alike" (Zürn 2018, 60). This complex and even paradoxical nature might also be observed concerning actors' institutional roles within the Council.

On the one hand, there is the individual state that might use the Council as a venue to address its parochial interest—including the unequally powerful P5—and then there is the Security Council as a collective actor, consisting of all its given members at a given point in time jointly facing the task to preserve international peace and security (United Nations, Article 24; Voeten 2005). The collective entity is, of

[2] The P5 consist of the United States, The United Kingdom, France, the Russian Federation and China.
[3] Chapman's point still holds up. As of writing this dissertation, no resolution has been overturned by a majority of the elected members.
[4] Viola makes a compelling argument as to why the sovereign equality of member states does run counter the logic of institutionalized inequality in the form of the P5—therefore, the institution's backdrop may actually best expressed as a club good, than a common good.

course, not only made up of the P5 but of the E10 as well. Together, the E10 and the P5 are equipped with the authority to pass binding resolutions for all UN member states, not just members of the Security Council.[5]

Instead of downplaying this institutional paradox, my dissertation investigates its political consequences. The two roles— the Permanent Five and Elected Ten— form two levels of analysis in my writing—both levels I investigate through the rhetoric of Member states. The arguments I present, and the evidence I show, have important implications for our understanding of international security politics.

For the longest time, conventional wisdom has assumed that by and large, the interest constellations of the P5 (Bosco 2009; Bosco 2014; Voeten 2001) mostly determine UNSC conduct. Although Gilligan and Stedman already, in 2003, pointed out that the P5 agreement is quite trivially important for intervention, as without it, no action can go forward (Gilligan and Stedman 2003, 39). So, the much bigger question becomes, what happens after an agreement is procured? In other words, what other factors motivate UN intervention? A burgeoning literature found that next to the characteristics of a conflict (Beardsley and Schmidt 2012; Fortna 2004; Hultman 2013; Mullenbach 2005), the preferences of the E10 over resolution outcomes may matter as well (Binder and Heupel 2020; Carnegie and Mikulaschek 2020). While this literature has advanced our knowledge concerning intervention, it largely remains silent about which actions are selected and why they are chosen. I contend that this is so because the scholarship underestimates the complexity of the institutional decision-making of the Council because it sees no place for its rhetoric. Furthermore, a very small but ardent literature maintained that the rhetoric in UN debates had been consequential in at least two conflict episodes (Hurd 2005; Johnstone 2003; Medzihorsky, Popovic, and Jenne 2017).

I build on this literature by following the initial impetus of Gilligan and Stedman (Gilligan and Stedman 2003). P5 agreement is a necessary scope condition of my dissertation. But what happens once the P5 agree? What does the institutional decision-making process look like? To what extent can rhetoric affect interventions? To shed light on this process, I built a theoretical framework on the importance of unanimity in UNSC decision-making (Chapman 2012; Hurd 2002; Thompson 2010; Voeten 2005; Zaum 2013) and theorized a role for thematic

[5] To differentiate between the 15 Security Council Members at a given point in time and the entire 193 UN member states, I capitalize the „M“ whenever I refer to Council Members.

rhetoric in the intra-institutional decision-making process (Goddard 2006; Hanrieder 2011; Hurd 2005; Johnstone 2003). By utilizing this framework through the use of a state-of-the-art machine-learning text model (Watanabe and Zhou 2020), I investigate tens of thousands of diplomatic speeches with two concrete research questions in mind:

c) Why do some themes become dominant?
d) What is the effect of dominant themes?

I.2 The Argument in brief

My framework starts from the vantage point that there is normative pressure to justify one's positions and one's conduct in the UN Security Council (Billerbeck 2020; Forst 2017, 57; Zürn 2004). Crucially, however, states cannot merely state their parochial interest as a rhetorical basis for their conduct, as the egoistical pursuit of national interest is frowned upon and unlikely to be met with multilateral enthusiasm (Johnstone 2003, 441; Schachter 1985, 35). This phenomenon I term the *unsayable in world politics*. Unsayable is that, of course, states want to realize their interests and want to see their preferences maintained in any given conflict resolution. So, states must justify their positions and conduct on something other than their parochial interests. To do this, they search for a normative rubric that could justify their position as legitimate and why their proposed action should deserve the support of the international community. Such normative rhetoric, I argue, is *thematic*—it is meant as a hermeneutic shortcut signaling benign intention—thus, alerting states to the worthiness of support (Chapman 2012; Hanrieder 2011; O'Mahoney 2017). Furthermore, after authorization, such themes may be used later to justify conduct.

Yet, such rhetoric and actions are not only observed by UN member states but by elites in other countries and the international community as a whole. Over time, specific rhetoric and specific actions create the expectation that if another conflict comes on the UN agenda and states talk similarly about it; they must choose the same type of intervention (Franck and Weisband 1971, 171; Sandholtz and Stone Sweet 2004). In other words, through the consistency of rhetoric and actions, institutional *precedents* of decision-making are created (Gehring and Dörfler 2019). Adhering to this *consistency pressure* is important, as otherwise, states have to accept audience costs, imperiling their own credibility in the world and the status of the

institution to which they belong (Fearon 1994; Scherzinger 2022a). Through the causal mechanism of consistency pressure, rhetoric can affect the decision-making outcomes of an international organization.

My analysis then investigates and explains the occurrence of dominant themes and their impact in three exemplary domains of institutional decision-making. First, across UN agenda items (and their debates) from 1995-2018. Second, in the domain of voting and unanimity production. Third, in the issue-area of civil conflict management—arguably the hardest case for rhetoric in UN conduct, as the looming power of the P5 should go a long way in explaining outcomes here, thus potentially mitigating the role of rhetoric and the E10.

Crucially, my doctoral thesis delivers a series of important theoretical and empirical contributions. First, through the use of background interviews with senior UN diplomats, and a novel way to revisit the deliberative turn in IR, I am able to craft a theoretical framework that explains a so-far understudied dimension of UN decision-making; that of intra-institutional signaling.

Second, my empirical analysis lends systematic and rigorous support to the argument that thematic rhetoric affects the actions and decisions of the UN. Through the use of a novel semi-supervised machine-learning model, I can demonstrate that dominant themes may threaten unanimity over resolutions but that this trend can be mitigated if and when the E10 share the public motive of the dominant theme. Against my original expectation, I find that unanimity has not a curvilinear relationship with dominance—in the sense that medium to high levels release a signal of benign intention. Instead, I find that unanimity and thematic dominance forms a U-curve shape. Unanimity, in the Council, is most likely on two poles: Either on low dominance, so debates where everyone can justify actions and positions on their preferred theme, or on very high dominance where only theme is shared by the collective. These findings suggest that an individual consistency between words and action, most of the time, trumps collective consistency. Most importantly, however, the highest likelihood of unanimity is achieved if the E10 share a rising theme—bringing it to dominance. This empirical evidence underscores the argument that only with the rhetoric of the E10, a signal of benign intention is reachable.

Third, I build three sets of original data (UN resolutions corpus 1995-2018, UNSC country votes 1995- 2018, a language model that can classify and differentiate between all types of UN language) which will hopefully prove to be of enormous help to international relations, peace and conflict, and QTA scholars globally.

Fourth, with these original data, and a series of panel data regressions, I can demonstrate that rhetoric even affects intervention outcomes in civil conflicts against a host of alternative explanations. However, the analysis also falsifies the assumption that dominant themes promote the choice of certain intervention types. While rhetoric remains significantly associated with intervention, neither dominance nor the participation of the E10 matter toward the resolution of civil conflicts. Because not every type of rhetoric is systematically associated with intervention, I offer an inductive argument that there is something like 'a logical sell' and speakers face certain constraints when framing their thematic rhetoric to fit a particular crisis (and intervention type).

Lastly, there is strong correlational evidence that rhetoric may not only promote but also prevent intervention. A rhetoric of women and children can do both: Increase the associated likelihood of military intervention and, at the same time, decrease the associated chances of mass sanctions. This finding suggests that rhetoric can not only spur institutional decision-making but may become a roadblock in its way.

All in all, my analysis provides mixed evidence for the importance of the Elected Ten but leaves the scholarly community with the plea to investigate rhetoric as a potential explanatory variable in the arena of world security politics.

I.3 Outline for this Dissertation

Having established the research question and motivation for this undertaking, I now turn to the roadmap for this dissertation project. I divide my dissertation into two parts. The first illustrates the organizational workings of the UNSC and the theoretical assumptions guiding my doctoral thesis. The second and more elaborate part focuses on the empirical interplay between rhetoric and action by the Council.

In the next section, I detail the 'journey' from observing a crisis to an eventual resolution. As the UNSC remains a non-transparent institution, demonstrating at

what procedural point rhetoric in general—and themes in particular—affect an outcome will greatly benefit our understanding of the decision-making process within the most powerful organization in security politics. To do this, I rely on the sparse secondary literature on Council procedural matters and a series of confidential background interviews with high-ranking P5 and E10 diplomats conducted between October 2020 and June 2022.

In Chapter 2, I present my theoretical framework centering on the concept of themes as a window into institutional decision-making. In essence, the chapter scrutinizes two types of rhetoric: normative rhetoric, called themes, which carry a publicly stated motive for action and a potential justification for intervention, and organizational rhetoric, which is merely meant to maintain standardized communication in a bureaucratic fashion. Moreover, I situate my concept of themes in the influential IR literature of the deliberative turn. Chapter 2 also theorizes the conditions under which themes become dominant. To do this, I embed my framework in the background logic of the *unsayable in world politics*.

Furthermore, I derive from prominent secondary literature and UN resolutions thematic precedents which have been used to justify actions and positions in the UNSC. Then, I move on to explain the paradoxical nature of thematic dominance: That is, I explain why dominance is something desirable as it may lead to a signal of benign intention, but conversely, it may exclude outlier positions and thus harm the likelihood for unanimity. Last, I close the chapter by providing twelve hypotheses about the interplay of rhetoric and action and two propositions for the occurrence of dominant themes.

The second part of my dissertation delves into the empirics of rhetoric and intervention in international security politics. In Chapter 3, I turn to the research design of my dissertation. I detail how scholars can capture themes and organizational rhetoric in international security organizations using a series of novel machine-learning methods stemming from automated corpus linguistics (Watanabe and Zhou 2020). Coding experiments demonstrate that my novel seeded-LDA model with an original seed word dictionary is coming extremely close to human intuition in classifying themes in UNSC debates (F1 score of 0.81). Moreover, it details the data-gathering process that led to an original dataset on all Security Council resolutions, with full text, voting decisions, and authorized action from

1990-2018. Last, I present a series of state-of-the-art validation techniques for using my main text model.

In Chapter 4, I map the rise and fall of themes throughout the UNSC agenda from 1995 to 2018. Through illustrative descriptives, I provide strong plausibility to the argument that external shocks promote themes but that their framing remains a political choice. I further dissect thematic dissemination by the E10 vs. the P5, showing some interesting variations later explained through a combination of consistency pressure and political interest constellations.

In Chapter 5, I move towards the domain of unanimity production in the UNSC. I build on existing studies by providing a baseline model of unanimity and then an augmented model including my linguistic and participatory variables of interest. Crucially, I demonstrate against a host of alternative explanations that themes play an important role in the formation of unanimity in the Council and that without the verbal participation of the E10, unanimity is extremely rare. Against my theorizing, I find that unanimity is not curvilinearly related to thematic dominance, but that their relationship is similar to a U-shape curve. This finding suggests that unanimity is likely on two poles: *Either on very low dominance*, so a debate where speakers talk about a number of themes or a debate where speakers *focus on only one theme*. This falsifies my assumption that too much dominance can threaten outlier positions. In the chapter, I explore this relationship further and assess an inductive explanation pointing towards the realization that individual justification and consistency, often times, trumps collective justification and consistency.

Notably, I also discover that not every theme is equally able to produce unanimity in the Council. While a theme of women and children promotes unanimity, a theme of human rights decreases the chances for unanimity in the Council. The remainder of the Chapter then gives a detailed account of why this could be the case.

In my final empirical Chapter, Chapter 6, I study the hardest possible case of rhetoric in Council decision-making. That is, I investigate whether rhetoric affects outcomes in civil conflict interventions. Because intervention and occupation costs are assumed to be highest in these kinds of cases, the scholarship assumes that P5 interests (and preference homogeneity) mostly determine conduct in tandem with so-called crisis characteristics. I can falsify this claim with considerable statistical evidence, showing that rhetoric matters—even against a host of alternative

explanations. Confirming large parts of my theoretical framework, I demonstrate that each type of conflict intervention (offering aid, authorizing sanctions, blockades, consensual peacekeeping, a third-party intervention, and even outright military force) is associated with at least *one type* of thematic rhetoric. However, the analysis also finds only murky evidence for the importance of the E10 in handling civil conflict management. To my dismay, the role of dominance does not seem to affect the decision-making in this crucial issue area. In the remainder of the chapter, I discuss the plausibility that rhetoric may not only promote action but could also become a roadblock in its way—leading to a plea for the incorporation of more linguistic variables in future IR research.

The Conclusion provides a summary of my contributions and addresses countervailing arguments once more. In addition, I address the theoretical and technical limitations of the analysis and discuss how future research could potentially overcome these. Finally, I close my dissertation by providing an outlook of how rhetoric can remain a window into the decision-making process of the United Nations and other international organizations in an age of renewed geopolitical conflict.

I.4 From the Onset of a Security Threat to an eventual Resolution

Against the backdrop of rich and diverse literature, the UNSC remains an opaque organization. This is well illustrated by the fact that after more than 75 years of existence, the UN has not yet finalized its *definitive* rules of procedure. Instead, they are still merely "*provisional* rules" (Gharekhan 2006, 13)—because the five permanent members can still not agree on the official handling of some rules of conduct. A more cynical take on this lack of definitive rules is that the P5 enjoy this status of secrecy, as it might award them much-welcomed wiggle room for the conduct of power politics in the shadow of the institution.

Be that as it may, much of the inner workings of the Security Council remain opaque and practice-based and are rarely formalized, which is surprising given the sheer amount of international authority the Council may exercise (Zürn, Tokhi, and Binder 2021). Since diplomats necessarily remain secretive, often to protect working relationships with already strained international partners or to protect the neutral candor necessary for their job, the working methods and crisis diplomacy of the Council may seem impenetrable to scholars.

Indeed, of all the studies that focus on the UN, there only is a small amount of literature on the inner workings of the institution (Allen and Yuen 2022; Einsiedel, Malone, and Ugarte 2015; Gharekhan 2006; Gifkins 2021; Sievers and Daws 2014; Welsh and Zaum 2013).[6] And none of these studies use rhetoric to elucidate the *decision-making structure* of the UNSC. Thus, to demonstrate to what extent rhetoric may affect the outcomes of the institution, it is vital to fill this gap—detailing the journey from observing a crisis to its eventual resolution, thereby detailing at what point language comes into play. To facilitate this, I conducted a series of eight background interviews with high-ranking UN officials, of both P5 and E10 countries, from October 2020 to June 2022. These interviews were an integral element in elucidating the institutional decision-making process.

Based on Article 24 (United Nations, Article 24), the Security Council is responsible for "maintaining international peace and security" in an anarchic world. Because the founders of the institution did not specify what exactly constitutes a threat to international peace, the Security Council has interpreted the mandate rather broadly, intervening in a wide range of crises from famines and other humanitarian catastrophes to nuclear armament, interstate war, intrastate conflict, to even genocide (Gharekhan 2006, 2).

Not all of the security threats the Council addresses must be target specific. From time to time, the Security Council will act on a topic passing a resolution to 'mobilize for peace', to 'issue a call against domestic violence', or a statement on 'the universality of children's rights'. Indeed, in the data used for this dissertation, roughly every third resolution is not addressing an interstate or intrastate conflict.[7]

Before Member states can discuss any crisis, the Security Council has to decide to spend time on this particular security threat in one form or another. This is by no means a trivial undertaking (Gharekhan 2006, 15). Council Members have to decide whether the given threat should be discussed publicly or privately first and whether non-members should be allowed to participate or even speak (Gharekhan 2006, 15).

[6] These are commendable studies that at least feature *one* section or one chapter on the procedures of the Council. If we downsized this list by making a requirement that the procedures are the main focus, there would be even fewer to cite.
[7] Author's data collection.

In secondary literature, this is usually where the confusion starts. For whatever reason, it is astonishingly hard to find a detailed account of what type of UNSC meetings actually exist. And this confusion does not stop at the door to the Security Council chamber. Anecdotally, Sidney Bailey found that after polling various UN diplomats who had just left an informal consultation, they themselves often could not even agree on what type of meeting they just had. Some participants described it as "informal consultative meeting", others as "informal discussion", and one diplomat even thought that it was a "formal meeting" (Quoted in Feurle 1985, 269).

To demystify some of these practices and meetings, I propose that one could classify the types of UN meetings along two dimensions (two categorical variables). Hence, one can form a two-by-two typology for them. First, there is an underlying dimension of secrecy. *Private* meetings are secretive in nature, which means that no form of verbal record will be kept, and diplomats can speak freely as information almost never gets leaked. Public meetings, on the contrary, take place in the debating chamber of the Council, are televised, and always transcribed.

Second, there exists a dimension of access. Meetings can be *open* so that any UN member state, not just Security Council members, can attend them. Or, meetings can be *closed*, so only sitting Council Members may attend unless the Council President or the Secretary-General invites other countries to participate under article 31 of the Charter (United Nations, Article 31). Usually, states who want to participate are granted access as long as they provide a reason why the debate is important to their interests. Invited states can never vote on any matters and do not count towards the quorum of the Council. In Informal Consultations, Security Council members may meet "in part" or "as a whole". For the latter, attendance is mandatory for UNSC members, as the current Council president may want to discuss the upcoming agenda informally.

Figure 1.1 Typology of Meeting Types

		Secrecy	
		Public	Private
Access	Open	Non-existent	Informal Consultation /Arria Meeting
	Closed	**Public Debates**[8]	Private Negotiation /IID

Source: Author's illustration.

Things get a bit trickier with the two sub-types of private meetings, namely Arria Meetings and informal interactive dialogues (IID). Arria meetings are named after UN Ambassador Diego Arria (Venezuela), who convened in 1992 an informal meeting to have a civilian give an eyewitness account of the violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Security Council Report 2020a). Because the account itself was unlikely to be featured in a public debate, Arria chose the UN delegate lounge as the venue for his meeting. The meeting created a precedent, and since then, informal meetings, which are open to every interested party, even outside UN membership, are frequently held there (ibid). The meetings are completely optional for diplomats, are public, and no formal decisions can ever be made there.

Although these meetings will never form the basis for a resolution, or any concrete action, they inform ambassadors about important events in civil conflicts or other crises. This is also a place where civil society groups and NGOs find easy access to the UN (Tallberg et al. 2013).[9] In recent years, there is also evidence that these meetings might be the starting place for disseminating so-called fake news. For example, some higher officials told me that with the beginning of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Russian Federation held many Arria Formula meetings on their "special military operation".[10]

The IID meetings have little standing in secondary literature—if they are mentioned at all. In 2009, an African Union (AU) delegation visited the Council to push for a

[8] Written in bold so signal the focus of my dissertation.
[9] Technically, NGOs may also at times speak in the public debates of the UNSC but access here is much harder to obtain and more restricted.
[10] Confidential background interviews with senior UN diplomats in May 2022 and June 2022.

deferral from the International Criminal Court (ICC) case against the president of Sudan, Omar Al-Bashir, to the Security Council—hoping that the Council would authorize a seize warrant (Security Council Report 2020b). Because some powerful members had concerns over procedural precedents, after all, the AU was another IO, and the meeting was not yet voted to be on the agenda, they opted to hold the meeting in a conference room (ibid). The meeting was without a clear outcome, but a practice was born, and since then, the Council has met on 69 occasions labeled as an IID meeting.[11] These meetings are private, they appear on the Council records, but verbatim exchanges are not reported. In opposition to the private negotiations, the Council president is always present.

Private negotiations are the most secretive and closed meeting type and are often said to be the place where 'the magic happens' (Bosco 2009; Bosco 2014). Formally, private negotiations do not exist because the only meeting type that the Charter warrants is the public debate. Technically, no decisions can be reached in those meetings, as these have no legal standing (Gharekhan 2006, 18–19). In reality, however, private negotiations are frequently happening in the offices of specific Member States. However, how frequently they happen is anyone's guess, as the Security Council keeps no records of these meetings, not even records indicating whether they talked at all.

Perhaps due to this secrecy, some scholars have placed prominence on these meetings for institutional decision-making (Claude 1966; Feurle 1985). And to their credit, states likely do not simply discuss their stakes in the given conflict in these meetings but may agree on more important points.

Yet, the claim that virtually *all* issues are agreed upon here (before even one debate is held) is as much a myth as the claim that no issues are ever solved behind closed doors. As a matter of fact, no scholar ever had access to them, so the little that we know stems largely from dated anecdotal evidence (Malone 1998). Some allegations persisted over the years that the United States was allocating aid from UN agencies to affect Council votes in these private meetings (Alexander and Rooney 2019; Kuziemko and Werker 2006) or influenced world bank decisions (Dreher, Sturm, and Vreeland 2009a). Although studies found correlation evidence, they could not tie it to particular votes (Woodward 2007). Yet, the amount of correlational

[11] As of June 2020.

evidence seems to point at least in the direction that in some instances, when a powerful member state sees its national interests at stake, it may be willing to 'offer bribes' as particular perks (Dreher, Sturm, and Vreeland 2009b).

Yet, I doubt that this is a frequent practice of backdoor collusion. After conducting my own background interviews with senior E10 and P5 officials and investigating some novel descriptive evidence (see Figure 1.2) below, I would argue that the P5 often uses these meetings to find an agreeable position between each of them but that they *rarely* invite any of the E10 members for private pre-negotiations before any public meeting. Whether or not the P5 'buy votes' during these meetings is something that I can neither confirm nor reject. But I can offer some reasoning why I think, if vote buying exists, it is rather a rare event than a common practice.

Because the Council needs nine affirmative votes, so at least four more to authorize any action, I find it hard to believe that background agreement perfectly dictates Council action. If this was the case, why would the P5 not at least invite consistently four more Council members to secure their preference over a given resolution? If vote buying was standard practice, they should at least take the time to negotiate with the potential buyers.

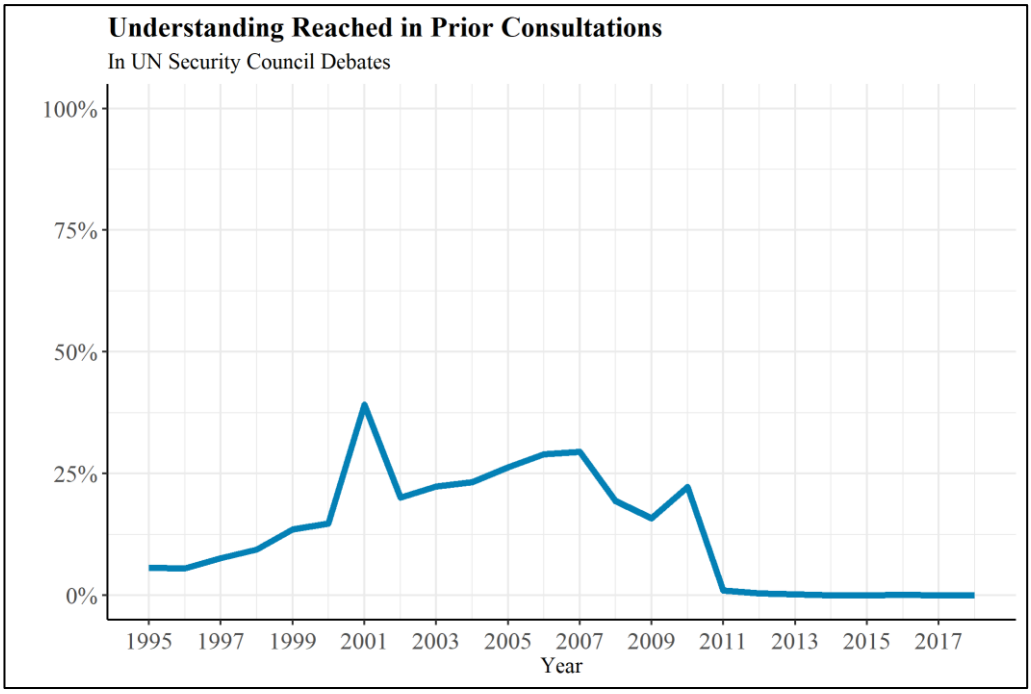
Instead, it appears far more likely that the P5 are locking in a particular winset that forms the basis of their agreement. This is their minimum baseline for a course of action going into the public debates, but to get everyone else on board, they are willing to have a discussion on the matter in public. The reason why the P5 are faring in such a way can also be explained through the pressure of the Council mandate. Suppose a crisis comes on the agenda with enormous media exposure, such as the Syrian Civil War or an Ebola outbreak in West Africa. In that case, the P5 want to signal to the world that they are seized of the matter and ready to deal with the crisis in public meetings. Quite frankly, they might simply not have the time to conduct excessive background negotiations with all Council members behind closed doors until they finally arrive at a zone of possible agreement (Fisher, Ury, and Patton 2011).

A second reason against a long backdoor negotiation with all Council members stems from the fact that more negotiating parties form more veto players (Tsebelis 2011). So even if the P5 would find a winset between them, honing each of their ideal preferences, the added number of E10 members would certainly water down

their agreed-upon compromise—pulling it in favor of their individual ideal points. This means that the P5 actually have little interest in inviting all Council members for their private negotiations before a public debate starts because it seems likely that they would have to make much stronger concessions behind closed doors than in public.

The fact that private negotiations form such a mythos in UN scholarship is also likely to be a function of the Cold War era. Some of the early seminal accounts of the UN were written when full backdoor collusion and great power imposition might have been much more common practice (Claude 1966; Franck 1990).[12] To provide a descriptive illustration of shrinking backdoor diplomacy, observe Figure 1.2

Figure 1.2 Percentage of Agreement in Prior Consultations, announced by the UNSC president



Source: Collected via regular expression pattern matching in UNSC debates (Schönfeld et al. 2019) before the resolution vote (Scherzinger 2021).

To have a rough impression of how often there even might be something as a tacit background agreement or understanding, I found a way to visualize it through a verbal expression. Before voting on a resolution draft, it is common practice to either state the sponsor of the resolution and, or whether the resolution is based on

[12] I want to thank Michael Doyle for alerting me to this argument.

an "understanding reached in prior consultations" (Hurd 2002, 43). While this phrase is not a perfect proxy for background agreement (and collusion), since this agreement was reached in prior consultations, not necessarily in prior *private* negotiations, it can give us an idea of whether publicly admitted deal-making has declined over time.

To build the graph, I ran a pattern-matching regular expression consisting of "understanding reached in prior consultations" through all Security Council debates on the day of voting from 1995 to 2018. Over all years and votes, 16-% have been made with the prior mentioning of agreement facilitated behind closed doors. This means that at least 16-% of all Council votes were substantially decided upon in informal consultations behind closed doors rather than during a Security Council debate. Notably, however, there has been some meaningful variation over the years. The peak of nearly 40% agreement in 2001 may be related to the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center. Crucially, background agreement takes a hard dive after 2007 and virtually plummets to zero in 2018. This finding underscores anecdotal evidence provided through my confidential background interviews: Senior P5 and E10 diplomats refused the idea that agreement is regularly procured before debates. Instead, the P5 members suggested that they agree between themselves so that no veto gets drawn but that there are only rare instances where agreements are made with other Council members. Furthermore, several E10 member states claimed that they were *not once* invited for private negotiations during their tenure.[13]

This suggests at least two things. First, there is substantial evidence of background collusion in some instances and thus a strong selection effect concerning which debates are fully open—in a sense that agreement is not fixed beforehand—and those debates, which are practically real-time negotiations. Denying this selection effect is not acknowledging a potential collider in institutional decision-making. Importantly, however, we should recall that the P5 agreement is, either way, *a necessary condition* for any action to take place (Gilligan and Stedman 2003). So, at least some level of background collusion is not surprising but expected.

Second, however, *neither* is the background agreement rate a hundred percent nor growing over time. In fact, the opposite seems to be the case. At least on a verbal level, background agreement has dramatically shrunken over time. Whether or not

[13] Series of confidential interviews conducted with high-ranking diplomats from P5 as well as E10 governments between October 2020 and June 2022.

there is bribery taking place in those instances where a background agreement is reached, I cannot say. But Figure 1.2 strongly calls into question the 'theatrical nature' of the Security Council (Feurle 1985, 267).

This brings us to the fourth meeting type: The public debates. These are televised, and all speeches are translated into the six formal UN languages. In my view, these meetings are an unjustly overlooked raw diamond of institutional decision-making.[14] I argue that, instead of trying to infer from murky evidence, what goes on in private negotiations—without ever having access to them, we should focus on the evidence we do have in front of us. And this evidence comes from the public Security Council debates. This is a core claim of my dissertation. The rhetoric in these debates is meaningful and has hit-herto not received the scholarly attention it deserves.

Once the Security Council has decided that it will discuss a matter in public, it has to go on the agenda of the Council. In principle, there are three ways in which an item might make it to the agenda, and all of them require a vote. First, there are slated items that are put on the UNSC calendar and are later voted to be discussed on the daily agenda. These items tend to contain frozen conflicts (like, for example, the standing conflict in Cyprus), or other reoccurring inspections, monitorings, reports of committees or subgroups, etc. Sometimes these items come from the summary statement of the Council (Allen and Yuen 2020). In theory, the summary statement is a list of crises with which the Security Council is currently seized. In practice, however, the summary statement tends to be a long list of conflicts for which the Security Council has not found a definitive solution. For example, "the situation in the Middle East," referring, in this case, to the Israel-Palestine-Conflict, has been a recurring summary statement item since October 24th, 1967 (United Nations Security Council).

Second, the Secretary-General can put items on the UNSC calendar and, therefore, indirectly on the agenda, as these have a very high likelihood of being adopted. Third, the Security Council president, which rotates every month, starting in alphabetical order, may put items on the Council calendar. While the president usually selects items that are close to the interests of this particular nation-state, it is not uncommon for a new security threat presents itself, and the Security Council

[14] With two notable exceptions Schönfeld et al. (2019); Eckhard et al. (2021a).

president will have to respond with an agenda revision (Binder and Golub 2020). However, the leeway of the Council president in picking agenda items seems rather constrained. For example, during the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine, Russia also held the presidency of the Security Council. Although Russia purposefully did not select the war as an agenda item to talk about, all other Council members voted it onto the agenda (United Nations Security Council 2022b). This suggests that the power of the Council president to select the agenda items independently remains severely limited. As long as 9 out of 15 Member states want to talk about an issue, the Council will talk about it, whether or not the Council president (even a P5 president) agrees.

Roughly 50-80% of Council items per month are either slated or reoccurring, and the rest is set by the given Council president divided by his or her interests and suddenly erupting crises.[15] Once a given agenda is finalized, it requires a vote. Contrary to the otherwise unequal voting power of the P5, agenda items can never be vetoed by any permanent member (Binder and Golub 2020, 420). Once the agenda is adopted, public meetings proceed.

During those meetings, diplomats, secretaries of state, or even heads of state or governments, deliver carefully crafted speeches. Although drafting procedures vary, these speeches are most often signed off by their respective home governments and never circulated prior to the meeting.[16] While these speeches often feature euphemistic diplomatic jargon, they contain concrete signals as to what exactly this state perceives to be the heart of the crisis, what policies it prefers, and how such actions and positions are justified.[17] This is by no means a redundant undertaking, as government experts of respective host countries monitor these speeches meticulously, detecting even small discrepancies between public and private preferences of policy initiatives or justifications.[18]

In essence, these speeches serve three functions. First, they are meant to signal to other Security Council members how a given crisis or conflict should be understood. Such signaling functions as a 'litmus test' telling other Council members whether they follow a specific theme and, thus, whether they support a

[15] Confidential background interview with high-ranking E10 official.
[16] Although there may exist strong variance in discretion. Some diplomats seem to be dictated verbatim what goes into their speech, others may not even need a government sign-off.
[17] Confidential background interview with high-ranking P5 and E10 officials.
[18] Confidential Background interview with high-raking P5 official.

preferred course of action. Second, their rhetoric may come with an argument for action and a justification for their position. Because there are strong normative expectations about the appropriate exercise of authority, Council members feel the pressure to justify their actions and policy positions.[19] Third, after voting, states might still put themselves as speakers on the agenda to justify the Security Council's conduct collectively to an external audience—hoping to legitimate actions or the institution as a whole.

Often, a crisis may come rather quickly on the UN agenda. Especially, armed civil conflicts have the tendency to erupt suddenly, leaving little time for an extensive pre-negotiation consultation phase where member states can dangle their feet in the water, assessing how much support they have for a given policy proposal. As such, public discussions are also crucial because the repeating of a theme signals to other Member states, leading on the action, whether they have enough momentum for a resolution draft, and who is likely to support actions.[20] Of course, Member states cannot be a hundred percent certain about the accuracy of the signal, leading to rejected proposals, withdrawals, and in rare cases, a veto. Since virtually all member states strive for unanimous decisions, as unanimously authorized resolutions are regarded as strong signals for the legitimacy of a given action[21], and are said to boost compliance by the wider UN membership, the drawing of a veto is quite rare. In fact, on average, 92% of UNSC resolutions are adopted unanimously, and only 55 resolutions failed between 1990 and 2018, compared to the 1,783 passed during the same time.[22]

While diplomats listen carefully, when during a heated debate, specific courses for action are proposed (and such positions are justified), they pay special attention to the themes that are central to the speeches.[23] In my view, themes can be read as shorthand reality tests of the worthiness to support a particular course of action. That is why controlling the theme is particularly important for some Member states.[24]

[19] There was perfect agreement on this point by all interviewees.
[20] Confidential Background interview with high-ranking P5 official.
[21] All interviewees agreed on this point.
[22] Authors calculation. Data on this is available upon the submission of the dissertation manuscript.
[23] Diplomats did not use the term 'theme' but described practitioner terms that are relatable.
[24] Confidential background interview with high-ranking Security Council Member.

Debates on crises vary widely in terms of duration. Some crises are addressed swiftly, and only a few meetings on the matter produce an effective resolution, while others may stretch over days, weeks, months, or even years with breaks in between. Moreover, some conflicts get reactivated again and need renewed Council attention, with additional debates and many more resolutions. What complicates the matter even further is the fact that the Council may decide to switch between public and private debates, with only the former being accessible to outside researchers.

At some point during this process, informal penholders, i.e., states that lead on a specific issue, decide to circulate a first draft resolution, a so-called zero draft. This coincides when enough states have repeated a dominant theme—indicating that they understand the crisis in the same light.

The notion of penholdership is not well-explained by relevant secondary literature.[25] Penholders are usually seen as the first instance of resolution drafters.[26] Typically, the P5 start the drafting process of resolutions, which for most of the years before the 2000s, meant the US, Great Britain, and to a lesser extent, France.[27] Since then, Russia and more and more China have also taken it upon themselves to draft and circulate resolutions.[28] Informally, "there is a practice in the Council according to which resolutions are not put to the vote unless members have received it at least 24 hours earlier. Often, this practice is waived on the grounds of urgency." (Gharekhan 2006, 30) In recent years, the practice is rather that resolutions are tabled last minute.[29] Out of tradition, a tabled-draft resolution is written in blue ink, but only authorized resolutions get assigned a running number (Gharekhan 2006, 27). During debates on a crisis, there may be several rounds of drafting without circulation, and there may be more than one resolution on a matter.

Once the Security Council is ready to vote on an item—always in a public meeting—the delegates show, by raising their hands, whether they favor, reject, or abstain from a vote. Typically, votes are preceded by countries justifying why they are voting in a specific way. Oftentimes, after the vote has taken place, states also

[25] To my knowledge there is only data on penholdership and resolution sponsoring in the General Assembly, see: Finke (2021).
[26] Confidential background interview with high-ranking P5 and E10 officials
[27] Confidential background interview with high-ranking P5 official.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.

opt for another round of speeches, lauding the decided action or regretting that a vote has failed.

Summarizing the institutional working process, one can clearly see that rhetoric plays a significant role in its conduct. From agenda-setting to signaling during the debate to the final resolution draft, diplomatic rhetoric and verbal politics accommodate every step in an equation that might lead to intervention. Moreover, as long as private meetings remain off-the-record—and at least the permanent five have a strong interest in keeping this status quo—public debates remain the best gateway into the decision-making process of an ultimately intransparent institution.

Before we advance into the technical details of uncovering and analyzing thousands and thousands of Security Council speeches, we proceed by looking at the theoretical framework for this dissertation, namely the analytical prism of normative rhetoric. That is, we look at themes.

Chapter 2 – Theory: Themes as Signaling Devices in Intra-Institutional Decision-Making

Most political conduct requires language as a means for achieving political goals. Press releases, the Security Council's summary statement, meeting records, and authorized resolutions all contain language to a political end. Thus, the mere occurrence of political rhetoric in the UN is not a great surprise. Yet, the way language is utilized in the UN Security Council unearths an interesting and novel way to think about the function of rhetoric, and *thematic* rhetoric in particular, in international organizations.[30]

My theoretical argument in this dissertation is that public debates in the Security Council can be understood as a *marketplace of themes*. Actors in this public forum debate not only the characteristics of a given conflict or the effectiveness of measures, but first and foremost, they look for a dominant way to read a specific crisis or security threat. Similar to a marketplace, they try to sell each other a theme to buy in. Thus, actors—for most intents and purposes—Member states in the Security Council are looking for a shared rhetorical understanding. Yet, this understanding is politically motivated and consequential for the resolution of future conflicts.

To explain further, I conceive of themes as heuristic shortcuts or signaling devices that facilitate efficient decision-making in international politics (For the notion of shortcuts or reality checks, see: Hanrieder 2011, 409; O'Mahoney 2017, 326). Themes are meant to deliver an informative signal to designated audiences. In everyday language, people may also use the term "theme"—perhaps in a way to ask, "what is this about"?, or "What was the core of it"? In a simplifying way, themes used in international politics partly fare in a similar way. They convey a piece of information that serves as both a justification for a position and an argument for action.

While thematic talk may be visible in any kind of political debate, its more interesting applications may be in international institutions. In these institutions,

[30] Throughout my dissertation I will use the terms rhetoric and language interchangeably. Note, however, that I do distinguish between thematic language (or rhetoric) and organizational language (or rhetoric).

their occurrence can be explained by normative expectations for the wielding of authority (Buchanan and Keohane 2006; Zürn 2018, Chapter 3, in particular, p.70-77). It should be noted that this strain of literature is more interested in the legitimacy (and legitimation) (Tallberg and Zürn 2019; Zürn 2018) of an entire institution (Schimmelfennig et al. 2020) and less in the legitimacy of particular actions (Goddard 2006). Yet, these two lines of legitimation do not necessarily negate each other. Because states want to demonstrate that they are living up to these expectations—that they are good or rightful members and that their collective authority is legitimate—themes may be used as signaling devices answering two kinds of related questions, 'why should we do what I am proposing that we do'? And second, 'why is it justified'? This means that in the context of a mandated international institution, such as the UN, themes carry a normative impetus, explaining why actions are necessary and justified.

The crux of this conception of political language is then that it serves three functions. The first is that themes in public rhetoric are designed to signal to other participants how a crisis is (ought) to be understood. In that sense, a speaking state sends a signal of information to an *intra-institutional* audience. I contend that this thematic function is important and understudied in the UN and other relevant institutional literature.

Second, such signaling can be expressed as an argument aiming to persuade others—'we must protect X'.[31] In doing so, speakers may use the normative content of their theme, hoping that it will serve as an argument connecting with the normative convictions of their fellow Members. In this sense, a theme is meant to animate some form of action—it is meant to 'hook the audience in', priming them for action. As such, themes offer a *public motive* for action. Whether or not this publicly stated motive—'we must protect X'—is genuine, so states truly want to protect 'X', is irrelevant. What is relevant, however, is that states make a public claim towards action that goes on the track record of the UN meeting.

The third function of a theme is that of *justification*. In essence, if there is normative pressure for good or appropriate behavior—such as championing the most

[31] Note that when I speak of arguing here I do not rule out the possibility that themes may be used to bargain as well. My account subscribes to the notion that policymakers can do both in international negotiations, see: Zangl and Zürn (1996) This will be later discussed in greater detail in my theoretical literature review (Section II.3)

powerful security body in the world—states are expected to justify their course of action to uphold the legitimacy of the institution to which they belong. Themes can also be utilized in this way—'we had to intervene because of Y'. In this way, themes are meant to provide a justification for a prior action. Such usage can be understood as post-hoc rationalization trying to boost the perception that this form of action was legitimate. Seen in this way, themes may also be used as a signal device for an *extra-institutional audience*.

Importantly, while their applications may vary as an argument, or, justification, they all refer to an overaching meta-subject—to its theme. The statement 'it's about women and children' can be an argument for action, what I call a public motive, it can also be applied as justification, but at the end of the day, it is a heuristic through which a conflict can be understood—'this is about women and children'.

The remainder of this chapter will first explain how to identify a theme by differentiating it from similar concepts. Next, I will demonstrate that themes may rise (and fall), and that can tell us something about decision-making in the UNSC. Then, I will theorize the scope conditions of dominant themes. Furthermore, I will develop a series of hypotheses about the effects of dominant themes. Last, I will close the chapter by explaining why dominant themes are a double-edged sword; on the one hand, promoting action, and on the other, partly hurting Council unanimity.

II.1 Why Should Language Matter?

By virtue of the Charter, themes permeating the UNSC have a normative character urging fellow member states to act in order to maintain international peace and security. This is so because certain values are inscribed into the Charter of the UN, such as the impartial maintenance of international peace and security or the upholding of multilateral cooperation and development (United Nations, Article 1-2). At the same time, the Charter grants the Security Council an enormous amount of political authority. Thus, the usage of thematic talk in UNSC debates may be a starting point for a rhetoric of political justification.[32]

[32] For one prominent account of UNSC authority: see Hurd (2008). Zürn would describe Hurd's account of authority as 'inscribed' Zürn (2018, 43).

Similar to Erik Voeten's concept of the focal point, themes may be seen as a starting point for a line of justification for a specific action (Voeten 2005, 543). Post intervention, speakers may rally around a specific theme justifying the action—thereby hoping that the intervention may appear more legitimate—'we had to do this because of the children'. This need for legitimating is not only valuable because, to some extent, authority needs legitimacy to sustain itself (Zürn 2004; 2018) but also because particular actions may only function effectively if all member states comply. For example, if the Security Council authorizes a trade blockade against a particular state, as soon as important trading partners renege on this decision, the efficacy of the blockade comes tumbling down (Mahmood et al. 2022, 24). So, the UNSC wants decisions that are perceived as legitimate—hoping that this will buy them compliance with their decisions.

Furthermore, the bestowed legitimacy of a UNSC resolution may boost intervention-joining by national governments (Thompson 2006; 2010). Indeed, several studies have found that UN approval—in the form of an authorized intervention—spurs the willingness of national governments around to globe to join an intervention partly because citizens perceive such actions as more legitimate (Busby et al. 2020; Chapman 2009; 2012). Survey experiments conducted in the United States (Grieco et al. 2011) and in Japan (Tago and Ikeda 2015) corroborated this finding.

Because of this justificatory value, past studies that focused on UN language would either look at post action legitimation or rhetorical legitimation of the entire institution (Binder and Heupel 2015; 2021; Claude 1966; Franck 1990; Niemann 2018). Nevertheless, a small but ardent scholarly community advocated the idea that UN rhetoric was also responsible for affecting UN actions and decisions (Hurd 2002, 43; Johnstone 2003, 463). For these scholars, rhetoric was important not only because it allowed for post hoc justification after an intervention had taken place but one step earlier before the type of action was even decided upon. These studies were invested in my second function of thematic language—the idea that thematic talk may function as an argument or a barging chip for action. My theoretical framework builds on their pioneering case studies and gives a larger theoretical underbelly to their line of research.

To be more concrete, both Ian Hurd and Ian Johnstone believed that rhetoric spoken in the UN could alter decision-making processes. Johnstone thought that

'the better argument had a fighting chance to win' because, for him, the Security Council came closest to a real-world equivalent to the Habermasian ideal speech situation (Johnstone 2003). Following this line of reasoning, he assumed that the legalistic language before the Kosovo intervention affected later UN involvement in the conflict (Johnstone 2003, 440). In a similar vein, Hurd argued that specific thematic language used in public SC debates fostered agreement and ultimately produced a sanctions regime on Libya (Hurd 2005, 506). Notably, Hurd already presented the idea that a theme—for him, the type of norm invocating language—could affect outcomes.

For these scholars, the direction of causal action was clear, i.e., language affects outcomes. What remained less clear was the causal mechanism connecting language with real-world action. Therefore, to fill this gap, I propose a mechanism that may function as a transmission belt—connecting language with actions. I contend that speakers in the Security Council—like any other IO with a public venue—suffer from *consistency pressure* (Scherzinger 2022a, 4). That is, policymakers want to maintain an artificially coherent rhetorical foreign policy track record because they assume that such consistency is valuable to domestic or international audiences (Fearon 1994). Yet policymakers also know that their normative justification for action today might become an argument for intervention tomorrow. Thus, speakers in the UNSC must be selective and strategic in their normative talk, carefully using language, and be wary of creating rhetorical precedents which could be used against them (Gehring and Dörfler 2019; Schimmelfennig 2001; 2003, 5).

However, the public nature of their rhetoric (and their decisions) makes it precisely unavoidable to create rhetorical precedents over time (Gehring and Dörfler 2019, 122) because Member states have to justify interventions on something other than parochial interest as this is unlikely to convey much legitimacy (Schachter 1985), member states are tempted to use recognized normative rhetoric to defend their conduct. As such, UN member states are truly caught in a dilemma: On the one hand, they want to justify interventions with normative rhetoric to boost the legitimacy perception of this intervention, yet, on the other hand, this kind of language makes them vulnerable to consistency pressure.

Put in again in other words, speakers in the UNSC, and therefore UN member states value consistency over time as it might show domestic audiences that one has a coherent foreign policy strategy (Fearon 1994; Tomz 2007; Tomz, Weeks, and

Yarhi-Milo 2020) and thus lower potential audience costs but precisely because they have used normative language in the past to justify a particular action they might have created an opening to entrap them rhetorically (Schimmelfennig 2001).

To summarize, consistency pressure creates the need for states to keep an artificially coherent track record of rhetoric over time. If, in a specific situation, a specific kind of thematic talk is rising and speakers realize that in the past, they have spoken out against this type of rhetoric, they will be forced to be silent on the matter or suffer the political costs of flip-flopping on the issue. Conversely, if a particular thematic rhetoric becomes dominant during a Security Council debate, and a specific Member state has endorsed this kind of language prominently in the past, other states will expect this state to share this type of thematic talk. If this particular state does not contribute to the theme, others may be able to point this out in public—'you said that you cared about women and children in conflict in the past; why don't you speak out on this issue now?' Consistency pressure is a linguistic transmission belt—connecting language with outcomes. Through this causal mechanism, language may have an independent effect on UN actions and decisions. Importantly, consistency pressure functions on two levels between individual rhetoric and action, and collective rhetoric and institutional action.

As argued earlier, themes feature normative or value-laden language. This is important because this type of language unleashes consistency pressure. Frank Schimmelfennig thought that rhetorical action— "talking some into a corner making them do things they otherwise would not" (Krebs and Jackson 2007, 36)—would precisely work with normative language because they are implicitly promises for certain behavior (Schimmelfennig 2001, 48). I do not think that themes may solely operate on the logic of rhetorical action because they may also be used for genuine argumentation, but in both scenarios, whether to persuade someone or coerce someone, consistency pressure may affect outcomes. Whenever there is an audience lurking in the background, and states have used normative rhetoric in the past, they are vulnerable to the logic of consistency pressure.

Furthermore, consistency pressure does not only perform on a functional level between speakers and action but also on a collective level from debate to intervention. If a debate was centered around a dominant theme and then a particular form of intervention is selected, there may be expectations that if a similar theme becomes dominant in another crisis, a similar tool of intervention must be

selected. In short, consistency pressure on an institutional level may lead to the creation of precedents(Gehring and Dörfler 2019, 131). Once there is a previously fostered expectation, it is "generally difficult to go below" this level of consent (Gehring and Dörfler 2019, 132).

Of course, consistency pressure, as a background condition, has structural limits. If a permanent member has deeply vested conflicted interests in a crisis that may negate any action from going forward, that member might still veto an action—therefore going against the pressure in the room—and suffer the costs associated with them. Examples include a surprising veto by Russia to block renewed funding for a peacekeeping operation in Cyprus in 1993 and the frequent Chinese and Russian vetoes during the Syrian civil war (Allen and Yuen 2022, 30).

II.2 How to Recognize a Theme When You See it

Themes are versatile linguistic tools. They offer policymakers a heuristic through which a conflict can be understood, *'it's about women and children'*; an argument aimed at persuading another Member, *'this is about women and children!'*, or a justification for action, *'we had to do this to save women and children'*. While themes may be used as arguments or justifications, they do not have to be applied as such linguistic tools. On the contrary, themes are a mid-level linguistic concept that features a wide range of semantically connected terms. In this sense, themes are an aggregated entity that can be dissected into smaller linguistic tools. Admittedly, it might seem that themes, because of their versatility, resemble a linguistic chameleon. That is why a clear definition might prove useful; in my dissertation, I conceive of a theme as a *semantically coherent, supervening meta-subject that features rhetoric with a normative underpinning*. What sounds perhaps like an unwieldy conceptualization can be further explained.

First, themes are semantically coherent entities, which means that they feature words that are linguistically close to one another in their application and, therefore, easy to spot for human beings (Mimno et al. 2011). Faring in this way, themes are close to the logic of topics. Indeed, in a simple task to validate topic coherency, it is easy for human coders to spot outliers (or, in the lingo of quantitative text analysis, *intruders*). In the word cluster: Window, glass, broken, beach, it wouldn't

take a human coder a long time to figure out that *beach* seems to intrude into this cluster.[33] [34] Human beings process information efficiently in this regard—often catching a few words or overhearing a few sentences are enough to have an idea of 'what a discussion is about'. Similarly, themes are something that can be spotted or reached via modest intellectual effort. Thus, they make for great transmitters of information.

Second, themes are supervening meta-subjects. This means that themes can traverse different topics. Some quantitative text analysis scholarship treats themes and topics synonymously (see, for example amongst many: Asmussen and Møller 2019).[35] I argue, however, that these should be kept distinct from one another. While it is correct that both function in a higher order than, say, individual words, topics remain bounded while themes can be transitory and supervene on different topics. This is not to say that topics cannot bleed into one another or that the same words cannot feature in different topics (which they can). Instead, their mark of differentiation is rather related to their summarizing capacity. A topic may usually denote 'one thing or one issue' whereas themes may bundle some related issues together, uniting them under one core. For example, one could have a debate with a friend spanning many different topics, such as climate change, staggering public debt, or wealth inequality, while having the common theme of "generational justice". Hence, one could say that themes supervene on topics.

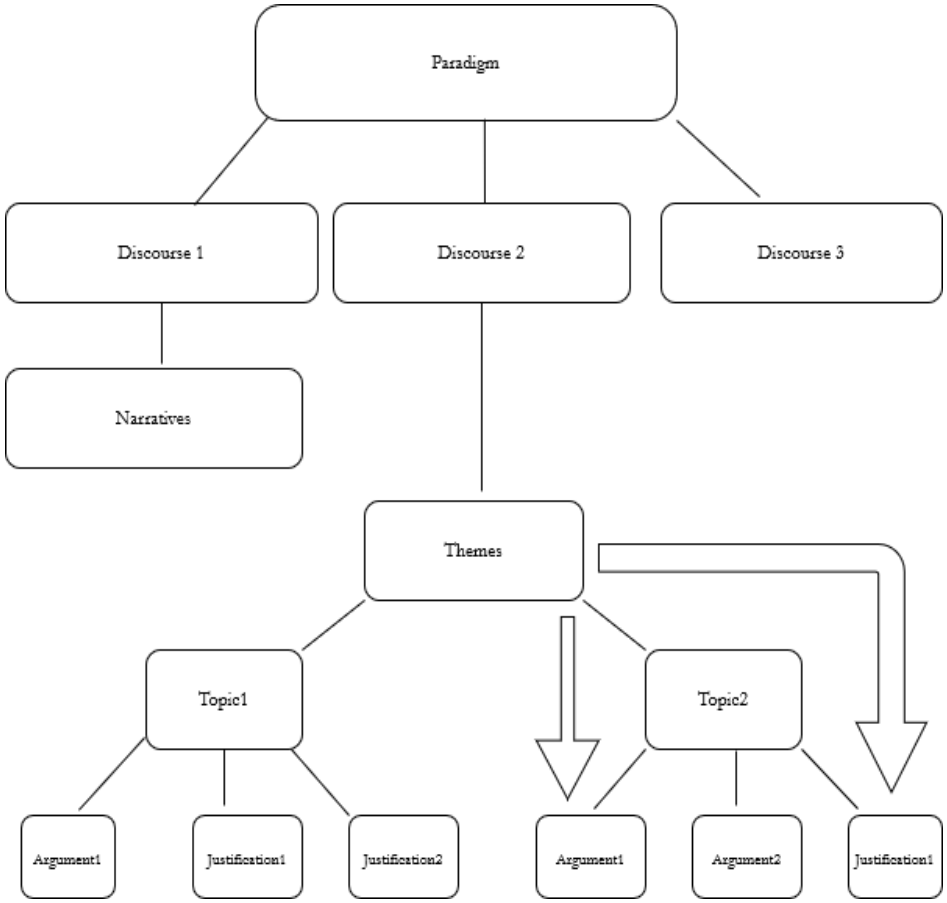
Third, themes in the Security Council have a normative underpinning, or at least they include some moral impetus for action. This is a function of the mandate of the Council that enshrines particular values into the foundation of the institution. Due to the mandate, onlookers evaluating the work of the Security Council have normative expectations concerning the wielding of such enormous amounts of authority (Zürn 2018). The justification of such authority will then come, at times, also in the use of thematic signals. While not all words belonging to a theme must feature value-laden language, still, to the observer of a Security Council debate, it will be immediately clear at the core of this kind of language lie values (that are at stake).

[33] This and similar examples can be taken from a "R Package" from Chan and Sältzer (2020).
[34] This is precisely a virtue of human coders, and arguably one of the main reasons why human coders remain the gold standard in the validation of many text analysis tools Grimmer and Stewart (2013, 279).
[35] An interesting early exception is Blei and Jordan (2003).

To give an example, in the UNSC, most debate topics will be different security crises summarized under specific agenda items. Therefore, if scholars use a machine-learning method, for example, unsupervised topic modeling on any of these debates, what they will find are distinct crises, such as the Israel-Palestine-conflict, the civil war in Burundi, or the intervention in East-Timor. What these models, however, will not reveal is what *themes* were present in these topics. In the case of the Israel-Palestine conflict, a whole host of themes may be thinkable. Did speakers talk about human rights abuses, about nuclear weapons (Iron Dome), about international cooperation and development (perhaps with Palestinian NGOs), about regional security (after all, the Middle East is a hotspot of regional tensions)? Intuitively, all these themes might be present in the Israel-Palestine-Conflict. Without themes, it remains opaque what normatively goes in a given conflict topic.

Moreover, themes are transitory. For example, the *human rights theme* might be present in the Israel-Palestine-Conflict, in Darfur, in Somalia, in Bosnia, and, East-Timor and many more. Thus, aggregating simply on topics disguises what overarching themes they share. Below, Figure 2.1 illustrates my understanding of themes and how they relate to other common linguistic concepts that might be relevant to the study of political language. Note, however, that this illustration is in no way exhaustive and visualizes *one* possible (selective) concept path.

Figure 2.1 Hierarchy of Linguistic Concepts (selective and illustrative)



Source: Author's own illustration

Starting from the top, the rounded rectangles represent different types of linguistics concepts, ordered according to the level of their operation, i.e., the more encompassing a concept, the higher its position in the figure. It is noteworthy to say that scholars who use political texts as their unit of analysis may start at any level of this linguistic hierarchy. Although the arrows and lines delineate a specific direction (from top to bottom), scholars may even do the reverse and try to predict from smaller entities bigger ones. The shown pathway is simply meant to symbolize *one* possible route of scholarly inquiry into political rhetoric.

For example, a researcher could start at the very top, singling out one overarching concept that stands for a whole universe of political or scholarly speech acts. This overarching concept I have termed paradigm without implying a Kuhnian sense of the word (Kuhn 1962). Instead, one could understand the term in line with Sil and Katzenstein as a higher-order research tradition (Sil and Katzenstein 2010, 6). In IR research, for example, one could select the higher-order concept of *Anarchy* as a

foundational concept for our discipline (Lake 2011, 2) and then dissect it into grand discourses which permeate it. Of course, as with any social scientific concept, the interpretations and configurations of any of these concepts (and their hierarchy) remain debated. For example, Jack Donnelly would, probably with good reason, claim that anarchy itself should not operate on the basis of a paradigm but merely as an important discourse in our field (Donnelly 2015). While I concede that this ordering may be selective and partially subjective, the bigger message still stands: There is a hierarchy in linguistic concepts that may be dissected into smaller entities. Following this paradigm, one could then, for example, collect the sheer endless universe of security discourses in scholarly research that follow this research tradition. Or, one could downsize already, only collecting data on security discourses within security organizations. Yet again, one could also try to illuminate related discourses such as, for example, the discourse on sovereignty.

Alternatively, one could take another avenue focusing on narratives within American security discourses (Krebs 2015b)—illustrated in the figure by a demarcated line towards another rectangle that remains without further connection. Here, for example, one could scrutinize how the narrative of 'American exceptionalism' has been used as a means for achieving public or international consent towards security matters of foreign policy and intervention. Such narratives are higher-order structures (at least higher than themes) that incorporate an actor and a plot (for an overview, see: Krebs 2015b, 11). Importantly, although on this level, the concepts are indeed quite large, this does not mean that the methods which analyze these have to employ large-n research methods. On the contrary, much important work on this level of operationalization comes from the humanities, qualitative social sciences, or normative theoretical work (Forst 2017, Chapter 3; Krebs 2015a; Narlikar 2020). In general, I think any of these concepts can be investigated using quantitative or qualitative scholarship.

Alternatively, as I did, one could try to dissect thematic talk in *one* multilateral security organization—the UN Security Council. Then one could analyze how different themes permeate or dominate multiple topics. While the figure illustrates only one theme for brevity's sake, in my dissertation, I investigate six distinct and encompassing UNSC themes. The two arrows flowing from the theme rectangle visualize two political functions I have theorized above; themes may be used to argue for (as well as bargain) or to justify a specific course of action. The centrality

of the concept is meant to illustrate its central place in conveying information efficiently.

Before we move on to situate themes in the long and fruitful research vein of the 'deliberative turn', I want to close this section by further differentiating themes from some of the other (mentioned) concepts. First, some scholars may think that the way I operationalize themes comes close to the illustrated discourses. The field of discourse theory itself is so rich in its scholarly history that even a detailed discussion here would probably not do justice to the variation in the academic application of the concept[36]. Therefore, to remain pragmatic, I differentiate the term theme here from two important strands of discourse theory. The first being Foucauldian applications of the concept revealing power constellations in language (Der Derian and Shapiro 1989; Foucault 2013; van Dijk 1997). While on the surface, there may be commonalities between the two concepts; there are clearly differing features.

First, discourses understood in this way elucidate power constellations that are innate and are not simply observable in thematic rhetoric but have to be unearthed or revealed. For example, while it is intuitive that a word spoken by a powerful P5 member enters the political arena with a different power weight than an E10 member, conceiving of this power differential without further qualifiers on the individual or the institution may seem very hard. Discourse, in this way, is not simply the word spoken but also the context, maybe even the zeitgeist in which it is uttered (Holzscheiter 2014, 143; van Dijk 1997, 3). Without additional data on the speaker, the context, practices, or habits of interaction, and many more, a theme can arguably not rise to a level of discourse in a Foucauldian sense. Second, a discourse, understood in this way, may be something grander than a theme permeating not simply one institution but also a broader public or the international arena per se—reducing the concept to a string of words fails to grasp the non-verbal nature of many of these approaches.

The second strand of research may be summarized as constructing "meaning in use" (Holzscheiter 2014, 143; Wiener 2009). If so understood, discourse analysis can and has been successfully applied to the United Nations or multilateral negotiation in general (Deitelhoff 2009; Seymour 2013; Stephen 2015). Yet, the

[36] For an excellent overview on the matter, see Holzscheiter (2014).

precise understanding of how actors conceive of different discourses, i.e., 'what it *means to them*', is lost in my thematic analysis. This deeper layer cannot be observed by simply collecting semantically coherent normative language that belongs to one meta-subject. Instead, this layer must be *inferred* or *adduced* (Stephen 2015, 780). The thematic analysis which I have in mind cannot make a statement on how actors *conceive* of something; it cannot even decipher whether actors are principled or strategic in their use of normative language—in fact, few studies can make this claim (Deitelhoff and Müller 2005). The thematic analysis that I propose thrives in the aggregate. It may illustrate UNSC core themes that traverse different topics and, therefore, time and space. We can delineate (and investigate) their rise and fall, who repeats them and trace their (average) effects, but we cannot infer what these core tenets mean to the user of such language—for this, we need precisely discourse analysis.

Another rich concept that may come to mind (and that I omitted from the figure) are frames and frame analysis (Benford and Snow 2000; Entman 2007; Goffman 1974). Arguably, the concept of frames is at least as diverse in scholarship as the aforementioned discourse. Again, to do justice to the huge variety of applications spanning several social science disciplines over decades would be a daunting task within the brevity of this section. Perhaps speaking for a large share of studies employing the concept, Entman summarizes, "frames introduce or raise the salience or apparent importance of certain ideas, activating schemas that encourage target audiences to think, feel, and decide in a particular way" (Entman 2007, 164). Indeed, this understanding of a frame comes close to the *heuristic function* of a theme—having at its core a signaling device that invites audiences to make a connection with the spoken words and a decision-making process. Just as themes, frames seem to be able to serve as cognitive devices helping policymakers to pass reality checks (Hanrieder 2011). Depending on who is using the term, the concept may also be used as a justificatory device, aiding to bolster one's position (Bélanger and Schimmelfennig 2021, 411). The latter application, then, is close to the *justificatory function of themes* having at its core normatively defendable values that may justify the exercise of one's authority and legitimate one's actions.

In a benign reading, frames, and themes may indeed come very close to one another in their applicatory or analytical value. I would still be hesitant to use them synonymously, though. While some output comes close to my understanding of a

theme (Bélanger and Schimmelfennig 2021), and the practice of *framing* is also close to the *argumentative function* of a theme (Medzihorsky, Popovic, and Jenne 2017), at least in my mind, there is the unshakable feeling that themes capture something bigger than a single frame. While this is a matter of aggregation—and there is an argument to be had that there might be some variety in the size of a frame (i.e., there are smaller and larger ones)—I think that the concept of frames comes with a variety of diverse connotations and expectations that seem partly to contradict each other. In essence, themes are less laden with diverse connotations and aptly summarize the three functions of political rhetoric—and, therefore, the theoretical core tenet of the dissertation—and are thus a great tool kit for the proposed analysis. In the next section, I further explicate the character of the signaling function of themes by situating my framework within the research vein of the deliberative turn.

II.3 Situating Thematic Language in the Deliberative Turn

My account of language, applied throughout this dissertation, is the result of a long search for a theoretical home in which to ground the perplexing nature of the Security Council. Ordinarily, and in a simplified manner, one can delineate at least three important theoretical avenues to consider when looking at rhetoric in international organizations more broadly: These are bargaining accounts (Elster 1986; Powell 2002; Schelling 1980, Chapter 3), arguing accounts (Deitelhoff 2009; Risse 2000; Risse and Kleine 2010), and rhetorical action accounts (Krebs and Jackson 2007; Petrova 2016; Schimmelfennig 2001). All of them are rooted in an intra-paradigmatic debate that arose during the 1990s in a German-speaking community of IR scholars (Müller 1994; Schimmelfennig 1997; Schneider 1994; Zangl and Zürn 1996). This debate, sometimes labeled *ZIB-debate,* was named after the German flagship publication Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen (ZIB), where most of the articles were published. Crossing the pond, the ZIB debate became first an American and then a global research strand under the rubric 'deliberative turn' (Epstein 2011; Goddard 2006; Krebs and Jackson 2007).[37] It is hard to overstate the importance of the deliberative turn for scholars invested in

[37] It is noteworthy that the early ZIB debate understood itself to be intra-paradigmatic and saw bridging potential between the bigger questions around rationalism and constructivism. In this sense, the ZIB debate was much more nuanced than its American counterpart.

the theoretical or empirical analysis of language in international politics (Deitelhoff 2017; Holzscheiter 2017).

To begin, an arguable core of the debate revolved around the question of what the intention of speech acts in international negotiations was. Did actors mainly try to move others to concessions—bargaining (Elster 1986)? Or did they try to persuade each other using a logic of arguing and reason-giving—arguing (Habermas 1985)? The upshot of these questions was that actors were either said to maintain their interests or, on the contrary, actors were willing (under the right conditions) to adopt new interests and thus change their positions in international negotiations. A third and complementary strand maintained that actors could also use reasons and justifications "even though the communicative logic is dominated by consequentialist behavior"—rhetorical action (Risse 2013, 342; Schimmelfennig 2001). An early in medias res position was advocated by Zürn and Zangl (Zangl and Zürn 1996), essentially foreshadowing the empirical finding that states may do both, but the likelihood of each depends on the design of the institutions, the characteristics of the actors and the respective interest constellations (Zangl and Zürn 1996, 359).

Then followed a research program spanning more than two decades of empirical application. Due to the brevity of space here, I cannot do justice here to the wide variety of findings. Instead, I will try to summarize their main points. First, merely observing spoken language makes it nearly impossible to conclude whether a state is bargaining or arguing (Deitelhoff and Müller 2005). Instead, such intentions must be inferred or adduced with great care by including other non-rhetorical data of such actors (Stephen 2015, 780). Even then, such an undertaking was viewed by some as "futile" (Krebs and Jackson 2007, 41; Morgenthau 1993[1948], 5). Because the inference of their intentions, or motives, was said to be not as clear cut as argued (ibid).

Second, these findings underscored the idea that the scope conditions of different types of rhetoric were important unknows. Jason Barnabas broke some ground showing that keeping an open mind was a necessary condition for being susceptible to persuasion and deliberation (Barabas 2004, 689). This finding, as important as it was, merely sidestepped the problem, though. As long as scholars had no "unmediated access to people's minds," it remained elusive whether they were keeping an open mind and were ready to be persuaded (Krebs and Jackson 2007,

40; Wittgenstein 1953, §150-§155). Ulbert and Risse provided a more nuanced scope condition for arguing. Although they submitted that policymakers probably argued *and* bargained frequently (Ulbert and Risse 2005, 352), they maintained that arguing was less likely to emerge in public discussions unless "speakers [were] uncertain about the preferences of their audiences" (Ulbert and Risse 2005, 363). Then arguing was said to be most effective (ibid). A further scope condition was proposed later by Risse and Kleine, who found that not only uncertainty of audiences' preferences but also uncertainty about actors' identities could help foster a reasoned consensus (Risse and Kleine 2010).

Although these findings gave the deliberative turn empirical rigor and theoretical depth, they did not decisively end applicability debates. Certainly, scope conditions need generalizable statements to maintain scholarly parsimony, but their application needs to be valid for different institutions. Since the focus of my dissertation rests on the UN Security Council, the mentioned conditions are important for my theoretical framework inasmuch as they accurately depict the UNSC—and here, things become tricky. Part of the problem derives from the fact that the Security Council is a strange animal in world politics (Zürn 2018, 51). The Council's mandate demands the impartial maintenance of international peace and security, but the significant power differentials and institutional privileges afforded to the P5 make it precisely unlikely that "alike cases are treated alike" (Börzel and Zürn 2021, 287). This paradoxical setting creates some uneasy applicability issues to the classical variants of the deliberative turn.

For example, if uncertainty about actors' identities facilitates deliberation, then one needs more assumptions to apply it consistently to UNSC negotiations. While actors may hold double identities, that is, they may speak as a single member state or the collective organ, their identities seem pretty stable. Elected Members have a short time span to bring attention to issues they care about, while Permanent Members may sit back and comfortably discuss whatever is coming their way, knowing they can veto any measure they do not like. Certainly, there might be an unexpected crisis, coming with lowly vested interest by the P5 and a homogenous interest formation of the E10 that gives rise to a mutual understanding or a reasoned consensus. This might happen especially so if most of the deliberations are done behind a closed door, leaving room for uncertainty without losing face. It is also conceivable that amongst the P5—also behind closed doors where confidentiality

applies—are continuously willing to work towards Habermasian *Verständigung*. However, these moments are impossible to observe empirically as the UNSC purposefully keeps no records of behind-the-door meetings. This basically leaves us with Zürn and Zangls' assertation that arguing may at least not be the immediate default option of *public* intuitional negotiation (Zangl and Zürn 1996, 359). It may happen in private settings more frequently, but this is, unfortunately, hard to falsify.

Bargaining accounts, on the contrary, convey the power politics of the Council, but they struggle with the collective entity. Aware of the immense power differentials amongst Member states, bargaining accounts often focus on the P5, their interest constellations' or preference homogeneity or heterogeneity (Bosco 2014; Voeten 2001; 2005). Some of these studies tend to overstate the dominance of the P5—seemingly equating most outcomes with their preferences (Bosco 2009; Mearsheimer 1994). This is problematic because intervention research has proven that a significant number of decisions cannot simply be explained by the preferences of the P5, much less of a single nation-state, but that the E10 play an important and undervalued role (Binder and Golub 2020; Howard and Dayal 2018).

Furthermore, while bargaining accounts can capture the rhetoric of *individual* Member states, they do not have an analytic tenet for the behavior of the *collective* Council. This is further problematic as the Council engages in a whole lot of legitimating talk collectively (Binder and Heupel 2021). By overlooking normative language, especially legitimating language, much of the Council's rhetoric and actions remain nonsensical (Hurd 2008, 3).

Rhetorical action accounts also partly struggle with the Security Council. These studies can offer another credible reading for the occurrence of normative or moral rhetoric in international negotiations. Their implicit assumption is most often that this kind of talk is used to "pressure another state into a corner, making it do something it otherwise would not" (see also Binder and Heupel 2020, 94; Krebs and Jackson 2007, 36). Rhetorical action accounts see normative or moral rhetoric as political promises which might be used as a trap to pressure another state into upholding their word. While these accounts represent a significant part of the Council debates aptly, they fail to see that normative language in the UNSC may not only be used to *coerce* someone but that there actually might be situations were even the P5 are willing to listen and open to *persuasion*. Precisely because the P5 know that the UNSC only has added value for them as long as the wider UN

membership believes that their decision-making is 'rightful' and deserves to be obeyed, they are at times willing to listen to the E10—and thereby following their reasoning (Mahmood et al. 2022, 574). In other words, there seems to be a limit to the extent to which the P5 may instrumentalize the E10—and thus, not every occurrence of normative rhetoric must be, per se, an attempt to compel somebody to do something they otherwise would not.

Moreover, rhetorical action also suffers from the same empirical observation problem as arguing scholars but due to different reasons. Rhetorical action scholars would expect a behavioral shift after a rhetorical trap has been laid. However, the particular voting rules of the UNSC lead to an unusually high number of affirmative votes. This does not mean that there are no contested votes where rhetorical entrapment could have played a role, but the exceedingly high amount of affirmative votes makes it hard to show this empirically.[38]

The summarized limitations may beg the question: Where does this leave thematic talk? Is the marketplace of themes a bargaining, an arguing, or a rhetorical action account? The answer is that it can be either one of them. My understanding of thematic talk remains agnostic to the intentions of speakers precisely because there is ample research that shows that all three types of communication—arguing, bargaining, and rhetorical action—may take place in the Council. At the same time, none of the three accounts can individually explain all kinds of spoken language.

Admittedly, I do believe that interests guide rhetoric, but this still leaves open the question of what happens in situations where one does not have strong vested interests in a given conflict. Furthermore, because both the P5 and the E10 profit from a legitimate Council, it is conceivable that there are moments of genuine arguing and principled rhetoric (this dynamic might even be more important for the P5). Observing genuine reasoning might be difficult, but the same could be said about catching an actor in the moment of entrapment. Therefore, my conception of language in international politics sits between the chairs of classical deliberative turn variants. It is a mediated account in the tradition of (Zangl and Zürn 1996) and (Zürn and Checkel 2005). It is guided by a theoretical underbelly of soft rational choice that meets sociological institutionalism half way, which is not unusual in the

[38] Almost all country votes past the cold war are affirmative (~ 96%). This does not mean that these votes could not have been produced through rhetorical entrapment. Showing this empirically in a large-n-setting, however, is challenging as there is little variation on the dependent variable.

current field of institutional research (Risse and Wemheuer-Vogelaar 2016, 157). The upshot is an eclectic account (Sil and Katzenstein 2010) that allows for the application of either one of the deliberative turn variants. This eclecticism is also visible in the function of themes. They may be used to argue or bargain, but they can also be used to justify. Their most agnostic application is that of information transmission as a heuristic device. This function will take center stage in my dissertation.

It is also important to note that consistency pressure, my main causal mechanism—connecting language with real-world outcomes—can function with all three types of communication. For bargaining accounts, the logic of consistency pressure works effortlessly because these accounts are generally concerned with audience costs (Fearon 1994). Particularly so since research in this vein has shown that audiences do have the capacity to constrain and punish actors (Tomz 2007; Tomz, Weeks, and Yarhi-Milo 2020). Similarly, rhetorical action accounts function easily with a logic of consistency pressure as entrapment works precisely *because* there is an outside audience presumed to listen and care about prior political commitment—this is how strategic actors can entrap political opponents by threatening them in such a way that they would lose face. And even arguing accounts may use a logic of consistency pressure, building on the assumption that actors value the normative rhetoric they have used in the past, i.e., such actors believe that it is appropriate or rightful to be consistent in one's wording and action. Thus, the marketplace of themes can be used with any of the three logics of communication. The next section differentiates themes from other kinds of organizational rhetoric because not every talk in an organization is thematic in nature.

II.4 Motive & Precedent

Above, I explained that themes serve three functions: They handily deliver arguments for a course of action, they offer a focal point for the justification of intervention (and thus the *exercise* of authority), and they exemplify a possible signal of how to read a crisis or conflict. Because in the Security Council, every intervention in world politics has to be discussed and all of them justified, or in the words of Sarah von Billerbeck, 'no action without talk' (Billerbeck 2020), Member states place a lot of significance on their public rhetoric.

Of course, not every talk in organizational rhetoric is thematic. In fact, as we shall later see, about 38-% of the average Security Council debate is made up of purely *organizational talk*. This distinction is useful to understand when states actually bargain and argue with each other and when they use diplomatic vernacular that amounts to not much else than 'cheap talk'. But how do we know when actors use which? How can we distinguish between thematic language and organizational rhetoric? To do this, the character of themes may be helpful.

I contend that themes exemplify two properties that make them distinct from organizational rhetoric. That is, themes in the Security Council carry a publicly revealed *motive* and refer to a normative *precedent*. A public motive may be the motivating reason for an action. It comes from the Latin word motus, meaning a moving action (Grammarist 2022). Indeed, a public motive is meant to motivate and thereby functions as a guideline for action that is meant to sway listeners into favoring whatever is being proposed. Importantly, in the Security Council, the public motive for action can be seen as an expected practice in Council debates. It does not refer to the *true* motivations of a speaker (as these are unknowable in any way). Instead, the publicly revealed motive is mainly there to have a tangible (and publicly defendable) motivation for action on the Security Council track-record for this particular state. Importantly, the public motive is identical to the type of theme. For example, the public motive 'this is about women and children', recurs to the theme 'women and children'.

A precedent refers to a prior point in time during which an institutionally important practice was borne. In relation to international institutions, research has argued that these can occur in decision-making outcomes (in our case resolutions) (Gehring and Dörfler 2019; Kaoutzanis 2020; Martini and Walter 2023; Sandholtz and Stone Sweet 2004) but also in public debates (Franck and Weisband 1971). For our purposes, important are those precedents that were borne in relation to Security Council actions and decisions. While there can also be mundane precedents and practices, such as whom to greet first or the order in which a speaker may refer to their colleagues, the noteworthy precedents are those that relate to Security Council interventions which are justified with *normative rhetoric.*

Above, I explained that themes may answer the question *why should we do what I am proposing that we do'?* And second, *'why is it justified'?* I argue that themes fare in this way because of their respective motive and precedent. Motivationally, themes in the

Security Council propose that one has to do something in world affairs, i.e., that there is a public motive for action embedded in a thematic claim. For example, a speaker in the Security Council may claim, *'this amounts to terrorism'*. Without the further need to say it aloud, everybody in the chamber of the Security Council knows this means 'we must do something'. Arguably, no speaker in the Security Council would put themselves on the record claiming *'this is terrorism'* only to follow up with *'so let us not act'*. The theme of terrorism demands action because it has a recognized *normative* motive in the Security Council. This can also be seen in the legal output, and thus legal precedent, of the Council cementing that "any act of international terrorism constitute[s] a threat to international peace and security" and that the international community must act when terrorism is identified (United Nations Security Council 2001b; 2005).

Of course, it is important to underscore once more that whether an actor is genuine in his or her remark—'*this is terrorism'*—is impossible to observe and is not of empirical relevance for this study. What is important, however, is that the actor made a *publicly observable claim* towards action. He or she offered a *public* normative motive for action, i.e., terrorism, which went on the track-record of the Council debate. Whether or not this publicly stated motive is also the *true motive* of his or her actions is irrelevant. Security Council members know that there is this expectation of motivating their proposed course of action in a public manner, regardless of what they are actually proposing.[39]

Justifications work similarly in the Council. Whether actors truly believe that something is justified is of little empirical relevance to the study. What is important is that there is the expectation in the chamber that actors present a justification for the exercise of authority, i.e., intervention. Ideally, these justifications refer back to a prior precedent where some intervention was justified on the grounds of normative rhetoric.[40]

To spell this out, speakers in the UNSC can claim that the occurrence of terrorism is a breach of international peace and security because it is a precedent of intervention—a recognized justificatory reason for intervention upheld through a series of landmark resolutions and decisions (United Nations Security Council 2001a; 2011b; 2014). Similarly, over time, the Security Council jointly, as well as

[39] Confidential Background interview with P5 and E10 senior diplomats July 2020.
[40] Interviewees spoke here of moral language. I use the terms normative rhetoric.

single member states, have time and again justified interventions referring to specific themes such as the 'promotion of human rights' (United Nations Security Council 1994; 2009b; 2016b) or the 'the prevention the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) (United Nations Security Council 2004; 2009a; 2011a; 2016a), or in this instance the 'combatting of terrorism'. Through such practice, some normative lines of justification become accepted as justified recognized reasons for intervention (Kaoutzanis 2020; Sandholtz and Stone Sweet 2004). Sandholtz and Stone Sweet describe this logic quite poignantly.

> Precedent works […] through the creation of analogies. If humanitarian intervention was permitted in A, and the case of B is similar in important respects, then there is a plausible *justification* for intervening in B. […] Furthermore, when states do object to a proposed intervention, they must offer counter-arguments permitted by the argumentation framework. […] Thus, participants in Security Council deliberations *devise their arguments* in light of that body's *prior decisions*." (Sandholtz and Stone Sweet 2004, 259)[41]

Policymakers within the UN refer to this dynamic as agreed-upon language.[42] Agreed-upon language is an important construct of UN lingo. Basically, it describes language that represents a consensual point of rhetoric that is (or at least was) agreeable to all negotiating UNSC at a prior point in time. Such language can be found in resolutions (Gehring and Dörfler 2019) but also in UNSC deliberations (Scherzinger 2022a). Most importantly, such language is thematic—offering a precedent of justified intervention that is recognized by negotiating parties.

The upshot is that not every possible statement may lend itself to justification. While states are strategic in the selection of their (normative) rhetoric, they are also cognizant of the fact that there is a particular history of justification and that specific themes have been used in the past to justify intervention which might be a plausible starting point for their own justification and arguments. As early as 1985, Oscar Schachter noticed that you had to justify your own positions in world politics on something other than your self-interest (Johnstone 2003, 441; Schachter 1985). This means that when states look for an argument to advance action (stating a public motivr) and a justification for intervention, they look towards the past and select among the precedents of prior normatively recognized rhetoric. The crux of this

[41] The concept was used by a number of background interviews with senior P5 & E10 diplomats.
[42] Confidential background interview with high-ranking E10 & P5 diplomats.

dynamic is that prior verbal precedents become reproduced over time. Thomas Franck and Edward Weisband capture this dynamic succinctly

> In the community of states, when a nation speaks to explain why it is embarking on a course of action, it is ordinarily understood by other states also to be *proposing a principle for future conduct or reinforcing an existing principle*. Other states have a right to assume that the speaker knows and intends this level of meaning and that he knows that the listening states make this assumption. (Franck and Weisband 1971, 121)[43]

This dynamic of precedent reproducing leads in connection with *consistency pressure* to a limited number of plausible justificatory rhetoric. Of course, seldomly new justificatory rhetoric might emerge—in conjunction with new norms but these are rare events. During the dissertation's time frame, the strongest candidate for a new globally disseminated norm is the responsibility to protect (R2P) which got quickly soaked up in the human rights theme. Moreover, a series of new protection norms focused on women and children in conflict, bundling them together through a series of landmark resolutions (United Nations General Assembly; United Nations Security Council 2000; 2008). Interestingly, UN resolutions kept such thematic language consistently apart from the general promotion of human rights—affording the women and children theme some special status in UN conduct (Carpenter 2003). This practice might have been guided by strategic considerations as well since states, such as for example China, who were critical of human rights rhetoric, might still be in favor of affording women and children special protection (Foot 2020).

Finally, through the precedent of a theme, we can distinguish them from organizational rhetoric. That is, while themes carry a public motive and precedent, organizational rhetoric does not. This means that themes use normative language that has been used to argue for a course of action and justify a particular intervention. Organizational rhetoric, I further categorize as 'greeting' and 'procedural talk'. The greeting category is as trivial as one thinks. Frequent words or sentences in this category include to 'thank a dear and honorable colleague' or to congratulate another Member 'for assuming the presidency'. This type of language fails to exemplify any motive or precedent because it features no normative rhetoric that has been used to argue for or justify actions and positions. Actors can neither use greeting language to motivate action nor to point to the

[43] Italics added by the author.

greeting for the justification of intervention. To put it bluntly, in international diplomatic talk, greeting language is nothing other than meaningless cheap talk.

Procedural rhetoric, while equally unable to motivate or justify, is substantially more interesting. While procedural rhetoric does also not feature a motive for action or a precedent for the justification of intervention, it offers a (verbal) window into the productivity of the Council. Procedural rhetoric typically occurs when states are slated to vote on an agenda item *'I put this matter now to a vote by show of hands in favor…'*, or when the procedure of a specific mechanism is announced *'these measures will be in force until the 31st of March next year and up for renewal ….'* Investigating this type of language reveals the extent to which the UNSC is engaged in active policymaking, at least rhetorically.

Through the differentiation of themes and organizational rhetoric, we now have a grasp on how to identify these two types of languages. First, to spot a theme in UNSC debates, it has to *carry normative or value-laden language*. Second, themes, in contrast to organizational rhetoric, feature a public motive and a precedent—a type of normative language that has been used in the past to argue for or justify actions and positions.

While, in principle, many types of public motives could become an argument for action, UNSC speakers know that because of consistency pressure, they must be selective and careful with the type of normative language that they use. Importantly, UNSC interventions cannot be justified on any number of parochial interests of member states but only on a finite number of recognized lines of rhetorical precedents (Sandholtz and Stone Sweet 2004). Therefore, focusing on precedents can help to identify the most important themes for a given institution or organization. This means that spotting themes methodologically should be theory-driven or deductively operated as long as there is literature on institutional precedents and justification.

II.5 The Unsayable in World Politics

The egoistic pursuit of parochial interest is a normative taboo in international politics (Schachter 1985). Especially in the context of the UNSC, as the sovereign equality clause of the UN Charter requires the impartial maintenance of international peace and security (United Nations, Article 2, Paragraph 1, Article 24). Therefore, in UNSC deliberations, states have to justify their positions on other reasons as their parochial interests. Even if states have parochial interests vested in a crisis, for example, strong economic dependencies towards a conflict party, they will not opt for basing their rhetoric on an argument that would emphasize how much they depend on, say, the fossil resources of a conflict party. On the contrary, I argue that states would always downplay their personal stake in the issue at hand and would try to select such rhetoric that would present the issue as a case 'where everybody could get behind'. These normative and institutional constraints limit the pool of plausible legitimating rhetoric.

To this end, states look for recognized precedents for intervention to make a claim on what has been done in the past and what ought to be done now. This need to look for some other justifiable rhetoric is what I call the unsayable in world politics. Unsayable is that—of course—states want to realize their interest in any given conflict or crisis. This is perhaps ironic, as two popular variants of one IR paradigm are fashioned on either relative interest preservation (Waltz 2000) or mutual interest accumulation (Keohane 2005). And also, even in my account of rhetoric, interest guides language. Yet, as a diplomat, saying this out loud would prove politically costly, as a) it is a normative taboo and b) it is unlikely to be met with multilateral enthusiasm. Therefore, states need to look for a plausible line of justification that may lend itself well to an argument about what to do and, at the same time, needs to serve as a later justification for their actions (Goddard 2006).

Hence, states look for a prior line of recognized precedents and take up related themes for their next debate. Which theme they eventually use depends on two soft conditions. The first is that this theme is in line with their past rhetoric to conform to consistency pressure. The second is that the state in question needs to think that the current crisis or conflict is a good fit for their theme. Whether something is, a good fit is in itself a political question. Some policymakers may think that an external shock, like an earthquake, a coup d'état, or a global pandemic, is a good

moment to sell a theme.[44] Others may think that they can make the case that a prior crisis (and its justification for intervention) is similar to the current crisis (and its supposed intervention). Policymakers' discretion on how to frame their theme may vary according to domestic political settings. Some member states impose virtually no constraints on their diplomats, affording them a huge leeway to write their own speeches and resolutions. Others receive their instructions verbatim from their home government.[45] In both instances, however, diplomats may look for prior agreed-upon-language that may lend itself to thematic talk.

In a similar fashion, I suggest that scholars who are invested in finding the most important themes for an organization or institution should look for prominent strands of justificatory language that these institutions have used in the past to justify their conduct. In this sense, scholars should work just like diplomats searching for precedent and agreed-upon-language.

At first, it may seem as if this process should be somewhat shortened by the fact that the institution of analysis has witnessed over 75 years of research (Beardsley and Schmidt 2012; Binder and Golub 2020; Claude 1966; Gilligan and Stedman 2003; Hultman 2013).[46] However, in my particular case, things are a little more complicated as there is not a vast amount of literature on the particular topic of *UN rhetoric* and *decision-making*.

However, there is a very small literature on the content of UN resolutions (Benson and Tucker 2022; Hanania 2021; Hauenstein and Joshi 2020). I argue that when we follow the reasoning in UNSC resolutions and connect this logic with said literature, we can identify lines of normative justification. In addition, there is a truly sparse but important literature on the topics dominating the UN in general (Baturo, Dasandi, and Mikhaylov 2017; Watanabe and Zhou 2020). Bringing these kinds of literature together leads to an overlapping number of normative rhetoric that has been used to publicly motivate for action and justify intervention.[47]

By summarizing this literature and reading more than a hundred UNSC resolutions manually, I argue that there are *six distinct and reoccurring themes*. These are: Human rights and humanitarian action (HR), women and children in conflict (W&C),

[44] Confidential background interview with senior P5 and E10 members.
[45] Confidential background interview with senior P5 and E10 members.
[46] This idea will be further explored in the method chapter.
[47] In Chapter 3, I discuss in detail the limitations of this approach.

regional security and territorial integrity (REG), the threat of terrorism (TER), weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and, development and cooperation (DEV). For each of them, we can point to the legal practice of authorized resolutions, as well as secondary literature underscoring their significance as overarching meta-topics of intervention. These themes are used to create an understanding, can function as arguments for action, and may be applied as justification for intervention. Because these six themes can be grouped according to the logic of their operation, I classify them into three categories.

Since, a priori, it is very hard to qualify one type of rhetoric over another because the literature is not fine-grained enough, and a posteriori (so past regression analysis) seems unethical—particularly in an age where scholars start to pre-register their hypotheses—I streamline my hypotheses such that all of them are (positive) and should promote action. Therefore, for each hypothesis, I state the type of thematic rhetoric and that it should (positively) affect the actions and decisions in a subsequent resolution.

II.5.1 Mandate Upholding

The UNSC is responsible for addressing any threats to international peace and security. A prominent justification for to act has been to emphasize that territorial integrity needs to be preserved (United Nations, Article 2, Paragraph 4). Furthermore, intra-state or inter-state conflict generates negative spillover-effects for neighboring countries and regions (Binder 2017; Doyle and Sambanis 2011; Gilligan and Stedman 2003). Although spill-over effects are unlikely to be mentioned literally during a speech, figuratively, they are evident in many justificatory debates. At its simplest, negative spillover includes costs inherent in a crisis that could be—if the security threat is not immediately addressed—externalized to other states, even entire regions—destabilizing them in the long run. Therefore, a whole plethora of UN resolutions has justified intervention under the theme of regional security. Especially, resolution (United Nations Security Council 1990) and resolution (United Nations Security Council 2002) are noteworthy here. These have justified any breach of territorial integrity as a plausible reason for intervention. Thus, the theme of regional security is a plausible candidate to affect the actions and decisions of the UN.

H1a: *The theme of regional security in a Security Council debate should affect the actions and decisions in the subsequent resolution.*

The mandate of the UN, however, is larger than simply maintaining international peace and security. Already Article 1 of the Charter—under the heading "purpose of the institution"—states that the UN should also promote development and cooperation among its members (United Nations, Article 1, Paragraph 2 &3). In practice, this has often led to a justificatory language that points to this obligation to provide development when civil conflicts cease to exist, but long-lasting peace has not been achieved. Because civil conflicts tend to reoccur if there has been no durable peace-building taken place (Collier, Hoeffler, and Söderbom 2004; Hegre, Hultman, and Nygård 2019; Hultman, Kathman, and Shannon 2016), UNSC members may strongly push for this theme to justify further interventions. At a given point in time, the UNSC needs to renew mandates, allocate additional resources, or build up a peacekeeping force. In these instances, arguments for sustained intervention are unlikely to simply repeat the themes that led to the intervention in the first place since the circumstances on the ground might have changed, and prior themes may not be 'a good sell anymore'. Therefore, in such cases, UNSC member states tend to employ a theme of post-conflict development to justify their actions.

H1b: *The theme of development in a Security Council debate should affect actions and decisions in a subsequent resolution.*

II.5.2 Protection Norms

Another theme that offers a rhetorical route to justifying action lies in the UN's principle of preserving and promoting human rights (United Nations 2022). Some scholars even claim that UN actions form the cornerstone of the international human rights regime (Barnett 2009). Conflicts that include pernicious human rights violations, most of all those targeting civilians, are assumed to have a particular pull towards action (Finnemore 2013; Fortna 2004; Mullenbach 2005). Amongst the huge variety of codified or non-codified human rights norms that are said to bind action, the responsibility to protect (R2P) or the convention against genocide are particularly noteworthy. Summarizing this bundle of norms that all convey the impetus to protect different types of civilians, Lisa Hultman has spoken of protection norms (Hultman 2013). Taken together, the language of protection

norms is an integral part of the human rights theme and, thus, a plausible candidate for influencing action.

H1c: *The human rights theme in a Security Council debate should affect the actions and decisions and the subsequent resolution.*

Furthermore, another set of norms has begun to concern what the UN perceives as 'vulnerable groups in conflict'. These norms afford and recognize the special needs of women and children in wartime (Carpenter 2003). Ever since resolution 1325, the UN has conveyed the idea that "conflict has a gendered dimension,"—meaning that women may prove to be particularly scathed by conflict because mercenaries or other soldiers might want to target or rape them to instill fear in the larger public of an opposing faction (United Nations Security Council 2000). Some recent empirical studies have shown that the UN is aware of this heinous conduct, and the likelihood of intervention may rise significantly if sexually motivated crimes are used as a war tactic against women and children (Benson and Gizelis 2020). The fact that the UN seemingly unites these two nouns—women and children—has also spurred some considerable critical scholarship (Carpenter 2005; Shepherd 2008). According to these authors, to UN is complicit in victimizing women because they disregard their agencies by lumping them together with the suffix "and children". Cynthia Enloe has, in an attempt to show the unintended loss of agency, sarcastically remarked that some actors might piously utter the phrase "womenanchildren"[48] whenever they want to alert audiences to a vulnerable group worth our empathy (Enloe 1990; Shepherd 2008, 391).

All in all, although there is critical scholarship about the justificatory practice of the UNSC to bundle women and children together as one type of group that needs protection, even this critical literature would probably agree that this is reoccurring theme justifying UN conduct. Adding to this, there is a burgeoning list of resolutions acknowledging intervention to save, in particular, women and children (United Nations Security Council 2008; 2013; 2019). Therefore, the following hypothesis can be formulated.

H1d: *The theme of women and children in a Security Council debate should affect the actions and decisions in the subsequent resolution.*

[48] The wrong spelling is intended by Enloe.

II.5.3 New Security Threats

Although the UN Charter originally saw no reason to curb the proliferation of nuclear weapons, UNSC resolutions have been passed to that effect (Heupel 2008). Weapons of mass destruction are subject to a strong international taboo (Tannenwald 2005; 2007) and 'red lines' but have been used in civil conflicts such as Syria. Adding to this, there is a whole cornucopia of resolutions justifying the use of sanctions, blockades, or even force, by citing the use of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons (United Nations Security Council 2004; 2009a; 2011a). The UN unifies these different weapon types under the theme of Weapons of Mass Destruction and uses them as public motives for actions as well as justifications for intervention.

H1e: *The theme of Weapons of Mass Destruction in a Security Council debate should affect the actions and decisions in a subsequent resolution.*

With the terror attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, the phenomenon of international terrorism rose to agenda prominence in the UNSC. The Council has passed a considerable number of resolutions on the theme, recognizing it as an "immediate breach of international peace and security" (United Nations Security Council 2001a; 2011b; 2014). Some of these resolutions had such wide-ranging implications that scholars criticized their conduct as mission-creep or mandate overreach (Hudson 2007; Kreuder-Sonnen 2019). Several other scholars remarked that the Council empowered itself through these resolutions from a global executive body to a global legislator (Alvarez 2003; Martínez 2008; Rosand 2004). Given this background, policymakers in the Council have time and again used the theme of terrorism in public negotiations as a public motive for actions as well.

H1f: *The theme of terrorism in a Security Council debate should affect the actions and decisions in the subsequent resolution.*

II.6 The Trade-Off of Dominance

The last section advanced our knowledge about which types of themes exist and why they should affect Council action. For themes to become visible, however, and thus become a focal point of justification or a public motive for action, they strive towards unipolarity—meaning that a dominant theme is something that can be recognized with greater ease. Likewise, the first function of a theme—the heuristic function—requires a clear signal to listening states. States that want to use a heuristic to arrive at a judgment the likes of 'what is this about' and 'why should I care' arguably do not expect a whole bunch of different thematic signals. Instead, states may want one dominant understanding of a conflict or crisis.

From a place of post-hoc justification, dominance also seems appealing. If states justify an intervention on six different themes, it might seem to onlookers observing their actions as if everyone just arbitrarily cites different reasons without even taking the time to tell 'one coherent story'. For all these reasons, a dominant theme is something desirable as it improves decision-making processes. To understand how themes reach domination, let us first consider how a theme enters the UNSC's marketplace, i.e., how it enters a public debate.

Keeping with the metaphor of a marketplace, Council members are buyers looking for a reading of a given situation to 'buy in'. There is an idiosyncratic institutional reason for this type of behavior: SC members are *expected to justify* their voting position to the world.[49] Therefore, states have to be prepared to give reasons for their actions (Forst 2017; Zürn 2004). Even when the outcome is authorized as "the Security Council" in toto, states behave at least as if it was an individual obligation to justify one's actions. Yet, the Council is ridden with power dynamics that lead to unequal distribution of information. With limited intel for some, public justification might not be as easy as it seems. Indeed, the route towards a publicly defendable justification might be very different depending on the institutional role a state fulfills in the Council. The Permanent Five (P5) members hold veto powers and chair their seats indefinitely. Combined with the fact that for all country-file or regional

[49] Indeed, after Russia's invasion in Ukraine, the General Assembly passed a resolution reminding states of their obligation to explain their conduct and voting—in the Permanent Five most of all—to the rest of the world United Nations General Assembly (2022).

issues (intra or interstate crises), they hold penholdership[50], the P5 are in an extremely privileged position.

As mentioned before, penholdership is a poorly understood phenomenon in secondary UN literature. And its status is somewhat controversial. The Charter itself makes no mention of it. Instead, penholdership is another informal practice that is idiosyncratic to the UN and obscure to the scholarly outside. It can be assumed that the UN realized over time that sponsoring resolutions and drafting up consolidated texts required intensive diplomatic, analytical, and legal costs. Small missions to the UN were assumed to be unable to provide such a level of resources (Allen and Yuen 2022, 55, see footnote 17). Thus, all country-file issues—interstate violence as well as intrastate violence—were passed on to the P5. Because for decades, this practice did not change, almost all resolutions were drafted by P5 members. Indeed, Susan Hannah Allen and Amy Yuen write that for their bargaining model in the UNSC, they simply assume that the penholder "is a permanent member since historically it usually is" (Allen and Yuen 2022, 55). Penholders are the first instance to draft a resolution. Thus, the P5 are in an advantageous position because they can pre-select with whom they want to negotiate for their resolution texts—giving them immense leverage over what is written in those and what is left out. Such informal private negotiations are always off-the-books and remain secretive even to the larger UN itself. Furthermore, penholders get additional access and information from the UN Secretariat to inform them on the matter of the crisis.[51] Combined with their own intelligence, the Permanent Members have unrivaled primacy on information. Because of this primacy, there is a considerable *asymmetric information distribution* recognizable in Council practice. This asymmetric information distribution works in two ways. P5 members know what they put into the resolution draft, but they do not know how the E10 will react to it. The E10 have their own interests and normative convictions, but they might have limited intel over a given crisis and no access to the resolution draft.

Furthermore, one could say that the permanent members are eager students of George Tsebelis (Tsebelis 2011, Chapter 2). While the Security Council is

[50] This means that they are the first instance to draft a resolution.
[51] Confidential background interview with two high-ranking P5 members in March 2021 and April 2021.

technically no legislature and the Elected Members do not perfectly capture the status of a 'veto player', the more general argument holds that a *possible win-seat* is harder to obtain as the number of bargaining actors increases. In other words, in situations with collective veto players, the "outcomes of decision-making become more complicated" (Tsebelis 2011, 39). Hence, Permanent Members have an interest in keeping the number of pre-negotiating actors as small as possible to get a resolution that is closer to their ideal point preferences. In a sense, this line of reasoning follows Voeten's idea of an elite pact (Voeten 2005). Great power agreement is hard enough to obtain. The mere fact that the permanent members found a position acceptable to them bestows, for some observers, already legitimacy to the Council (Voeten 2005, 529).

Thus, the Permanent Members want to achieve something that seems paradoxical at first: They would like to negotiate with nobody else, but they want everybody to agree with their resolution. Technically, the P5 would only require four more positive votes—as the voting rules state that the Council needs 9 out of 15 affirmative votes to authorize any action with the concurring votes of the Permanent Five (Sievers and Daws 2014, 295). But the P5 want the added benefit of unanimity because they believe that it will buy them desirable compliance with their decisions (Voeten 2005, 528). Moreover, a vocal scholarly community has maintained that virtually all Member states strive for unanimous decisions (Franck 1990, 150–51; Hurd 2002, 43; Zaum 2013, 70). Elected members may also care about unanimity because they may believe that being part of a Council that authorizes unanimous resolutions raises their status and prestige in world politics (Hurd 2002, 43). Indeed, in virtually all my interviews conducted for this dissertation, UN diplomats, be they from E10 or P5 countries, said that they deeply cared about unanimity. Many added that they believe unanimous resolutions represent the will of the international community.[52] So the P5 want unanimous decisions, but they also want to keep their negotiation party as small as possible; then how is unanimity created? To understand this, we need a perspective from the Elected Members.

Elected members have a different structural interest constellation. Elected members do not possess veto power over outcomes and serve two short-lived years on the Council without the option of being re-elected immediately (United Nations,

[52] Confidential background interviews with high-ranking P5 and E10 diplomats.

Article 23). This means Elected Members want to maximize their time on the Council. Generally speaking, Elected Members are quite eager to pass resolutions and to produce meaningful action because they want to signal to their home audience that they made good use of their short time in this prestigious institution.[53] Certainly, Elected Members also have vested interests in some regions of the world or hold normative convictions over specific issues, and in some cases, this may even lead to some diplomatic controversy.[54]

However, generally speaking, Elected Members have significantly fewer resources and fewer far-reaching interests over conflict resolution in international disputes. In fact, in her memoir, former Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power recounts visiting the UN embassies of 192 UN member states[55] only to realize that some of them possessed few employees and many, not a single political coordinator, typically responsible for negotiating with other Member states (Power 2019, 392–95). Moreover, some missions of "small or poor countries [had so few people working for them] that they often missed important votes and negotiations." (Power 2019, 394–95) This fact should not be interpreted as saying that the Elected Ten have no impact at all. It should also not be misunderstood as saying that the E10 are 'floating in the wind', willing to go with whatever is popular. After all, Samantha Power was referring in the quote to general UN membership, not specifically to the E10. Furthermore, even the Elected Ten are a strongly heterogeneous group made up of powerful states like Germany and Japan or small island nations like St. Kitts and Nevis having a population of just over 53,000 citizens. These facts are merely meant to highlight that the Elected Ten have, on average, fewer resources at their disposal while having the added pressure of 'making good use of their time'. Adding the fact that the E10 are often bypassed in prior consultations leaves them in a conundrum.

Both the elected and permanent members are expected to uphold and maintain the mandate of the UN to defend international peace and security (Article 24). This 'equal burden-sharing' is a reasonable expectation for the great powers—the P5—and an unfair demand towards the E10. To explain, a lot of institutional weight is

[53] Confidential background interviews with P5 and E10 diplomats.
[54] For instance, Germany during its term in the UNSC in 2020, initiated a drafting on a resolution to combat climate change via an early warning system. The US, under President Trump, threatened a veto. This instance is one of the extremely rare occurrences where an Elected member took up a penholder issue from a P5. See, NTV (2020).
[55] Every embassy except for North Korea.

placed on the discretion of the E10. 9 out of 15 affirmatives votes are required to adopt a resolution placing a strong emphasis on the need for approval by the E10, as the P5 themselves are insufficient in their voting power to authorize a resolution. This means that at least four more E10 members have to agree to the P5's position, or else the Council is blocked in its mandate to uphold international peace and security. This fact could lead to much clout for the E10 in a balanced negotiation process, but since the E10 are most often excluded from the private pre-negotiation, and the P5 also hold penholdership, they can only affect an eventual resolution through signaling in public negotiations.

Furthermore, because *asymmetric information distribution* affects them negatively, they have less information on the crisis at hand and a shorter time frame for action (serving only two years). Additionally, they want to show their home audience 'that they made good use of their time'. [56] This leads to enormous pressure to agree with the position of the P5.

For some more powerful E10 members like Germany, Japan, or India, this might not be a problem. They have vital intel on their own and possess the necessary resources to staff strong permanent representations with a dense network of diplomats. In addition, these particular E10 members also have no trouble using 'their own voice' in an international negotiation, as they have clear interests spanning the globe, which translate into crystallized preferences over specific conflicts.[57] However, because the Council has formal rules explaining which world regions have to be represented at the Council at every given moment in time, there is almost a guarantee in place that several E10 members will be from small nations.

Diplomats from some E10 nations told me that they had such a small staff that even if they were selected for private negotiations by the P5—which many of them never were during their tenure—they could not even send a whole delegation.[58] In many debates, they had virtually no intel of their own and had to follow their normative convictions of what is the right thing to do.[59] What they described is also taken up in my theoretical model: Interest guides rhetoric. But if there are no

[56] Confidential interviews with E10 member states during March through June 2022.
[57] Confidential background interviews with high-ranking P5 and E10 members.
[58] Confidential background interviews with high-ranking P5 and E10 members.
[59] Some of them referred to that as following the narrative.

concrete interests formulated, telling and retelling a theme has to rely on normative convictions.

This statement is not meant to belittle or patronize the Elected Members. In my conception, these states are *not* leaves in a storm willing to go whichever way the wind is blowing. Many of them do have vested interests of their own, yet these do not necessarily have such a global reach as the Permanent Members.[60] Meaning while some smaller E10 members might not have profound interests in the conflict resolution of, for example, Haiti or East Timor, they might have normative convictions which can be activated through specific themes.

I also want to shield myself against the misreading that the P5 simply follow their interest and E10 can only hope to uphold their normative convictions. On the contrary, I argued earlier that my account of thematic language is devoid of intentionality. This means that, under some conditions, the marketplace of themes is a two-way street. When the P5 have no strongly vested interests in a given crisis, they might also actively listen to the E10—searching for a theme to make sense of it. In addition, the P5 know that the UNSC has only value for them as long as everyone behaves as if its actions are legitimate and have to be obeyed. This means that there are limits to the extent to which the P5 can simply instrumentalize the E10 for unanimous decision-making. Otherwise, the E10 would start to ignore the authority of the UNSC. Therefore, not every instance of theme-selling is instrumental and not even by the P5. And also, on the contrary, not every utterance of an E10 member is a genuine attempt to argue about which theme best captures a given crisis.

The route towards successfully authorized resolutions is then the following: The P5 start pre-negotiating between them and find whatever ideal point compromise is acceptable to them (win-set). If there is an external crisis taking place, the P5 are pressured to start negotiating in public early on to show that the UN is aware and seized of the crisis. Then, depending on the interest constellation and how deeply vested these are, they try to sell their theme in those public debates, or they are

[60] Admittedly, the E10 are a quite heterogenous group of actors. It may consist of such rising powers as Germany, or Japan with much more refined and well-established security interests in some regions of the world. Yet, the E10 also consist of island states such as St. Kitts and Nevis with a total population of just above 56,000. Overall, I would argue that the scholarly focus tends to zero-in on the most powerful E10 members such as India and Japan and forgets that the median member of the E10 is much closer to much lower power level.

actually searching for themes themselves. If or when the E10 share their designated theme, thereby rising to dominance, the P5 see that the E10 accept their signal of *benign intention*—i.e., that there is a common understanding of the crisis reached. In a next step, the P5 reconvene behind closed doors and draft the first instance of their resolution, the so-called zero-draft.[61] The process from the start of a debate to the first draft may take days, weeks, or even months. This depends on if the E10 accept the signal, whether they use countervailing themes, and whether things change on the ground. At some point, the P5 decide that they are confident enough that their resolution draft will reach unanimity, and they submit it to the Council President, who calls for a vote. The final draft, which is about to be tabled, is supposed to be circulated 24 hours before the vote. However, most of the time, this requirement is waived on the grounds of urgency.[62]

Does this mean that dominant themes are solely positive—that there are only benefits and no costs to dominance? After all, its signal is needed for information transmission, and its dominance may be usable as an argument or post-hoc justification. Unfortunately, no.

Dominant themes may readily alert the Council that there is a common understanding of how a crisis is to be perceived, but true dominance is likely to eliminate outlier positions. This rather hurts than helps unanimity because to reach unanimity, quite literally, every single vote counts. Actions are possible with 9 out of 15 affirmative votes, but unanimity requires 15 affirmatives out of 15 votes. The Council is designed in a way to represent the interests of the international community—via a mechanism of different regions sitting in the Council through all times (Thompson 2006, 7–9). These wide-ranging interests' constellations may lead to a heterogeneity of preferences, with some rare outlier positions. If these nations have defended their position in the past against a relevant theme, consistency pressure applies, and they might need to defend their position against it once more.

Alternatively, they might be silent on the matter, but this leads to withholding of their information on whether they understand the crisis in a similar light. Being silent on a matter is problematic for the P5 as it increases uncertainty over vote

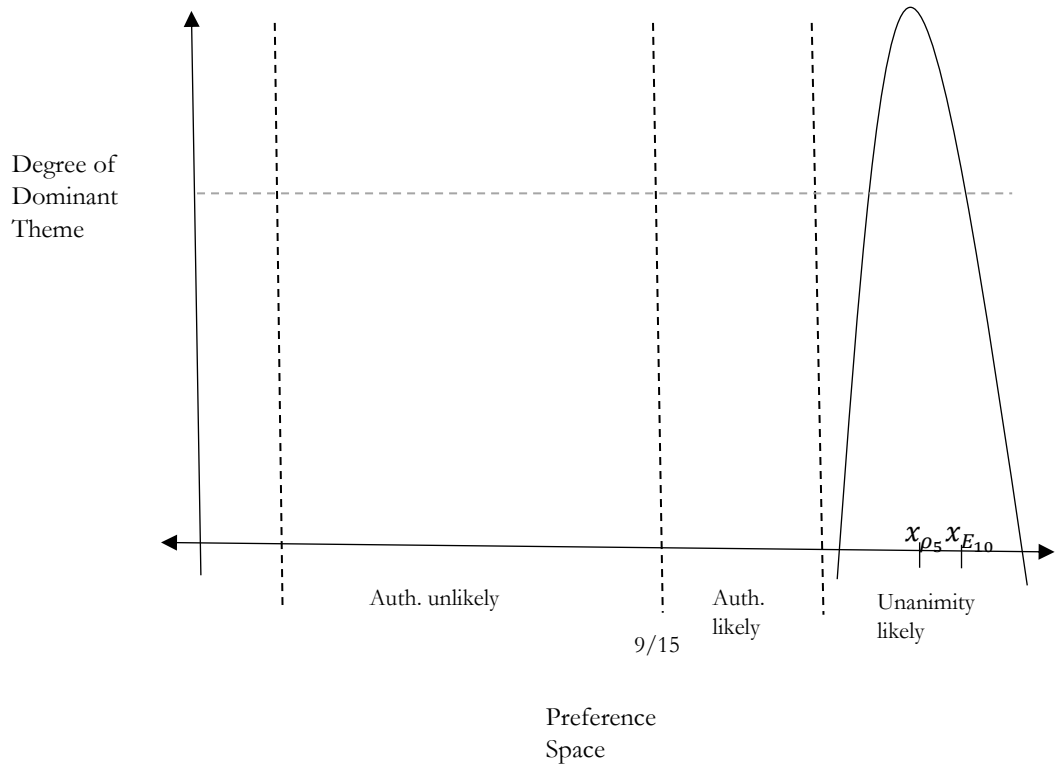
[61] Confidential background interviews with high-ranking P5 and E10 members.
[62] Confidential background interviews with high-ranking P5 and E10 members.

choices. Therefore, if a theme is truly dominant with no other option of thematic talk present—it is likely to hurt rather than help unanimity. It is noteworthy, however, that this theoretical model is probabilistic and not deterministic in nature. There might be situations where dominant themes may not threaten outlier positions—simply because there are not any. But this is rare rather than the default scenario due to the ensured preference range via the regional seat distribution system. The next section illustrates the logic of dominance in further depth.

II.6.1 Three Theoretical Illustrations of Dominance

To illustrate how pure dominance may rather hurt than help unanimity, rational institutionalist literature can be very useful (Chapman 2009; 2012; Thompson 2006; 2010). This literature has itself successfully imported spatial theory from committee signaling in legislatures (Thompson 2010, 36–37). As a starting point, this literature uses simplified visual schemas to illustrate a range of possible outcomes given a one-dimensional space of preference distribution. Figure 2.2 is meant to demonstrate such a one-dimensional preference space for the UN Security Council.

Figure 2.2 Homogenous preference distribution with one dominant theme



Note: The figure is modeled based on the schematic visualizations of Thompson (2010,37).

Figure 2.2 illustrates the rare ideal case of preference distribution within a Security Council debate over a given conflict (C), with one dominant theme and zero outlier positions. The markers XE10, and XP5, give out the different ideal point preference positions along a continuum ranging from authorization unlikely, via authorization likely (crossing the 9/15 requirement), to unanimity likely. On the y-axis, the scale depicts the degree of the dominant theme. Notably, the dotted *horizontal line* [----] indicates a threshold for a signal of benign intention. Of course, where exactly this threshold lies is hard to pinpoint exactly and may vary for different preferences and rhetorical settings. What is clear is that the signaling point should be rather high—the more the E10 shares the rhetoric, the better for the P5—but it should also not be so high to exclude any outlier position of an E10 member who fears going against a consensus in the room.

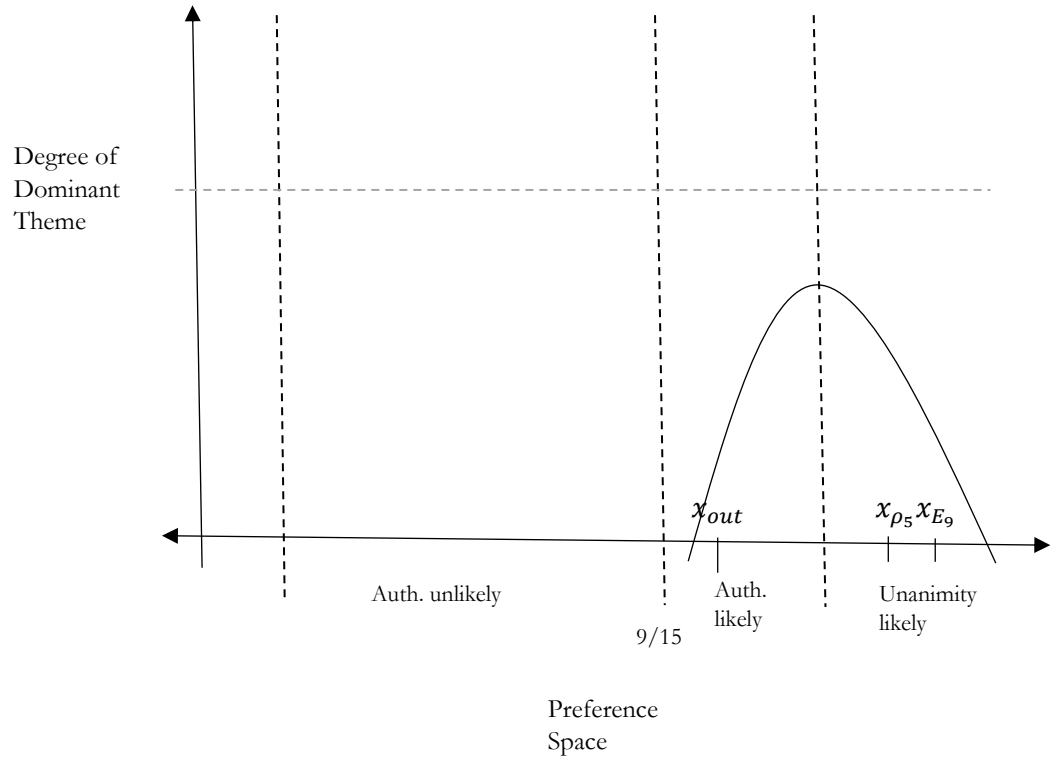
Most of the signaling literature argues that the UNSC is the most coveted multilateral security organization because it is the most representative of the will of the international community and has the most diverse interest constellation (Thompson 2010, 37). This is so because the UN ensures that there is at all times a diverse body of Member states seated in the Council—through a regional representation scheme. That is, at all times, there have to be three Members from African states, two Members from Asia, two Members for Latin America, one Member for Eastern Europe, and two Members for Western Europe and other states (in addition to the five permanent). Through this stratification, the Council is assumed to be operating as a "neutral representative of the international community in a case of military intervention" (Abbott and Snidal 1998, 28; Thompson 2010, 37). The idea behind this assumption is that *one* Member state is unlikely to dominate the institution because even powerful members have to work with a stratified sample of UN membership, coming to the Council with a diversity of interests. These diverse interests are then meant to translate into a range of policy preferences.

Of course, this assumption may be a simplification of the political background of the UNSC, as there have been sporadic arguments over the years that some powerful members—in particular the United States—have been said to engage in voting buying for specific resolutions (Dreher, Sturm, and Vreeland 2009b; Kuziemko and Werker 2006). Additionally, my background interviews, cited above,

have provided doubts about the wide-range interest definitions by smaller E10 members.

In Figure 2.2, the preferences of all Member states are favorable to action—the E10 are even keener on intervention than the P5—and at the same time, the dominant theme is not leaving the bargaining space of agreement (indicated by the *dotted vertical black line*). This suggests that during the entire debate, only one theme rose to dominance, and every single member state shared the same theme. For the P5, this is good news; every E10 member has repeated their desired theme—showing them that they understand the conflict in the same light. Because the theme has been shared in unison, a signal of *benign intention* is reached, crossing the threshold indicated by the *dotted horizontal line*. Consistency pressure is also not affecting the outcome adversely because no Member state has spoken out against the theme in the past. Because there are no outlier positions present, thematic domination does not exclude any Member. This is the optimal scenario for unanimous action. In such a signaling scenario, the P5 may now reconvene behind closed doors and draft their first (and most likely only) resolution. The chances of adopting it unanimously are excellent.

Figure 2.3 Heterogenous preference distribution with one dominant theme and one outlier position

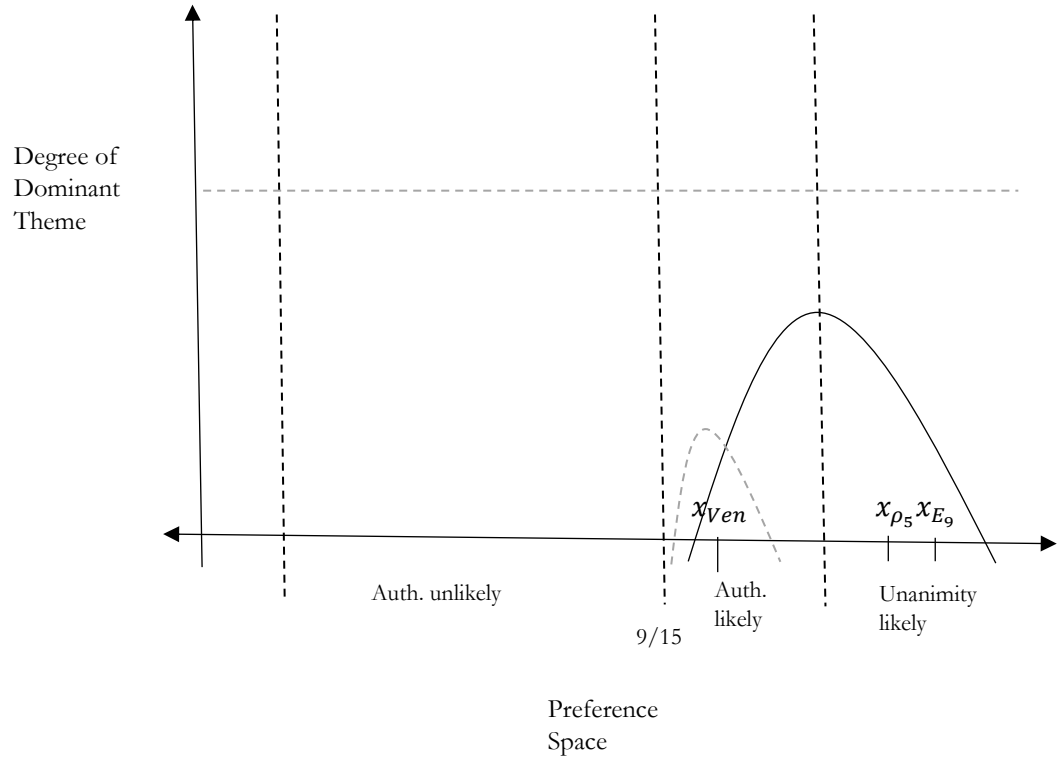


Note: The figure is modeled based on the schematic visualizations of Thompson (2010,37).

Conversely, Figure 2.3 illustrates a case where there is a more heterogeneous preference distribution around C, although most of them still fall into the spectrum of authorizing action. This is the arguable default scenario of UNSC bargaining. Yet, and this is crucial, one state has an outlier preference. In the past, this state has used countervailing rhetoric against the dominant theme shared by all other P5 and E10 members. While its ideal point is still pointing towards authorization, its rhetorical track record—through consistency pressure—prevents it from repeating the dominant theme. In this scenario, the dominant theme is excluding its outlier position, which is also visualized on the y-axis as the dominant theme fails to reach the dotted horizontal line [---]—indicating a signal of benign intention. Coming to a vote, this state may still not vote "no", as its ideal point preference is to adopt a resolution, but verbally it cannot communicate its stance because of consistency pressure. Its reluctance to repeat the dominant theme creates uncertainty for the P5. Depending on how quickly (C) needs to be resolved, the P5 must now act

without a signal of benign intention and bring the resolution to a vote without the full knowledge of whether states are going to vote "yes".

Figure 2.4 Illustrative example with one dominant theme and Venezuela's outlier position on R2P



Note: The figure is modeled based on the schematic visualizations of Thompson (2010,37).

Figure 2.4 uses the same logic as the scenario before but populates it with an illustrative example. Let us assume in the following that there is a civil conflict (C) taking place in a Latin American country, and the UN becomes aware of mass killings taking place within the borders of said country. Furthermore, let us also assume that the head of government of the respective country has declared himself to be unable to secure civilians and stop the killings. The ideal point preference distribution of all Members over (C) is such that action is likely, with XE10 (now actually E9) even being more hawkish than XP5. However, there is one outlier position advocated by Venezuela (XVen). Its ideal point preference would still point towards action (maybe Venezuela is afraid of negative spill-over in the form of refugees entering its own borders). But Venezuela has not shared the dominant theme of human rights. The reason for that is that some E10 members have strongly invoked the responsibility to protect (R2P) during the debate, and this

norm could serve as the prominent argument for intervention. Yet, Venezuela has decried the R2P in the past as a "perverse pretext for intervention" (Scherzinger 2022b, 7). Consistency pressure applies, and Venezuela must now adhere to its rhetorical track record and avoid repeating the HR theme.

To signal a different understanding, Venezuela has mounted a countervailing theme of regional security as a plausible escape route out of this conundrum, but the theme has not been shared by anybody else. If the P5 now draft a resolution and bring it to a vote, the authorized intervention is unlikely to be unanimous in nature.[63] Simply because Venezuela will have to abstain in the least to signal its dissent towards the R2P and the dominant HR theme, it may even vote "no," knowing that the action will likely take place without it (as everybody else shared the dominant theme). After all, it has a preference for action, but its rhetorical track record prevents it from showing this signal to its fellow members and also prevents it from voting affirmatively. This scenario highlights the extent to which a dominant theme can hurt unanimity production. Highly dominant themes allow for little dissent and may feature normative rhetoric against which a state has spoken out in the past. Because of consistency pressure, a state holding an outlier position must now refrain from repeating the dominant theme, increasing uncertainty for the P5 and lowering the chances for unanimity.

Of course, the represented scenarios are probabilistic in nature. This means that in rare circumstances, states may actually choose to suffer the audience costs of going against the rhetorical track record and vote affirmatively, even without repeating the dominant theme. Then, unanimity is not something that is fully strategically produced through verbal signaling but simply a product of preference distribution. However, such a scenario is supposedly quite rare as the costs of going against consistency pressure are assumed to be quite high.

To summarize, these three Figures illustrate three main points. First, preference homogeneity in the Council is desirable for unanimity because states want to realize specific things in a given resolution. This means that they care about the content of the resolution. The closer the preferences align over a specific conflict resolution,

[63] With China and Russia having very critical stances toward the R2P themselves, such a resolution would have not a real chance for unanimity from the very beginning—as China and Russia would not co-sponsor the draft, perhaps even veto it at a later vote. But for the sakes of simplicity, let us set this fact aside for a moment.

the better. Although this may appear trivial, this should be the default logic for reaching unanimity. This reasoning leads to the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis U1: *Preference Homogeneity among Council Members during a debate should positively influence the likelihood of unanimous voting on a subsequent resolution.*

Furthermore, E10 participation is crucial for unanimity production because their theme-retelling decreases the P5's uncertainty about voting choices. If or when the E10 speak, they show whether they understand the conflict in the same light. Even if the E10 may not share the dominant theme, their mere participation in the debate may be important for them, showing their domestic audiences that they are making meaningful contributions towards maintaining international peace and security. As such, their participation may also satisfy shared notions of democratic participation in global governance, making them more receptive towards a consensual outcome.[64] Furthermore, only when a crucial threshold of E10 Member repeats the P5's desired theme, is a signal of benign intention reached. Therefore, one can say that E10 participation is valuable as it may help to create unanimity via public signaling. This leads to two important observable implications. First, the participation of the E10, in general, is beneficial to produce unanimity, and second, the more E10 members repeat a dominant theme, the better.

Hypothesis U2a: *The ratio of E10 participation during a debate should positively influence the likelihood of unanimous voting on a subsequent resolution.*

Hypothesis U2b: *The higher the ratio of E10 members sharing a dominant theme, the better the likelihood of unanimous voting on a subsequent resolution.*

The third implication is that the degree of dominance matters[65]. Low dominance, so a debate that is *not concentrated on one theme but on many*, is bad for unanimity as there is much uncertainty for the P5 on whether states understand a conflict in a similar light. But very high dominance, so a debate that is focused on only one

[64] Confidential background interview with high ranking E10 officials.
[65] In Chapter 5, I demonstrate how I measure the degree of dominance as a measure of *market concentration* (Hischman-Herfindal-Index)

theme, with no other present, may exclude outlier positions. Unanimity, however, requires 15 out of 15 affirmative votes, so even outlier positions. Very high dominance threatens outlier positions and constrains alternative rhetoric. This is so because consistency pressure may foreclose the re-telling of a dominant theme if a state has used rhetoric against it in the past. The diverse interest constellation ensured through the diversification of Council seats—may, more often than not—lead to at least one outlier position. Therefore, all else being equal, high dominance is more likely to affect unanimity negatively. As such, the different degrees of dominance—the more a debate is solely focused on one type of theme—are meaningful for the likelihood of unanimity. This implies a curvilinear trend where low dominance is negative towards unanimity; moderate dominance helps unanimity, and high dominance, again, is hurtful towards unanimity production.

Hypothesis U3a: *Low thematic dominance during a Security Council debate should decrease rather than increase the likelihood of unanimity in the subsequent resolution.*

Hypothesis U3b: *Moderate thematic dominance during a Security Council debate should rather increase than decrease the likelihood of unanimity in the subsequent resolution.*

Hypothesis U3c: *The high dominance of one theme during a Security Council debate should decrease rather than increase the likelihood of unanimity in the subsequent resolution.*

II.7 The Scope Conditions of Dominant Themes

Dominant themes do not fall out of the sky but are actively produced. I have argued that dominant themes may serve as signaling devices, alerting states to the intensity of a problem and that there is ample rhetoric indicating a shared understanding of how to perceive it. Yet, under which conditions a specific theme rises to domination is so far unclear.

To illuminate the scope conditions of my argument, we need a detailed understanding of why a given state may repeat a theme. While dominant themes may appear post-intervention as a justification for prior action—the more interesting occurrence is during a debate. This is so because, post-action, states may

simply refer to the dominant theme during the debate, using it as a justification for intervention. So, the first occurrence of dominance is the real puzzle.

While there are three scope conditions that affect the likelihood of dominance, there is a larger institutional idiosyncrasy working as a background condition that can help us understand why a state even would want to repeat a theme or even put itself as a speaker on the agenda. As mentioned earlier, states are expected to talk during these public debates (Billerbeck 2020; Zürn 2004). In a sense, there is a felt pressure to explain why actions are necessary. Even after a vote has taken place, states still want to justify their conduct.[66] From a normative perspective, justifications are the essential cornerstone of any normative order (Forst 2017, 56). Seen in this way, an authoritative normative order, such as the UN system, "presupposes justifications and at the same time generates them." (Forst 2017, 56). So, the answer to the question of why does a state speak and why it would repeat a theme is that states want to speak up because they are expected to say something. This cannot explain what they are saying, but this pressure to explain themselves answers the question of why states would not choose to always remain silent during debates. Particularly so since there is good reason to believe that normative rhetoric might be costly.

To expand my conditional framework, I argue that there are two scope conditions to dominance; these two are sufficient but not necessary to produce dominant themes. While not a scope condition, one can also combine the logic of consistency pressure with interest homogeneity. If a theme is shared by the P5 and is in line with everyone's prior rhetorical track record and in line with everyones interests, they may (trivially) bring it to dominance, as there are only benefits and no costs assumed by sharing that information. Because this condition supposes that one knows the interests of Council Members over resolutions, I refrain from making a generalized hypothesis on this condition, as we lack specific Council Member interest data vested in conflicts (and resolutions). However, in Chapter 4.3, I offer a plausibility probe to underscore this dynamic, showing that a Member state's rhetoric is partially correlated with interests.

My first condition is great *power imposition*. Several E10, as well as P5 members, have told me during my interviews that they believe great power imposition to be

[66] Confidential background interviews with high-ranking P5 and E10 members.

problematic.[67] Great power imposition is UN lingo for a debate that is mostly driven by the Permanent Members. Certainly, a dominant theme can also be produced in this way simply by eager P5 members time and again inserting themselves into the debate, pushing their own understanding of the conflict. However, while such unseemly imposition can produce dominance, it is unlikely to be met with much support by the E10. Rather such imposition evokes notions of grandstanding, imperial overreach, or lecturing.[68] Therefore, great power overreach may be sufficient to produce dominance, but it is not necessary (or helpful) for unanimity production. In fact, it may be negative for unanimity production in the Council—because some states may reject the P5's preferred theme on the grounds of their imposition. While at times, the P5 might think that overreach might be necessary to bring a theme to dominance—and thereby unleash a signal—it will not be a signal of *benign intentions*. Such signals might still offer a predominant 'way to read the situation,' but unanimity in the Council is unlikely as some E10, particularly E10 members with colonial experiences, should be skeptical of this kind of great power behavior. Hence, the following hypothesis can be formulated.

Hypothesis U4a: *Great Power Imposition during a Security Council debate should negatively affect the likelihood of unanimity in the subsequent resolution.*

A second condition is the occurrence of an external shock. While the occurrence of a crisis is rather a mundane undertaking for the Security Council, after all, this is mainly what the institution is meant to solve; an external shock may be something more extraordinary. External shocks could be a global pandemic, a terrorist attack on a P5 member, a devastating earthquake, a coup d'état, or the like. Essentially, these types of shocks exemplify a severity that makes them applicable to a *Chapter 7 intervention*—the strongest form of intervention the UNSC may take. Such shocks may be welcome events for the framing of a specific theme, thereby bringing it to dominance. In this sense, an external shock is a sufficient but not necessary condition for dominance. Because external shocks come with heightened public visibility, quick and resolute action is often needed. In such a scenario, dominant themes may again be very helpful, indicating whether there is a mutual

[67] Confidential background interviews with high-ranking P5 and E10 members.
[68] Confidential background interviews with high-ranking E10 members.

understanding and a signal of benign intention reached. However, because these crises also may require immediate resolve without the careful steering of the P5 and less attention to outlier positions, they may rather hurt unanimity in the Council.

Hypothesis 4b: *The occurrence of an external shock during a Security Council debate should decrease rather than increase the likelihood of unanimity in the subsequent resolution.*

Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that UN literature has overlooked a vital theoretical gap. Most of the scholarship, when it even considers language to be an important variable in UN conduct, focuses on the post-hoc justifications of prior interventions or legitimation of the institution's authority. (Binder and Heupel 2015; Hurd 2002; Kentikelenis and Voeten 2020; Stephen 2015). For these scholars, language spoken in the Security Council predominantly serves the purpose of justification. Actors in world politics, within the Security Council, perhaps most of all, are expected to explain to the international community why a given intervention is necessary and valuable and should thus be complied with. Moreover, such actors may need to justify why the institution is good or rightful and conforms to the normative standards of external onlookers. Such literature implicitly presupposes that the only important UN audience is *extra-institutional*. I conceive of another audience of the Council, and this audience is *intra-institutional*. That is, this audience is composed of *other* Council members. Out of the necessity to win over 9 out of 15 votes—without which no resolution can be passed—public rhetoric is meant to be reproducible and to sway states into favoring a joint outcome. My account of a marketplace of themes contends that thematic language spoken in the Council is geared to convey a signal of information to facilitate institutional decision-making.

Permanent Council Members, who have led the penholding process, choose particular normative rhetoric that offers a public motive for action and a recognized precedent of justified intervention—a so-called theme. They use themes as a rhetorical strategy because the relatively high threshold of nine eventual positive votes cannot merely be crossed by plainly stating parochial interest since the Charter puts an emphasis on the impartial pursuit of international peace and security. Furthermore, because egotistical pursuit in world politics is tabooed and therefore

unsayable, public rhetoric must be squeezed into a theme that can make a legitimate claim for supporting the action (Goddard 2006; Schachter 1985).

To steer a debate in their favored direction, the P5 usually opens 'shop first', launching their desired theme for the issue to be talked about.[69] The P5 try to accentuate the discussion early on, hoping to imprint their stamp on the issue. The sequence of speakers is another aspect following a strategy of steering. The P5 want to "sell their theme" to the E10 that were, for most of the informal negotiation process, sidelined or even fully ignored. Penholdership gives the P5 unrivaled access to information and leverage over what gets written into a resolution and what is left out. This leads to an *asymmetric information distribution* and puts the Elected Members in a conundrum. However, asymmetric information distribution runs two ways; while the P5 control what gets written in a resolution draft, they do not know whether the E10 will accept their pre-negotiated win set.

The Elected Members want to eagerly insert themselves in the working of the Council in a public manner—to signal to their home audience that they are furthering their own status in the world—yet, the flow of information is uneven, and their own national intelligence on international crises or conflicts may be limited. This leads to a paradoxical situation. A lot hinges on the rhetoric, participation, and voting of the Elected Ten—as the Council needs at least four of them to agree with the Permanent Five, or all of them to agree for the desirable unanimity—but because of the asymmetrical level of information educated decision-making is not a trivial undertaking for the E10. Since the P5 have sidelined the E10 in the pre-bargaining process to protect their coveted win-set, they now need to win their consent in public negotiations.

Although technically, the P5 would only need four more votes to authorize any action; they seek affirmative votes from all Council members. The P5 desire unanimity because they believe that unanimous decisions increase compliance with UN actions and decisions (Voeten 2005, 533–34). The E10 seek unanimity because they hope that serving on a Council that produces unanimous decisions will increase their status and prestige in world politics (Hurd 2002, 43; Zaum 2013, 70).

[69] Confidential background interviews with P5 and E10 diplomats indicated that this trend is especially pronounced for all country-files where P5 are penholders.

To arrive at unanimity, the P5 want the E10 to share their preferred theme in unison without excluding any outlier positions. Thus, they seek a dominant theme to offer a mutual understanding of how to perceive a given conflict or crisis. To this end, there are two scope conditions to consider. First, the P5 know that a theme only brought to dominance on their behest might seem as if the great powers imposed their will onto everyone else.[70] The P5 want to avoid the impression that they are overbearing and therefore try to avoid great power imposition. While great power imposition can produce a dominant theme, it is unlikely to release a signal of benign intention, as some E10 members are less likely to repeat their theme.

Second, the occurrence of an external shock can be actively used to frame a given context in a certain thematic light—thereby increasing the likelihood of dominance. Yet, because external shocks come with public visibility, there is less time for careful debate steering and little time to respect outlier positions. Hence, external shocks rather decrease than increase the likelihood of unanimity in the Council.

Furthermore, highly dominant themes may readily alert a common understanding over a specific crisis and thus help to spur action, but they are also likely to eliminate outlier positions and are, therefore, likely to hurt unanimity. In all, dominant themes are a double-edged sword for institutional decision-making. They are likely to produce action because they signal how a majority of speakers understand a conflict, but they are likely to harm unanimity in the Council because they threaten outlier positions. As unanimity virtually requires everybody to be on board—even outlier positions, high dominance may rather decrease than increase the likelihood of unanimous voting because some states will have an outlier position against such rhetoric and, due to consistency, pressure has to refrain from sharing the emerging signal. Specifically, dominance should have a curvilinear relationship with dominance—in the sense that low dominance hurts unanimity (no signal of benign intention is reached), moderate levels help unanimity, and high dominance hurts unanimity again (excludes outlier positions).

Through the use of sparse secondary literature, and landmark UNSC resolutions, I have classified different thematic talk into three logics of Council actions. The first acknowledges the mandate of the Council and tries to uphold it. The second starts from the consideration that there are a host of protection norms, all embedded in

[70] Confidential background interviews with high-ranking P5 diplomats in March and April 2021.

either a language of human rights or women and children, which are said to be globally distributed and internalized to various extents. The third, new security threats, is cognizant of the fact that the UN Charter was written in 1945 and new security threats may imperil "international peace and security" and that the Council has to respond to such actions. All six themes should plausibly affect UN decision-making and actions.

The next chapter builds upon my theoretical framework by operationalizing thematic talk in UNSC debates. I do so by using a series of state-of-the-art techniques stemming from automated computer linguistics.

PART 2

EMPIRICS & DISCUSSION

Chapter 3 – The Quest for a Machine-learning Classifier of Thematic and Organizational Language

With the advent of computational methods imported from corpus linguistics and data science, a whole new ocean of research questions—targeting textual big data analysis—became answerable (Benoit, Laver, and Mikhaylov 2009; Grimmer and Stewart 2013; Rauh 2022a). My dissertation has made excessive use of some of the *state-of-the-art* methods (Roberts, Stewart, and Tingley 2019; Watanabe and Zhou 2020), and this Chapter details my rationale and implementation of them. In particular, I will explain my research strategy to produce an original language model of thematic and organizational rhetoric. To this end, the chapter comprises four stages. First, I explain the journey towards a semi-supervised machine learning classification model, discussing viable alternatives, their strengths, and their weaknesses. Second, I introduce my final model, which strongly outperforms existing studies of UN language (F1 score at 0.81) and will be a significant contribution to the quantitative text analysis (QTA) field. Third, I illustrate all *qualitative* content analysis techniques that I used to enrich and augment my machine-learning model—showing that normative rhetoric featuring public motives for action and justifications for interventions must be *manually added* to machine-learning models when trying to classify themes. Fourth, I close this chapter with a series of validation steps that I undertook to make my analysis robust to tweaking and measurement error. The conclusion summarizes my efforts, states the limitations of QTA, and prepares the reader for the first application of the model in the next chapter.

III.1 The Promises and Pitfalls of Machine-learning Classification

At the outset of my empirical analysis lay one basic problem: Now that I knew theoretically what thematic language looked like, how could I assess this in tens of thousands of UN speeches empirically? With these enormous amounts of data, systematic hand coding would be unfeasible. Instead, what I needed to do was to write an algorithm that would—with statistical precision—classify specific parts of

speeches belonging to different kinds of language.[71] Data scientists and QTA scholars, in particular, speak of this scenario as a classification problem (Grimmer and Stewart 2013). In essence, a scholar wants to understand how many cases out of the universe of all cases (W) are to be classified as (x), (y), (z). Moreover, scholars do not only want estimates to be precise so that all x, y, z are indeed instances of (x), (y), (z)—which can be called *precision*—but scholars also want to find *all* cases of x, y, z out of (W)—which is called *recall*.

Put in another way, for my study, it is extremely important to know that when I classify segments of diplomatic speeches as belonging to a specific theme or organizational rhetoric, I want to be correct (precision). Furthermore, I want to find all speech segments that belong to a specific type of theme or organizational rhetoric, not just some (recall).

In principle, there are three computer linguistic routes to achieve high precision and recall in automated classification. Scholars can use supervised classification (Lowe 2008; Wilkerson and Casas 2017), unsupervised classification (Blei, Ng, and Jordan 2003), or, what I eventually embraced, semi-supervised classification (Watanabe and Zhou 2020).

Each type of classification method comes with advantages and disadvantages. Unsupervised classification assumes that scholars have no theoretical priors over the data to be analyzed (Blei, Ng, and Jordan 2003). It is computational-friendly and requires few resources but is ignorant to prior knowledge of the data to be analyzed. Supervised classification, on the contrary, lets a scholar code a sample of corpus data (a training set), assign codes and then extrapolate these codes over the entire corpus (Jurka et al. 2013). It is often precise but extremely resource intensive and has the downside of assuming that the scholars know *all* relevant keywords that signal a specific type of language a priori. Semi-supervision, the youngest of all models (Watanabe and Zhou 2020), allows scholars to incorporate existing research via seed words which steer the eventual classification while also allowing reiterative tweaking of the model via knowledge and frequency seed words. Although I eventually settled on semi-supervision as my main empirical model of textual

[71] When I speak of classification here, I mean mixed-membership topic models without implying that all classification techniques are topic models.

analysis, the documented research process gives us valuable insights into the fundamentals of uncovering thematic talk.

To start off, unsupervised classification—the earliest form of automated classification—came from bibliographic search engines. Researchers wanted to find new literature that should somehow relate to some broad category. An algorithm would search word co-occurrences, so words that appear together and suggest, based on these co-occurrences, discernable topics. Indeed, the logic of co-occurrences still informs almost all classification models (Vayansky and Kumar 2020), with the exception of semantic association models (Rauh 2022b; Rodriguez and Spirling 2022). One example of an unsupervised classification model, an early Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) model, has been recently applied to a corpus of UN resolutions (Hanania 2021).

The problem with unsupervised classification, with any kind of classification really, is that scholars need to know how many topics they want to classify a priori (Grimmer and Stewart 2013, 285–86). In QTA lingo, the number of k, where k is the number of topics to be classified, needs to be set before the algorithm has read a single text file. This leads to a strange conundrum. On the one hand, unsupervised classification, such as an LDA model, assumes that scholars do not know any kind of latent structure of the corpus to be analyzed, and the algorithm does the classification for the scholar (that is why we call it unsupervised). Yet, on the other hand, the topic model forces the scholar to make a decision on how many topics should exist in the corpus a priori. Applied to my study, this would mean that I choose the types of languages beforehand, but I pretend to know nothing about UN debates when I start running my computational algorithm.

Coming back to the mentioned study of analyzing UN resolutions, Richard Hanania argues that there are only three meta-subjects, "war, punitive, and humanitarian" (Hanania 2021). The appeal of this model is its simplicity. Having only three categories is attractive because the model can easily create three kinds of overarching types of classification that are readily distinctive from one another. Yet, it is also theoretically misleading. My theory chapter has shown that there are excellent qualitative studies out there, and even a very small quantitative literature, that has substantially analyzed UN rhetoric; some even claim UN discourse (Binder and Heupel 2015; 2021; Eckhard et al. 2021a; Hurd 2005; Stephen 2015).

Discarding all this research in favor of three meta-subjects may not do justice to existing research.

To qualify, my point here is not to criticize Hanania's approach—for scholars who are interested in these three meta-subjects, the analysis will reveal important insights—but it does not further our understanding of UN organizational and thematic language, especially in the light of my complex theoretical framework. Surely, the six kinds of themes might be somewhere nested in Hanania's meta subjects, but when they become dominant, when they rise and fall, all of this is hidden in the data.

Still, unsupervised classification undoubtedly has attractive advantages. For one, unsupervised classification is the most time and resource-saving approach. Scholars do not need to hand code, develop dictionaries, or otherwise steer the algorithm. Unsupervised models simply calculate word co-occurrences, then forms topics from these co-occurrences, asses the individual word likelihood for each word to belong to a certain category (β), estimate their proportions over documents (θ), estimate the proportion over the data (γ).

At the beginning of my empirical search for the right classifier, I also used unsupervised classification—hoping that I could find the six types of thematic language and two kinds of organizational rhetoric without steering the model. While, in hindsight, this approach was flawed, its output helps us to understand why simple topics and overarching themes are not identical.

III.1.1 Why Unsupervised Classification will discover Topics but is unlikely to discover Themes

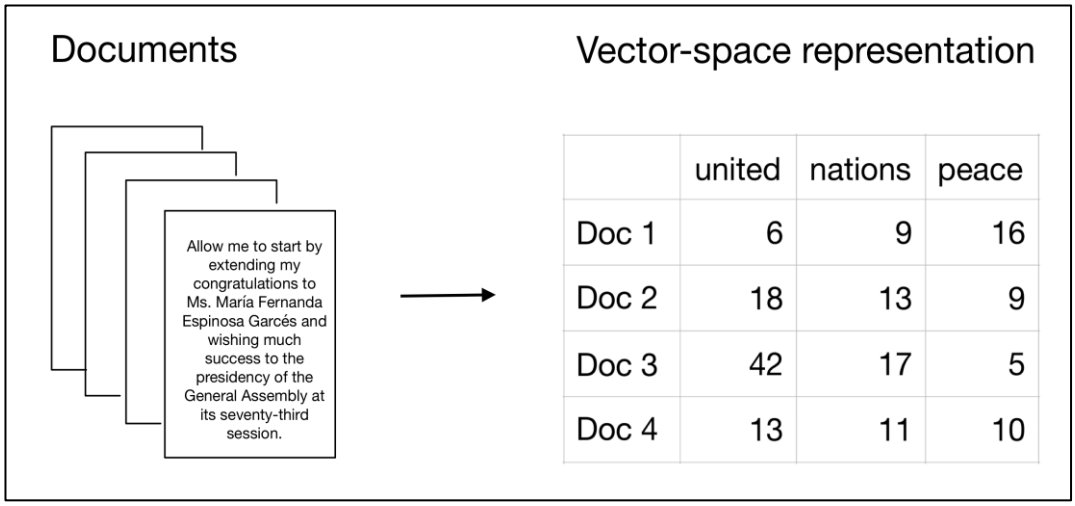
At the beginning of my empirical analysis, I spent a considerable amount of time tuning an unsupervised classification model, specifically a structural topic model or STM for short (Roberts, Stewart, and Tingley 2019), to discovering my six types of themes and two kinds of organizational rhetoric. The STM, in opposition to the crude LDA, assumes that we can better understand (and find) topics by adding some priors on the speakers and the documents themselves. For example, a speaker may themselves be associated with a certain topic (such as for example, the USA with human rights). The STM also offers an additional benefit. In opposition to

other unsupervised models, the STM offers a function to suggest an appropriate number of topics itself based on a pioneering study by (Mimno et al. 2011).

Before running the STM, however, I had to build an original corpus that would—for the first time—combine UNSC debate data with UNSC resolutions. The rationale for this should be clear. My argument is that language can affect real-world outcomes. But to trace such outcomes, i.e., whether the UN actually intervenes in a conflict by authorizing a military force or by releasing sanctions, we need data from UNSC resolutions because every single UN decision has to be voted for and finalized in a resolution. To get these data, I web-scraped all relevant UN resolutions from the UN archive for the duration of my study (1995 to 2018) and connected them with existing UN speech corpus data by Schönfeld et al. (Schönfeld et al. 2019). Connecting these resolutions to UN debates is not a trivial undertaking, as the UN can pause any agenda item (and therefore any debate) at any time and pick it up at a later point in time. To overcome this convoluted time structure, I made use of a unique meeting identification number—in UN lingo, the so-called SPV number—which connects the final date of the debate with a vote. Since the SPV number also appears in the relevant resolution text, I found a way (via exact pattern matching) to connect entire debates with decision outcomes (and votes). With these original data sources, I was able to discern how many debates were held and, at the end of the debates, what action types were authorized in which resolutions. I transformed these data into a Document Feature Matrix (DFM).[72] One can think of a DFM as a space where each word is counted (and stored in a column) for each document in a dataset (per row).

[72] I used the quanteda text package in "R" for all textual data-wrangling Benoit et al. (2018).

Figure 3.1 Example of a DFM



Source: Meyer, Cosima and Puschmann, Cornelius. 2019. "Advancing Text Mining With R and quanteda." Methods Bites, Blog of the MZES Social Science Data Lab. With permission by the authors:https://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/socialsciencedatalab/article/advancing-text-mining/

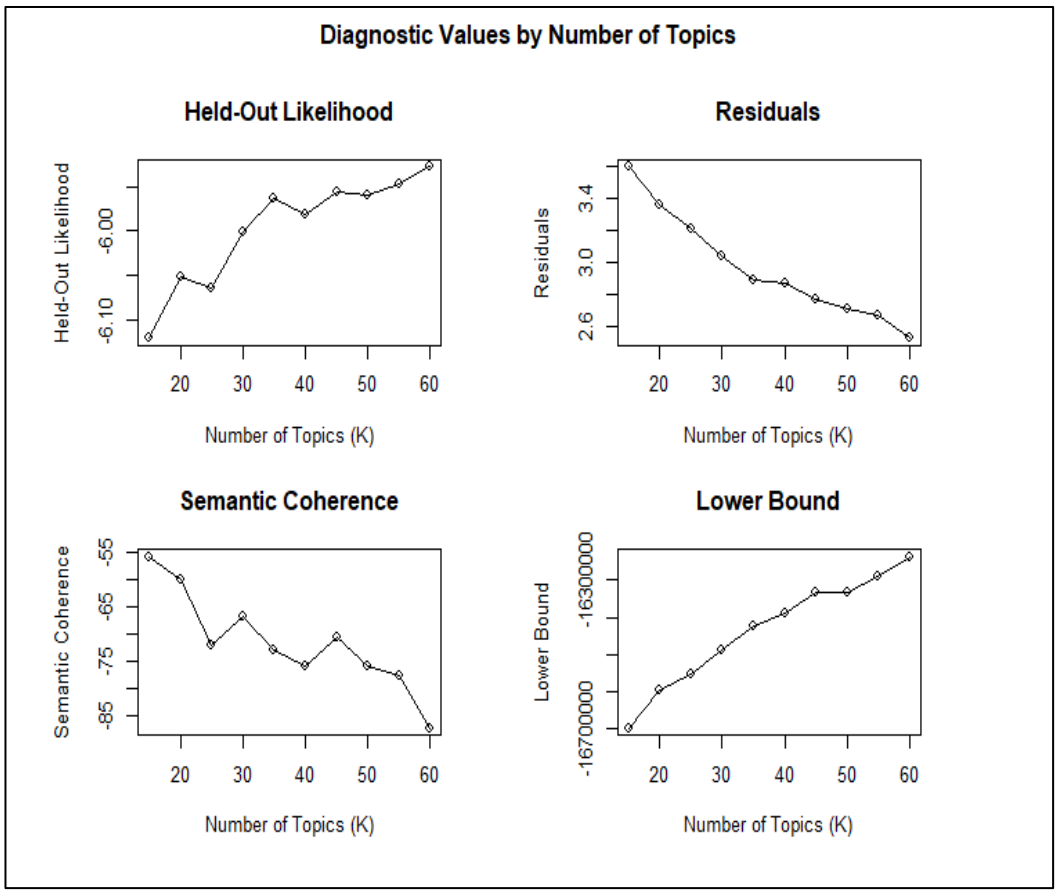
Vector space representations, DFMs, are numerical representations of words in documents. This means that their natural language structure is broken up into what scholars call a 'bag of words'. This is important to understand because the output of topic models, depending on what metric one uses, will be words, not orderly structured sentences. This does not mean that scholars cannot infer semantically coherent topics—they evidently can. But the sequence and structure of sentences are lost. Hence, scholars cannot rely on the *natural processing* of *language*. Instead, they must use methods that can work with co-occurrences of words, patterns that emerge out of frequency or exclusivity, and not via their placing in a sentence.

Moreover, because the term "security council" would be too frequent in its use (without adding really inferential benefit), I deleted the term from my DFM. I also removed numbers, punctuation, and symbols as a preprocessing step. Furthermore, I set a common threshold of 10 occurrences per word, meaning that if words appeared less than ten times over the almost 80,000 speeches, I deleted them from the DFM. This is a common technique in QTA preprocessing to avoid overfitting the model due to extreme outliers.

Finally, after all the pre-processing, I returned to the STM model. Following (Mimno et al. 2011), I let the STM suggest an appropriate amount of topics for me (hoping that I could discern my themes from them). In a first run, the model reported a surprising amount of 62, more or less, discernable topics. This is

surprising because my UN Resolution corpus features 68 unique agenda items. Hence, the STM suggested, purely on the basis of text data, a number of topics that compares considerably well with the number of distinct agenda items. However, taking such an arbitrary number of topics at face value is dangerous. To minimize the risk of statistical artifacts—topics that appear valid to a computer program but not to a human researcher—the STM provides additional diagnostic tools to investigate the model output. Figure 3.2 presents a visual summary of these outputs.

Figure 3.2 Diagnostic Values for an STM Model in UN Resolution Debates



The four parameters allow researchers to fine-tune an unsupervised model. For example, held-out likelihood shows the likelihood that 'hidden topics' exist in the data comparing model outputs for different models with different numbers of k (x-axis). The higher the topic number, the smaller the likelihood that there are hidden topics (which should be made distinct). Faring in a similar way, residuals show the number of words that are error terms—terms that cannot be mapped with any statistical certainty to any of the modeled topics. In both plots, a number slightly above k = 60 seems to produce the best results. The lower bounds diagnostic tells

us how long it took for the model to converge—which may be an important characteristic for data scientists but is of less relevance here.

Semantic coherence is a complex parameter. Semantic coherence is the parameter that most closely resembles what human coders understand as topics (Silge 2018). At its simplest, it gives out a measure of how closely the words are related in their usage in everyday language. Semantic coherence is inversely related to exclusivity. Such that the more something is semantically coherent, the less exclusive it is—and vice versa. This relationship oftentimes produces some tension between 'what a computer program thinks a good amount of topics is' and what a human coder thinks 'a good amount of topics is'. For example, in the bottom left quadrant of Figure 3.2, semantic coherence is very high for k = 20, but for a human coder (as a validity test), it is very hard to identify consistent topics, let alone themes (available in the appendix), with such a number of k. Instead, with at least 60 topics, the issues to be talked about appear to be more or less distinct from one another. Taken together, the parameters reveal that with k ~ 60, topics are well distinct from one another while having substantially low residuals, and the likelihood for left-out topics is very small. After further validation, I found that, indeed k = 62 represented a strong balance between the parameters. Figure 3.3 gives a visual representation of k = 62 with the top 7 β-terms for each topic.

Figure 3.3 STM Model Output with k = 62

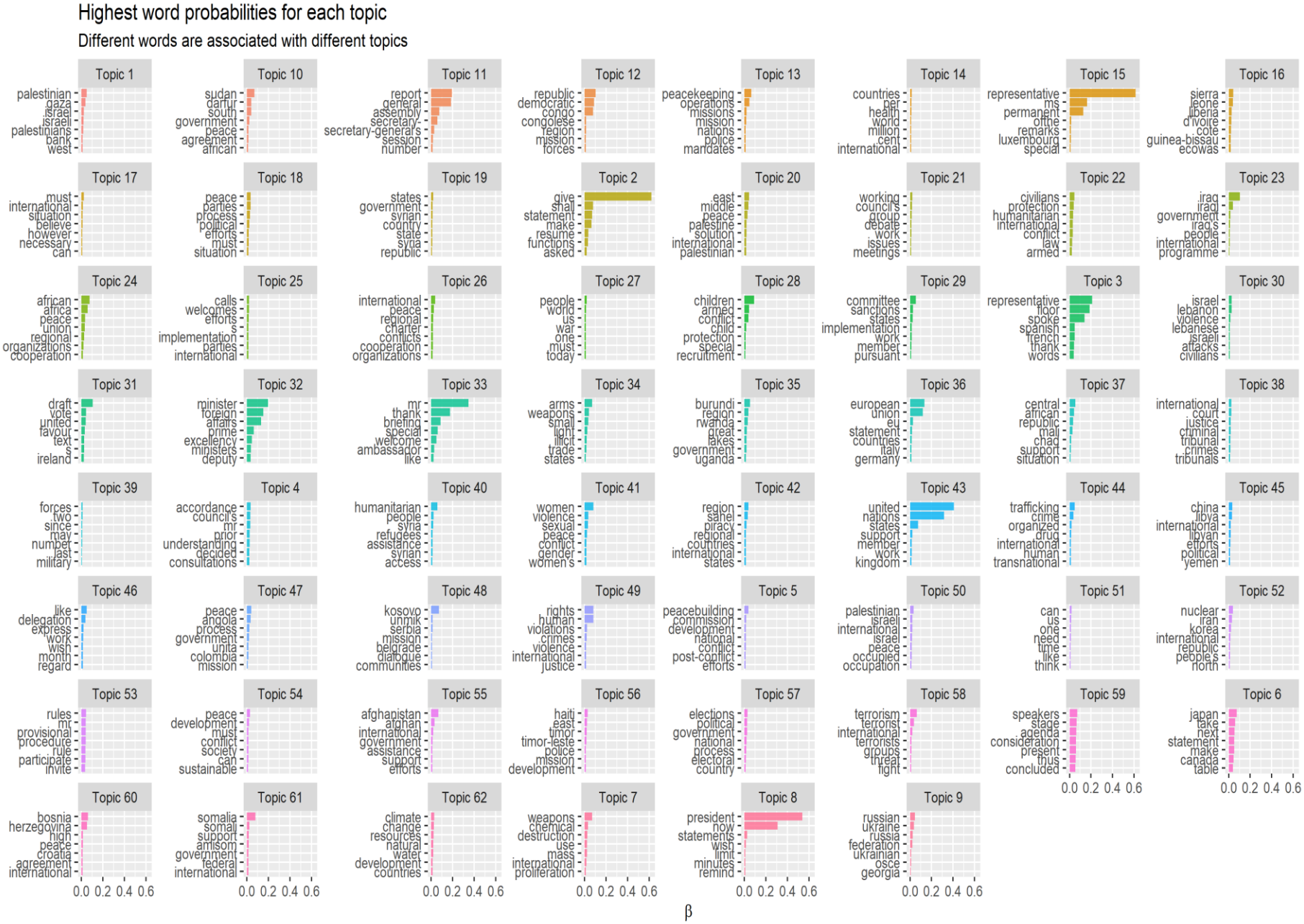

Highest word probabilities for each topic
Different words are associated with different topics
Topic 1
palestinian
gaza
israel
israeli
palestinians
bank
west
Topic 10
sudan
darfur
south
government
peace
agreement
african
Topic 11
report
general
assembly
secretary
secretary-general's
session
number
Topic 12
republic
democratic
congo
congolese
region
mission
forces
Topic 13
peacekeeping
operations
missions
mission
nations
police
mandates
Topic 14
countries
per
health
world
million
cent
international
Topic 15
representative
ms
permanent
ofthe
remarks
luxembourg
special
Topic 16
sierra
leone
liberia
d'ivoire
cote
guinea-bissau
ecowas
Topic 17
must
international
situation
believe
however
necessary
can
Topic 18
peace
parties
process
political
efforts
must
situation
Topic 19
states
government
syrian
country
state
syria
republic
Topic 2
give
small
statement
make
resume
functions
asked
Topic 20
east
middle
peace
palestine
solution
international
palestinian
Topic 21
working
council's
group
debate
work
issues
meetings
Topic 22
civilians
protection
humanitarian
international
conflict
law
armed
Topic 23
iraq
iraqi
government
iraq's
people
international
programme
Topic 24
african
africa
peace
union
regional
organizations
cooperation
Topic 25
calls
welcomes
efforts
implementation
parties
international
Topic 26
international
peace
regional
charter
conflicts
cooperation
organizations
Topic 27
people
world
us
war
one
must
today
Topic 28
children
armed
conflict
child
protection
special
recruitment
Topic 29
committee
sanctions
states
implementation
work
member
pursuant
Topic 3
representative
floor
spoke
spanish
french
thank
words
Topic 30
israel
lebanon
violence
lebanese
israeli
attacks
civilians
Topic 31
draft
vote
united
favour
text
s
ireland
Topic 32
minister
foreign
affairs
prime
excellency
ministers
deputy
Topic 33
mr
thank
briefing
special
welcome
ambassador
like
Topic 34
arms
weapons
small
light
illicit
trade
states
Topic 35
burundi
region
rwanda
great
lakes
government
uganda
Topic 36
european
union
eu
statement
countries
italy
germany
Topic 37
central
african
republic
mali
chad
support
situation
Topic 38
international
court
justice
criminal
tribunal
crimes
tribunals
Topic 39
forces
two
since
may
number
last
military
Topic 4
accordance
council's
mr
prior
understanding
decided
consultations
Topic 40
humanitarian
people
syria
refugees
assistance
syrian
access
Topic 41
women
violence
sexual
peace
conflict
gender
women's
Topic 42
region
sahel
piracy
regional
countries
international
states
Topic 43
united
nations
states
support
member
work
kingdom
Topic 44
trafficking
crime
organized
drug
international
human
transnational
Topic 45
china
libya
international
libyan
efforts
political
yemen
Topic 46
like
delegation
express
work
wish
month
regard
Topic 47
peace
angola
process
government
unita
colombia
mission
Topic 48
kosovo
unmik
serbia
mission
belgrade
dialogue
communities
Topic 49
rights
human
violations
crimes
violence
international
justice
Topic 5
peacebuilding
commission
development
national
conflict
post-conflict
efforts
Topic 50
palestinian
israeli
international
israel
peace
occupied
occupation
Topic 51
can
us
one
need
time
like
think
Topic 52
nuclear
iran
korea
international
republic
people's
north
Topic 53
rules
mr
provisional
procedure
rule
participate
invite
Topic 54
peace
development
must
conflict
society
can
sustainable
Topic 55
afghanistan
afghan
international
government
assistance
support
efforts
Topic 56
haiti
east
timor
timor-leste
police
mission
development
Topic 57
elections
political
government
national
process
electoral
country
Topic 58
terrorism
terrorist
international
terrorists
groups
threat
fight
Topic 59
speakers
stage
agenda
consideration
present
thus
concluded
Topic 6
japan
take
next
statement
make
canada
table
Topic 60
bosnia
herzegovina
high
peace
croatia
agreement
international
Topic 61
somalia
somali
support
amisom
government
federal
international
Topic 62
climate
change
resources
natural
water
development
countries
Topic 7
weapons
chemical
destruction
use
mass
international
proliferation
Topic 8
president
now
statements
wish
limit
minutes
remind
Topic 9
russian
ukraine
russia
federation
ukrainian
osce
georgia
0.0 0.2 0.4 0.6
β

Figure 3.3 demonstrates the advantages of unsupervised classification (while also giving us a solid representation of its drawbacks). Without any steering of the algorithm—apart from selecting k—the model converged on 62 different topics. After careful assessment, these topics often come very close to the actual UN agenda items during the same time frame. After manual cleaning, my original UN resolution corpus gives out 68 unique agenda items between 1995-2018. These 62 topics come surprisingly close to covering most of these agenda items.

For example, topic 1 with β-terms such as "Palestinian", "Gaza", "Israel", "West", "Bank", could indicate the Israel-Palestine conflict, which features very prominently as an agenda item in the UNSC. Along the same lines, topic 48, with words such as "Kosovo", "UNMIK", "Serbia", "Mission", "Belgrade," could indicate the civil conflict(s) in the Former Yugoslav Republic. It seems that the model is capable of mapping different UN agenda items (mostly civil wars) from text data. Yet, with further scrutiny, I realize that the exclusivity is worn down with the increased amount of semantic coherence. Consider, for example, topic 50, with words such as "Palestinian", "Israeli", "international". This topic should—ideally speaking—be part of topic 1, which already mapped the Israel-Palestine conflict quite nicely.

Another strong drawback is the fact that my six important themes, justified in my theory chapter, are now submerged on the same level topics. For example, Topic 7, on the bottom half of the figure, features words such as "weapons", "chemical", "destruction", "use", or "mass", this topic could be similar to my WMD theme. Faring in a similar fashion, topic 41 in the middle of the figure with words such as "women", "violence", "sexual" could indicate the W&C theme from my theory chapter. Yet, topic 28, with words such as "children", "armed", "conflict", should be part of the same theme. The overarching problem of the unsupervised model remains that if we discover relevant themes of interest, such as Women and Children or WMD, this is, more or less, relegated to chance. Without any further steering of the algorithm, it is, more or less, the luck of the draw whether one finds meta-subjects of interest. And it is even more luck to find something complex as a theme nested indeed in *one* category (and not in two topics such as the women and children example).

Furthermore, even though several parameters were optimized in the validation of this model, topics are still not acceptably exclusive. The women and children theme

may feature in two distinct topics, but it should be one overarching theme (as readily apparent in topics 41 and 28). Moreover, because we have the output now of themes and topics on the same analytical level, that is, themes and topics appear next to each other (for a hierarchical comparison, see Figure 2.1 from Chapter 2), we cannot measure or quantify how much, say, WMD rhetoric is present in the Israel-Palestine conflict.

To add yet another caveat, because we could not force the algorithm to look for normative terms (which are supposed to motivate or justify conduct), we cannot be certain that our desired themes if they are even decipherable, feature *normative* language. However, featuring normative language was part of my theoretical definition of thematic talk. What is more, because we could not impose that organizational rhetoric is devoid of normative rhetoric, we cannot be certain that greeting or procedural talk does not show up in our thematic language. Without any supervision, the STM has produced output that may come close to different topics or agenda items, but it has watered down the distinctiveness of thematic language vs. organizational rhetoric. Therefore, the unsupervised model has produced output that is a poor empirical match for my theoretical framework.

The upshot of this exercise is that unsupervised approaches are severely limited in their capacity to recognize and model themes. The bigger picture is that themes and topics are not identical. Themes supervene on topics and feature normative rhetoric. Thus, the algorithm needs some sort of hierarchical input as computational priors that steer its convergence.

III.1.2 How (Semi)-Supervision may recognize Themes

The prior section has shown that complex linguistic concepts—such as themes—require some sort of human input. But a human coder cannot read and (hand)code thousands of thousands of diplomats' speeches. To overcome such limitations, there are two ways to put a 'human in the loop' in automated classification. Supervised classification uses training data, which a scholar has hand-coded, and then learns from these data underlying rhetorical patterns of interest—applying them to large-n datasets (Montgomery and Olivella 2018). While this can produce highly valid classifications (Grimmer 2010), the downside is that it is a) extremely resource-consuming and b) scholars need to know all their coding markers before starting on their training data. Put in other words, scholars need to know a priori

all important keywords or indicators that signal for them a specific kind of theme or organizational rhetoric. A learning process over time is not conducive to supervised classification since the coding scheme requires you to have made all of the coding instructions before reading the first document. When we say that unsupervised classification assumes a scholar knows nothing about the underlying data, supervised classification directly comes in from the opposite aisle—assuming the scholar knows everything about the data.

Semi-supervision, a state-of-the-art method, applied for the first time on text data in 2020 (Watanabe and Zhou 2020), offers an attractive compromise: Instead of assuming that scholars either know nothing or everything about the large-n data to be analyzed, the model settles in an intermediate position. It allows scholars to steer the algorithm by giving it certain anchor words. These anchor words, called *seed words* in QTA lingo, can be distinguished into two types. *Knowledge seed words* have to be produced by the scholar themselves and rely on their background knowledge of the literature or phenomenon under study (a priori). *Frequency seed words* are the most salient words (top features) or most distinctive words for each theme or rhetoric past the first run of the model—so a posteriori (Watanabe and Zhou 2020, 8). Taken together, semi-supervision harnesses the advantages of both of their rival approaches by relying on a mixture of a prior and a posteriori knowledge synthesis. In this way, semi-supervision may make use of secondary literature by important seed words from it while keeping the option to change and tweak the dictionary by focusing on frequency seed words later on. For these reasons, I ultimately settled on semi-supervised classification as my main empirical model for my dissertation project.

Seeded-LDA, a semi-supervised machine-learning classification algorithm, is a tweaked mixed membership topic model that allows the researcher to steer the algorithm (a Gibbs sampler) by using seed word dictionaries. Using a Seeded-LDA is an iterative process. Scholars can re-run and augment their dictionaries over repeated attempts to increase their precision and recall—I embraced such a strategy as well, fine-graining and improving my model over time. As a starting place, however, and in order to hone existing research on the UN, I began building my seed word dictionary with secondary literature.

My theory chapter revealed six types of themes with precendentory character within the institution—Human rights and humanitarian action (HR), women and children

in conflict (W&C), regional security and territorial integrity (REG), the threat of terrorism (TER), weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and, development and cooperation (DEV). For each of them, I constructed a first set of three knowledge seed words from the small secondary literature. Then, in a second step, I let an algorithm run through all UNSC debates where these initial terms were salient and read the final outcome resolutions for the usage of the same terms. All in all, I read more than 100 UNSC resolutions to look for suitable justificatory terms (roughly 7% of all resolutions). The idea behind this strategy was to find words that were used in debates as arguments for actions and in resolutions as a verbal justification for specific actions. I followed this strategy because I believe, as shown in my theory chapter, that themes can lend themselves to being an argument for action as well as a justification for intervention. Moreover, normative justifications—tied to specific themes—should have the capacity to create precedents over time. Finding words that are connected to such justifications would come very close to the notion of rhetorical precedents embedded in themes. As such, I manually selected normative terms that were used as justifications (and were said to be precedent) and publicly used to publicly motivate for actions.[73] Lastly, I choose my three initial seed words such that at least one of them would have a normative underpinning—a type of language that has an impetus for action, that alerts other Members of the Council that specific values are at stake, and the UNSC must act to preserve those to conform to my theoretical definition that themes feature normative rhetoric.

[73] This forms a limitation to my analysis and will be discussed in section III.2 and the Conclusion to this chapter.

Table 3.1 Initial Theory Seed Words for Seeded-LDA Model with Input from UNSC Resolutions

Theme	Theory Seed Words	Input from UNSC Resolutions
HR	"Human Rights", "Humanitarian", "violat*"	"Protect*", "respect*", "responisb*", "citizen*"
WMD	"WMD", "warhead", "nuclear"	"chemical", "non-proliferation", "biological", "safeguard", "stockpile"
DEV	"develop*", "peace-building", "good governance"	"reconciliation", "capacity-building", "disarm", "reintegration", "dialogue"
W&C	"child*", "women", "abduction"	"vulnerable", "victim", "abus*", "forced-labour"
TER	"terror*", "radicalization", "extremis*",	"foreign fighters", "suicide attack*", "terrorist attack*"
REG	"secur*", "regional security", "conflict*"	"military*", "destruction*", "threat*", "dispute"

Table 3.1 provides an overview of my initial set of seed words plus input from a repeated reading of UNSC resolutions. Abbreviations with an * signal lemmatizations these word stems catch all related words. For example, the lemmatization of terror* would find related words such as "terrorism", "terrorist", "terrorists", and so on. Most often, the exact theory words would appear in resolutions justifying UNSC conduct. However, after reading more than a hundred resolutions, I noted either a series of terms that were used as synonyms or more nuanced applications of the same theme.

For example, the HR theme was, unsurprisingly, implied with terms such as "human rights," but sometimes the UNSC would justify conduct on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). In fact, civilian protection, in general, would often fall under the rubric of the HR theme. To prevent overfitting—too closely tailoring a theme to one particular feature—I included terms such as "respect*" or "protect*" to catch wider instances of human rights norms—and not only references to R2P. Indeed,

going through a list of 100 random draws of the word "respect*" proved to be an excellent indicator for HR talk.[74]

Some of the UNSC input brought to light other aspects of the theme under study. To give just one example, the WMD theme encompasses other related threats that are not captured by the words "nuclear" or "warhead" that relates to weapons of mass destruction used in civil wars such as "chemical" or "biological" weapons. With these initial seed words, I let the algorithm converge, meaning that it would first estimate the likelihood between these words and their respective labels and then sample words that have a high likelihood of appearing together with these labels.

When looking at residual terms (just as in Figure 3.2), I realized that there was a whole set of language not well mapped to any of my six themes—most of these related to organizational talk. To make them distinct, I build a separate seed word dictionary for them to filter this type of rhetoric away from my themes. To construct my organizational dictionary, I read more than UNSC 50 debates (the average debate has 14.3 individual speeches). I did this because the two types of organizational rhetoric—greeting and procedural talk—tend to appear at the beginning of every speech and at the end of every debate.

Usually, after announcing the day's agenda, the President of the UNSC would give the word to one of the P5 members, who opens up the debate. When first called upon, speakers in the UNSC congratulate the president for assuming his role (the presidency rotates every month, so there is a solid likelihood of a new president whom one has to thank). Then, the respective diplomat would address his or her fellow colleagues with some praising terms—all of this kind of talk falls into the category of *greeting*. To put it bluntly, in international negotiations, this is nothing other than cheap talk.

After handing out praise, speakers go on to justify their position on the matter at hand or publicly motivate for a specific type of action—using thematic language. In closing, speakers thank, once more, the president and revert back to him or her, who calls on the next speaker on the agenda. This process is repeated over days,

[74] I did this by randomly sampling 100 "respect" occurrences in my corpus and then printed the context of the speech around it by relying on varying word windows of 10, or 30 words before and after the term "respect". I made sure that, whenever respect was mentioned, the term was applied for a human being, a group of human beings, or as a recognition of the rights of such a group. The term proved to be a reliable indicator of human rights talk.

weeks, or even months until the final day of the vote. During this time, procedural rhetoric may occur in two instances.

First, procedural rhetoric occurs whenever concrete measures are being discussed that require legalistic procedures, such as installing a sanctions committee, building an expert group, or delegating the matter to another legal UN body. Second, procedural rhetoric features most prominently in adopting an agenda, the process of voting, or authorizing resolutions.

Table 3.2 Seed Words of Organizational Rhetoric

Organizational Rhetoric	Theory Seed Word	Input from Debates
Greeting	"welcome", "thank", "wish"	"kind", "mr", "now", "statement", "speak", "excellency", "minister"
Procedure	"agenda", "vote", "draft"	"consider", "concluded", "rose", "president", "abstention", "adopted"

Table 3.2 shows my initial seed word dictionary for organizational rhetoric and displays in its third column the frequency seed words I derived from UNSC debates. The crux of these types of language is to filter and aggregate organizational rhetoric in such a way that a) no thematic language is subsumed under them and b) the amount of residual terms significantly decreases. Both conditions have to be validated separately (in section III.2 below). For now, it shall suffice to say that the residual category was nearly empty when including organizational rhetoric in the full model. This means that running a seeded-LDA model with my thematic language plus the two types of organizational rhetoric is an exhaustive model—it represents all institutional language of the UNSC.

With these two sets of dictionaries, I re-read manually selected UNSC debates. Concretely, I sampled such debates where one theme or one rhetoric had an expected proportion of over 90%. I did this to ensure that my model was not too narrowly fitted. Although the model already performed well compared to human intuition, some themes were too narrow in its applicatory frame. For example, the terrorist theme was spot on when it came to debates surrounding 9/11 or the shooting down of Malaysian flight MH17 over Ukraine. But a further careful reading of other speeches demonstrated that the algorithm overlooked instances of

violent religious terrorism, specifically Islamist fundamentalist terrorism related to the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS) or Al-Qaida.[75] The algorithm had too narrowly 'learned' that the use of airplanes or aircrafts as weapons signaled terrorism and failed to 'understand' that much wider instances and actions may also be emblematic of terrorism as well. To overcome this problem, I added seed words that would target wider practices of terrorism and connected them to specific entities or actors.

Similar things could be said about the HR theme. High proportionality (shares over 90% in a debate) often coincided with physical integrity rights. Most prominently, the debates over the Syrian Civil war proved to be a hotbed of the theme. However, the secondary literature that targeted the theme was actually meant to be broader, incorporating elements of humanitarianism as well (Barnett 2009). Thus, I augmented the seed words once more, adding terms that aimed at basic rights, like food and shelter, and civilian rights more broadly (Hultman 2013).

Over repeated runs, I iteratively tweaked and updated the model until I found that the seeded-LDA model came ever closer to human levels of theme recognition. Although time-consuming, such an iterative and incremental approach is also the suggestion of the first seeded-LDA study—presenting the model for the first time (Watanabe and Zhou 2020). The next section presents the final seed word dictionary and details my validation process.

III.2 The Final Model and its Validation

After numerous executions and re-evaluations, I settled on a final seeded-LDA model with an original seed word dictionary that, for the first time, can reliably and precisely distinguish organizational rhetoric from thematic language and is the first model that exhaustively represents UNSC language. Table 3.3 presents the final seed word dictionary.

[75] I thank Martin Binder for reading some of these speeches together with me and noting this particular glitch.

Table 3.3 Final Seed Word Dictionary

Theme/ Organizational Rhetoric	Seed Words (Theory + Frequency)
HR	"human rights", "violat*", "maim", "civilian", "suffer*", "livelihood", "injur*", "humanitarian", "flee", "displaced", "protect*", "citizen*", "respect*", "refugee*", "responsib*", "food", "health", "people"
WMD	"non-proliferation", "weapons of mass destruction", "wmd", "chemical", "biological", "nuclear", "energy", "atomic*", "capabil*", "disarmament", "test-ban", "safeguard", "iaea", "stockpile", "warhead"
DEV	"develop*", "post-conflict", "institution-building", "peacebuilding", "capacity-building", "disarm", "demobil*", "reintegration", "donor", "peace-building", "reconstruction", "capacity", "reconciliation", "implementation", "repatriating", "dialogue", "confidence-building", "good governance", "corruption", "assistance*", "transitional justice"
W&C	"child*", "vulnerable", "school", "abduction", "abus*", "sexual", "slave", "atrocities", "victim", "women", "girls", "kidnapping", "forced-labour"
TER	"terror*", "isil", "isis", "ideology", "radicalization", "extremis*", "propaganda", "extremist", "countering", "al-qaida", "al-qaeda", "Taliban", "crime", "terrorist attack*", "counter-terror*", "foreign fighters", "deash", "suicide attack"
REG	"secur*", "attack*", "dispute", "conflict*", "fight*", "destruction*", "military*", "threat*", "solution*", "arm*", "regional security"
Greeting	"thank", "kind", "mr", "now", "statement", "resume", "speak", "welcome", "excellency", "minister", "affairs", "prime", "secretary", "ms", "permanent", "express", "wish"

Procedure	"draft", "shall", "resolution", "consider", "concluded", "agenda", "president", "rose", "vote", "favour", "abstention", "adoption", "adopted"

Steering the algorithm with the displayed seed words results in a highly accurate classification scheme. Even with the advent of machine learning algorithms and natural language processing, human intuition remains the gold standard in any coding procedure (Grimmer 2010). Thus, in order to validate the accuracy of any machine-learning model, it is advisable to test it against human coders. The closer the model comes to human intuition, the better.

To validate my model extensively, I chose three strategies. First, I hand-coded a random sample of 100 UNSC speeches and compared automated scores with actual hand-coding scores. Second, I performed a novel Jensen-Shannon Divergence estimate (Watanabe forthcoming) to demonstrate that my different types of themes and organizational rhetoric are sufficiently exclusive from one another. Third, I alternated the model in such a way that there was no overlap in the 45 top FREX words for each category—making the themes further exclusive.

To make my hand coding transparent, I display an intuitive example below. The highlighted speech stems from former US Ambassador to the UN Bill Richardson on the topic of "Haiti" in 1997. Three years prior to the speech, a military coup had ousted democratically elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Under US leadership, and with UN blessing, a multilateral intervention force had reinstated Aristide and found the country in turmoil and economic shambles (Malone 1998, 98). The depicted speech was part of a larger debate to possibly authorize a UN assistance force UNTMIH to stabilize the country and monitor its institutional recovery.[76]

[76] UNTMIH was successfully authorized in resolution 1123.

Table 3.4 Example of a Single Speech with Classifiers

Speaker	Meeting ID	Speech Transcript	Snap Judgment	Thematic Scores
Mr. Richardson (USA)	SPV3806 (Speech 19)	Three years ago, Haiti found itself staring into the abyss. The democratically elected President was living in exile in the United States. The aspirations of the Haitian people to finally achieve political, social and economic reform were snuffed out by a military dictatorship that practised terror throughout the nation, torturing and murdering its political enemies and those Haitians who dared to speak out. Three years later, with the support of the international community, Haiti is taking meaningful strides forward. Today we come together to ensure that this progress continues. If approved, the United Nations Transition Mission in Haiti (UNTMIH) will assist the Haitian people and their Government in building on their notable achievements. Furthering the work of its predecessors, this Mission will help to professionalize the new Haitian National Police Force. Most of the Haitian National Police officers are under the age of 30. The most seasoned officers have less than two years of on-the-job experience. Since its creation just over two years ago, the Haitian National Police has made great progress. However, if we are to help Haiti to develop durable democratic institutions, the international community must continue to guide this young and inexperienced force. Since 1994 the Haitian people have achieved much. They have held six free and fair elections. For the first time in Haitian history, one popularly elected President peacefully succeeded another. As never before, an elected Parliament now plays a prominent role in Haitian democracy. Haiti's economy is showing signs of recovery from years of decline. Despite these advances, obstacles remain. Some in Haiti even seek to reverse the progress of the Haitian people towards a democratic way of life. Haiti's long- neglected judicial system also needs help. Progress is being made in this area, but much needs to be done. The creation of UNTMIH will further bolster the rule of law, development, democratization and peace in Haiti. My Government welcomes the continued support for Haiti that the adoption of this draft resolution will signify. The international community is devoting considerable resources to help build the foundations for a stable, open and democratic society in Haiti. Our actions today give the Haitian people a chance to create a future of enduring freedom, justice and prosperity for all its people.	A lot of development/little terrorism /little HR	74% Dev / 12% HR / 2% Terrorism (other values omitted)

Just like a human coder, the seeded-LDA algorithm scans the depicted speech for words that are connected with specific categories. However, while a human coder

may only state ordinal coding proportions such as "a lot of development talk", or "little terrorism talk", the seeded-LDA may even quantify percentage estimates of the individual shares. For example, the cited speech shows an expected proportion of 74-% for the development theme (DEV), 12-% for the Human Rights theme (HR), and 2-% for terrorism (TER).[77] These results not only come close to the coding intuition of a human coder but are remarkable in another way: Not every theme is as overt as terrorism; some, like human rights or development, are rather latent themes, themes that require deeper inference and still the model can precisely distinguish between them.

For example, Ambassador Richardson makes a reference to the military dictatorship "that practiced terror"—this is evidently a seed word of the terrorism theme. Yet, the algorithm also understood more subtle hints at thematic talk. Holding "six free and fair elections" signals to the model a high propensity for human rights, something that, arguably, a human coder would also recognize immediately. "Haiti's economy is showing signs of recovery after years of decline"—signals to the algorithm a high likelihood for the development theme, again underscoring the intuition of a human coder. Thus, the seeded-LDA model recognizes overt references to a theme while also being able to infer from paragraphs, even sentences, latent thematic talk.

Of course, I did not simply validate the model against my hand coding of a single speech. Instead, to 'proof' the accuracy of the model, I drew (again) a random sample of 100 speeches from my UNSC resolution debate corpus. Then, I read each speech individually and hand-coded the most dominant theme or organizational rhetoric. I fared in this way because estimating percentages is difficult for human coders and can appear arbitrarily. Spotting one dominant theme, however, is easily manageable for human coders. After coding the 100 speeches, the average UNSC speech is 15 minutes long (Watanabe and Zhou 2020, 2); I let my seeded-LDA model converge over the same texts, prompting it to give me the expected dominant theme, or organizational rhetoric, per speech. Using the programming language "R" again, I calculated the so-called confusion matrix for my coding decisions, comparing them to the automated machine learning scores. I

[77] All other themes and organizational values were below 1% and have been omitted from the table.

calculated precision scores[78], recall scores[79], and F1 scores[80]- the latter is the most important metric in the field of automated classification (Ba and McKeown 2021; Rudkowsky et al. 2018; van Atteveldt, van der Velden, and Boukes 2021). It is built through a harmonized mean of precision and recall to give the user an idea of how valid and encompassing the model is. As a rough rule of thumb, F1 scores greater than 0.6 are publishable, values > 0.7 are strong results, and values > 0.8 are outstanding, coming close to the gold standard of human intuition. The scale ranges from 0 to 1. Table 3.5 summarizes my automated scores against my hand coding.

Table 3.5 Classification Scores validated against Human Hand Coding of 100 Speeches

Application	F1	Precision	Recall	Relevant Speeches
Entire Model	0.81	0.82	0.8	100
Greeting	0.94	0.92	0.96	24
Procedure	0.92	0.86	1.0	22
W&C	0.87	0.91	0.83	11
DEV	0.74	0.77	0.71	14
WMD	0.70	0.88	0.58	8
HR	0.67	0.67	0.67	9
TER	0.67	0.5	1.0	4
REG	0.63	0.63	0.63	8

The depicted scores are, in some cases, extremely close to human intuition. Importantly, the full model strongly outperforms the only other existing study classifying different speeches into UN language categories (Watanabe and Zhou 2020). Watanabe and Zhous' pioneering study estimated for their full model an F1 score of 0.7—after contextual smoothing.[81] And could only find two meta-subjects reliably—against the cutoff of 0.6. My augmented seeded-lda model outperforms their value by striking 11 percentage points, both improving accuracy and coverage. What is more, my model can consistently and precisely distinguish thematic language from organizational rhetoric. The latter scored considerably high compared to human intuition. F1 scores of 0.94 for greeting and 0.92 for procedural talk demonstrate that the machine is as capable as a human coder in spotting these

[78] Precision = Sum of true positives divided by the sum of true positives plus false positives.
[79] Recall = Sum of true positives divided by the sum of true positives plus *false negatives*.
[80] (2*Precision*Recall) / (Precision + Recall)
[81] It's important to note that they used sentences instead of speeches as their unit of analysis.

types of rhetoric. Because organizational rhetoric, in contrast to thematic talk, has a mantra-like quality in the UNSC, being highly stylized and following concrete diplomatic vernacular, these types are nearly perfectly recognizable for a computer algorithm.

However, this should not downplay the values of my themes as well. Women and children, for example, achieve an excellent 0.87 F1 score, showing that the model is fully capable of recognizing the theme correctly and has strong coverage. Three themes land values of very high validity exceeding F1 scores of 0.7 (W&C, DEV, WMD)—a further testament to the validity of the thematic language types. While all themes achieve publication levels, some of the more latent concepts receive smaller F1 scores, such as HR or REG.

One more secondary value is surprising, though. Terrorism only scores 0.5 on its precision scale (out of 1.0). This low value is most likely an artifact of the random draw and is probably not a fair representation of its actual precision. As evident in the fourth column, only four speeches were coded as terrorism at all (and only two of those were indeed terrorist-dominant speeches). Hence, the low precision value may be an artifact of the sampling strategy instead of an accurate representation of its true parameter. With only four speeches, there are few coding choices that affect the overall values of the theme significantly. Even more importantly, because the coding scheme was done on the most dominant theme (so the highest θ-value), it did not consider close but smaller runner-ups. In both of the misclassified terrorism speeches, there were strong secondary front runners (both times, regional security with a share of > 40% but < 50%). The fact that recall lies squarely at 100% (1.0) for terrorism is an indicator of its considerable validity. In all likelihood, the realistic F1 score for terrorism should thus be much higher. Still, my study reports this conservative measure for terrorism to opt for full transparency. Crucially, my language model is precise whilst having wide coverage. This is rare and points to the quality of the chosen seed word dictionary. Importantly, all language categories are reliable and (way) above publishable quality, thus breaking new empirical ground.

A second way to validate the model even further lies in divergence optimization. The idea here is that the model should reliably find all x, y, z out of (W)—meaning high recall—but it should also not water down the *distinctiveness* of each language type in doing so. Putting it differently, when diplomats talk of human rights, it

should be human rights they talk about and not some mingled version bundling in, say, women and children or development as well. Accordingly, the model should have categories that are necessarily distinct from one another, yet, at the same time, they may not be so insular that they cover no ground. An ample metric to measure the distinctiveness of my model is to use a Jensen-Shannon Divergence (JSD) stemming from data science and applied mathematics more general (Fuglede and Topsoe 2004; Fujino and Hoshino 2015). Applications in the social sciences, specifically IR, are still forthcoming (Watanabe forthcoming).

In essence, a JSD is a similarity measure that gives out the likelihood that two (or more) probability distributions are identical. As any machine learning model has a stochastic component, in my model, a Gibb sampler, the result can be expressed as a probability distribution—namely, the probability that for the given category (y), the words u, v, w, have a certain probability of falling into said category and for category (x) that the same words have a certain probability of falling into that category as well. The JSD can then be calculated using the sum of the entropy of (x) and (y) relative to their shared mean (Nielsen 2019; Watanabe forthcoming, 25).[82] JSD is bounded between 0 and 1, whereby a value of 0 gives out fully identical distributions and a value of 1 completely independent distributions with zero overlap—both extremes are unrealistic with natural language because the same word may feature in different types of language.

An optimal value depends on the research objective. In my case, I need to strike a balance between distinct categories that are semantically coherent and encompassing categories that can achieve a high recall. Thus, the optimal value lies somewhere in the middle of the scale. After convergence, the JSD score for my final model lies at 0.517—meeting these two requirements straightforwardly. In addition, running the model again with the option to force the model to empty its residual words (recall the upper right quadrant of figure 3.2) results only in a 0.07 % change in its divergence. This is substantially significant since the model is, therefore, fully exhaustive—it is fully representative of UN language without any watering down of any of the categories.

A third strategy to validate the model lies in another way to check the distinctiveness of categories. Let us assume that each language category is a distribution of words

[82] In R this can be easily done using the divergence function of the seeded-lda package Watanabe and Zhou (2020).

that belong to any or all of the categories with a specific likelihood of falling into them (β-terms). Of these terms, there are, of course, some that only fall in one category and not others; these could be said are very distinct for that category. Now, with that knowledge, we can estimate, numerically, how distinct each term is for each category—by retaining its phi parameter (φ).[83] If we now take a combined measure for the frequency of each word (per category) and its distinctiveness (weighted per category), we arrive at so-called FREX words—estimated for the first time by Roberts et al. (Roberts et al. 2014).[84] Unfortunately, seeded-LDA does not come with an inbuilt FREX word estimator, but following the steps I described above, these words can be built using a loop function in "R".[85] As a final validation step, I optimized my six themes and two types of organizational rhetoric such that there was no overlap between the first 45 FREX words for each category. The table for these results is available in the appendix. Owing to these validation strategies, I have created a final model that is reliable in its output with the upshot of being valid and precise. In the following three empirical chapters, this main model will be the baseline of all textual analyses.

Conclusion

Quantitative text analysis has enriched the political science toolset, and without it, my dissertation project would not be feasible. The advent of large-n text analysis, however, has brought with it—as any new series of methods—promises, and pitfalls. The advantages are obvious; thousands and thousands of diplomatic speeches do not have to be hand-coded anymore to illuminate social scientific concepts of interest. But this resource-saving invention comes with sparse theoretical guidance. The illustrated journey of deciding which machine learning method would be capable of detecting themes is a case in point. Lots of time and resources could have been saved if I had embraced the semi-supervised model from day one. Nevertheless, the lesson learned is—perhaps even more so—clear. Although we now have the power of machine learning models[86], complex linguistic

[83] Technically, each feature because not all units have to be proper words but for simplicities sake, I simply refer to terms.
[84] FREX is a compound word of frequency and exclusivity.
[85] I want to thank Kohei Watanabe for giving me tips on how to hard code this function and sharing parts of his original code with me.
[86] Of course, we had the power of machine learning for quite some time as any logistic regression is also some form of machine learning. But this is not the kind of learning associated with the advent of big data analysis.

concepts, such as themes or narratives, *need human input*. Relegated to mere co-allocation of words makes detecting themes reliably almost impossible. As such, the irony of QTA is perhaps that it makes the human scholar—and his qualitative input—indispensable. For some quantitative scholars, this might be an inconvenient realization. My research process shows how I learned this the hard way, detailing the advantages and shortcomings of all the plausible classification methods in between. This is, perhaps, the biggest contribution of this chapter: Detailing a *theoretically* driven machine learning analysis, something that is quite rare with methodology published in leading political science journals.

The other contribution is, of course, the original textual machine learning model, which is able to reliably and precisely distinguish between six themes and two types of organizational rhetoric. What is more, the model, from a statistical as well as theoretical angle, is exhaustive so that it represents all kinds of UN language. The novel seed word dictionary will be of great use to UN scholars and the text analysis community alike.

No statistical model is either true or false but simply useful or not useful. I have given a detailed validation rationale to underscore that I believe the model to be largely capable (and therefore useful) in the study of thematic and organizational language in the UNSC. That notwithstanding, there is always room for improvement. The coding scores I have reported for my model (c.f. table 3.5) give an exact appreciation of remaining uncertainty and immediately signal one source of limitation in my analysis. Mitigating remaining error and improving accuracy against human hand coding will be one avenue to improve my machine-learning classification in the future.

Yet, there is another source of uncertainty that may not simply be optimized through statistical precision—something that, again, there is very little word of in the QTA literature. We can diversify our classification categories all the more—using sophisticated methods like the JSD—but at the end of the day, seeded-LDA models depend on the a priori input of meta-categories from the theoretical literature. Be it themes, narratives, or frames, the number of such entities needs to be defined through the secondary literature. But if there is scarce research on the subject, or the secondary literature is widely contesting the number and distinctiveness or overlap of entities, semi-supervision will be tricky to facilitate.

But even if there is an agreement in secondary literature, there is often a residual ambiguity concerning the exact hierarchy and placing of subjects. For example, some scholars have investigated the discourse on "democracy" within the United Nations (Eisentraut 2020; Thérien and Bélanger Dumontier 2009). Does this mean that they are mistaken, that there is no democracy discourse taking place at the United Nations? Of course not. But from a lens of themes, democracy is, at least in my reading, submerged under the rubric of human rights and development; it is not a stable theme on its own. I can point to my exhaustive model as empirical evidence for this argument. After all, the residual category was nearly empty, and there were no hidden subjects in the data, but ultimately, I have to admit that there is a certain degree of selectivity in analyzing the secondary literature to arrive at a number of themes. This is a limitation of my model and has to be acknowledged. Because there was scarce literature on UNSC rhetoric in particular, I refrained from deriving qualitative statements over which themes should be more likely to create unanimity in the Council. The latter should improve with more research on the power of thematic rhetoric in the UNSC.

This, in turn, means that QTA literature, in their application in the social sciences, needs to pay attention to the theoretical dimensions underlying their research interest. Ideally, these two kinds of literature should evolve in tandem, not opposed to one another. However, when there is scarce literature guiding the inquiry, semi-supervision is only viable as long as there is a starting point of theoretical departure (and it may limit what can be classified and tested). This chapter has presented an example of how to take secondary research seriously in the study of diplomatic rhetoric via seed word dictionaries. Hopefully, the documented research process will be useful for scholars who wish to do the same.

The next chapter finally applies the seeded-LDA model, for the first time on a large set of UNSC resolution debates, to trace rising and falling themes over time whilst trying to provide plausibility probes to some theoretical conditions of the theory chapter.

Chapter 4 - Mapping Themes over Debates and Agenda Items

In previous chapters, I have theorized the scope conditions of dominant themes. Now, in this chapter, I will map these theoretical assumptions against the empirical canvas. Using my *semi-supervised machine-learning model*—introduced in the previous chapter—this chapter yields four plausibility probes. First, I will give a comprehensive overview of Council rhetoric by mapping the distribution of themes, and organizational rhetoric, over debates, years, and agenda items. This will help us understand what kind of talk dominates the UN—and, relatedly, how states understand conflicts in the marketplace of themes.

Second, I will illustrate how external shocks can influence dominant themes. I will show that some external shocks—if strategically woven into diplomatic rhetoric—can impact the development of a dominant theme. Furthermore, I will generate plausibility for the assumption that policymakers are selective in which events they address and that the intensity of a conflict is not a reliable indicator of debate prominence. Ultimately, the retelling of a theme seems to remain a political choice and does not seem to be simply determined by a functionalist perspective towards conflict characteristics.

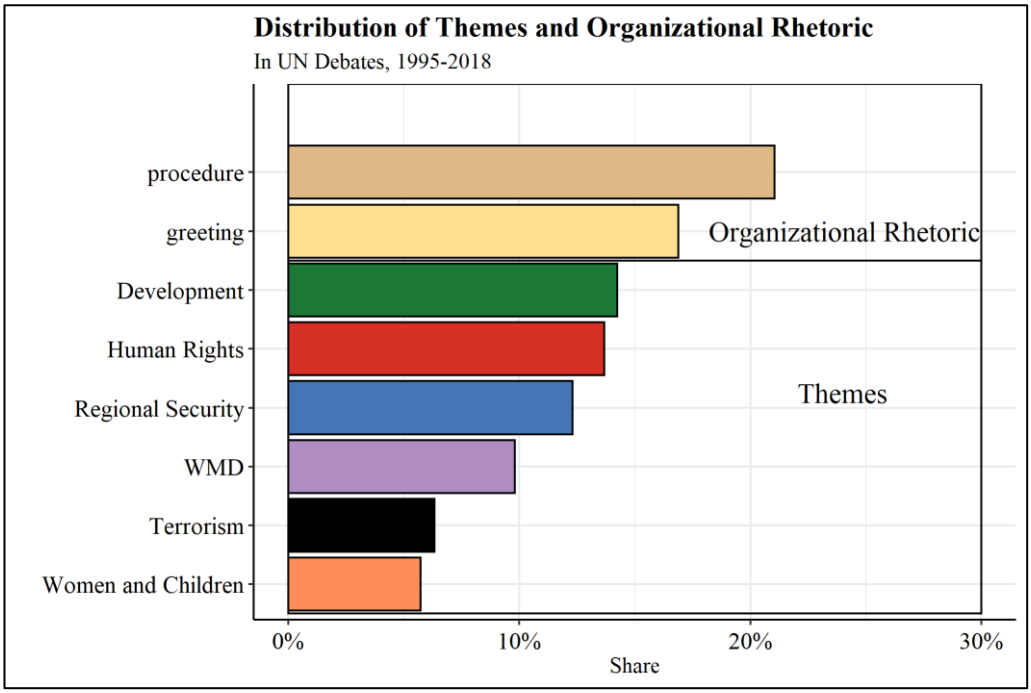
Third, a detailed visual analysis explores in which agenda items which kind of rhetoric dominates to alert us to potential patterns of rhetorical precedents. Fourth, by delving into the more fine-grained analysis of individual rhetorical patterns of the P5 vs. E10, we will see that interests seem to guide but do not seem to fully determine rhetoric. Taken together, the following Chapter is meant to answer the first research question, i.e., *why do some themes become dominant?* The analyses performed in this chapter, while important, remain plausibility probes, and the conclusion will address these limitations in further detail.

The basis for the preceding analyses stems from a combination of different datasets. First, the UN Debates data (Schönfeld et al. 2019) form the raw empirical foothold. Although tremendously useful, mundane UN talk—as argued earlier—is less interesting for the analysis of themes, as states may not be searching for an understanding of how to publicly motivate action or justify an intervention. Instead,

politically interesting debates are those at the end of which resolutions are authorized. During these, states have to justify *why* they want to intervene in a crisis or conflict—pointing to themes in their defense. As such, I augmented Schönfeld et al.'s data to trace themes over time in a meaningful way. Using an updated version of my original UN resolution corpus (Scherzinger 2021), I assessed which debates are related to the passing of which resolutions, using the so-called SPV number—then I merged my original resolution-session data with Schönfeld et al.'s speech data, arriving at a comprehensive UNSC resolution-debates dataset from 1995 to 2018. Taken together, these data contain all UN speeches, with full text, before an eventual resolution (also with full text), denoting every speaker, the number of words used, the topic of the session, and its date. With these data, I could also discern which themes dominate which UN agenda item.

As an intuitive starting point, we can look at the distribution of themes over UN resolution debates to understand the kind of rhetoric spoken at the UN. When we think of a UNSC speech as a mixture of rhetoric that might focus on organizational matters or specific themes, then we can take the share of each of these segments of a given speech and calculate its proportions—taking then the overall shares across all debates presents us with a distribution of the different kinds of rhetoric within the UNSC.

Figure 4.1. Distribution of Themes and Organizational Rhetoric in UNSC Debates with Eventual Resolution



Out of the 10,990 resolution-speeches UN diplomates gave during that time frame, 22.9-% revolved around procedural matters. Another 15.5-% belong to the greeting category, extending warm regards or euphemistic diplomatic jargon that mostly boils down to what could be conventionally labeled as "cheap talk." In sum, 38.4-% of UNSC rhetoric concerns organizational matters, and the remaining 61.6 percentage points involve one of my six themes.[87] Interestingly, in debates at the end of which a resolution is authorized with the words submitted in "agreement made in prior consultations" (recall Figure 1.2), the share of organizational rhetoric jumps to 55%--the latter finding is available in the appendix (item A.C.4.1.1). This is interesting evidence, as it underscores the heuristic function of themes. In debates where agreement is facilitated in prior closed doors negotiations, states do not need to actively search for themes in a debate, as an understanding has already been reached. Hence, the share of thematic rhetoric is substantially smaller in such debates.

While the greeting category captures cheap talk, procedural language is not without relevance. Since almost all Security Council resolutions are adopted in a public meeting with statements before and after,[88] the share of procedural rhetoric may offer an interesting linguistic proxy into the productivity of the Council. These speeches are dominated by roll calls for country-voting or the presentations of particular UN actions—such as the authorization of sanctions or peacekeeping missions.

Regarding the shares of themes, the development theme (DEV) marginally outperforms all others with a share of 14.3-%. While not talking of themes per se, (Eckhard et al. 2021a) found recently that within UN debates on the Afghanistan war, the subjects of reconstruction, reform, and state transformation were among

[87] While the shares within each speech can be simply calculated, it is important to remember that the classification of these segments was based on a gibbs sampler (within the semi-supervised seeded-lda model) and are therefore *estimations*. Hence, we should treat this figure as *expected* distribution of themes, or *approximation* of a theme distribution rather than a fully deterministic exact calculation.

[88] It is a little known fact that UNSC retains the right to adopt resolutions through a consensus or by acclamation Sievers and Daws (2014, 336–37). However, the UN almost never adopts a resolution in this way. In fact, out of 1783 resolutions which were authorized from 1995 to 2018, only 18 (0.1%) were adopted without a vote. All of these resolutions deal with the appointment of judges to the ICJ, the appointment of a new Secretary-General, or the admission of a new UN member state. On virtually any other matter, the UN would always adopt a resolution with a public vote. Throughout the 1940s- 1970s it was still practice to adopt some measures relating to peacekeeping missions via the consensus principle, Sievers and Daws (2014, 336). After the 1980s this practice was seen as non-transparent and problematic.

the most prevalent (Eckhard et al. 2021a, figure page 8). Reflecting on the entirety of UNSC resolution speeches, their mosaic of Afghanistan debates fits nicely in the overall distribution of Council rhetoric.

A close runner-up is human rights & humanitarian action (HR theme), as 12.8-% of all rhetoric can be classified as belonging to this category. Keeping in mind that the theme of human rights promotion may be a fruitful ground for contested arguments within the Council, the individual contributors to this share will be of particular interest further below.

The third largest theme is regional security and territorial integrity. "Maintaining international peace and security" is the mandate of the Council (United Nations, Article 1), and this theme is the broadest application of the UN mandate. By and large, diplomats seem to signal this theme frequently in UNSC debates.

Next follows the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) theme with a share of 10.3-%. When diplomats focus on this theme, they may talk about the (non)-proliferation of nuclear weapons, the prohibition but also the punishment of the use of chemical or biological weapons, or concrete violations of specific treaties (such as North Korea's continued nuclear missile testing).

Although rising to strong agenda prominence after 9/11 (Luck 2004, 85), UNSC speakers devote only 6.1% of their debate entries to the theme of terrorism (TER). This is interesting as the Security Council became the main actor in combatting the phenomenon on a global scale, exercising and legislating unprecedented amounts of authority in this regard (Kreuder-Sonnen 2019, 83–103). Still, we shall see soon that most discussions revolving around terrorism culminated during two peak events—the World Trade Center attacks and the emergence of the Islamic State (ISIS) in Syria and the Levante. Again, it is also worth noting that resolution speeches analyzed here concern those moments when the Security Council chose to act.

It is also important to point out that there exists a great heterogeneity in which UNSC speakers have used the specific term of terrorism. Note, for example, the variance in usage between the Russian delegate Mr. Zagaynov speaking of terrorism in connection with the practices of pirates robbing ships and taking hostages around the Somali coastline (United Nations Security Council 2017), and France's diplomat

Mr. Delattre expressing concerns over the actions taken by warring factions in Libya (United Nations Security Council 2015). Arguably, the dissimilar usage results not only from a broad understanding of the phenomenon but also from specific and interested framing (Medzihorsky, Popovic, and Jenne 2017).

The last and most recent theme is women and children in conflict, with a share of 5.6-%. While its prevalence in UNSC speeches is rather low, it is interesting for two reasons. First, although one could see it as closely interwoven with the human rights theme, talk on women and children (abbreviated as W&C) as a distinctive theme hardly arose before the late 1990s and early 2000s. Second, when reading into individual debates that focus on the theme, it seems to be purposefully distinct from other human rights rhetoric. This may be so to allow human rights critical states to offer a rubric that maintains related content but does not venture into politically charged territory (Foot 2020).

In my theoretical framework, I have classified my six themes into three logics of organizational action. Speakers who rally around the development theme, or a theme of regional security, are said to belong to a logic of *mandate-upholding*. In terms of debate proportions, this logic narrowly outperforms a countervailing logic of protection norms, led by general concerns for human rights (Hultman 2013). This could be either read as a statement that, at least rhetorically, the diffusion of human rights norms is not as pervasive as assumed (Greenhill 2010) or that they are marginally trumped by concerns over the sovereign equality and territorial integrity that the UN Charter warrants. Every state who wants to join the UN has to ratify, at some point or another, the Charter. As such, it might not be surprising such a strong motive for UNSC debates.

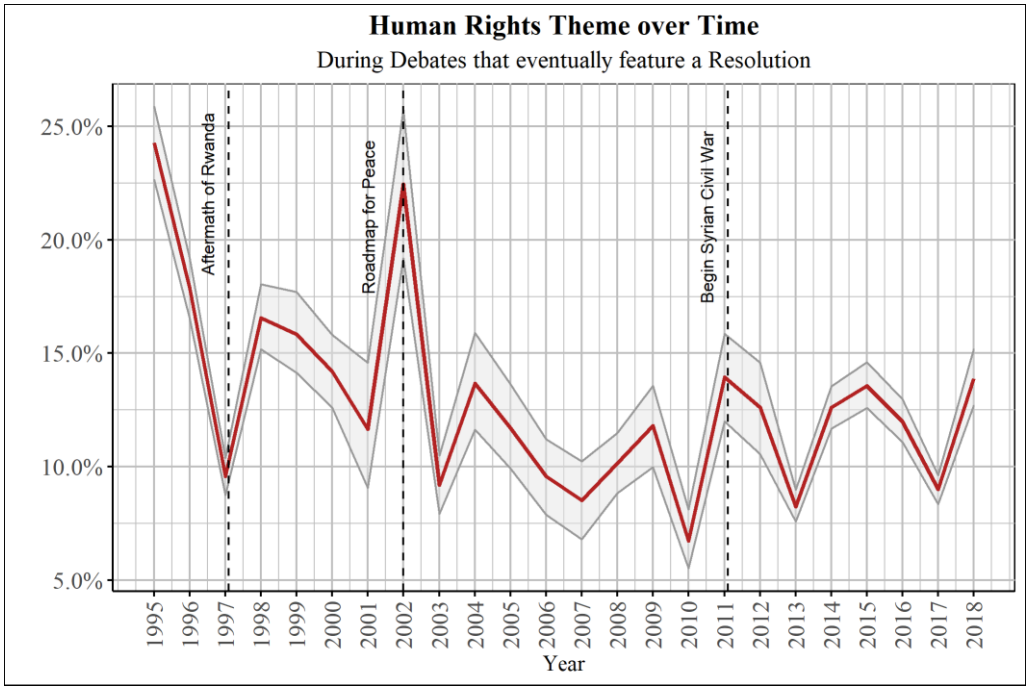
Comparatively, the logic of new security threats receives smaller debate shares and, therefore, less attention. In terms of WMD, the interest constellations are largely heterogeneous within the Council. Every P5 Member state possesses nuclear weapons, but only a handful of E10 members can claim the same thing. The smaller share might correspond to fewer states who have nuclear weapons, and those states might be cognizant that when they use this theme, they might alert non-nuclear E10 members to this sizable power imbalance. Thus, the lower share might be a function of the uneven distribution of nuclear weapons in the Council.

IV.1 External Shocks and Dominant Themes

In my theoretical framework, I have presumed that thematic dominance does not occur ad random but that external shocks can promote it. In fact, I argued that reference to such an event might be the starting point for a rising theme. Because the mandate of the UNSC is the maintenance of international peace and security, by default, actors will make references to a specific crisis or other security threats simply because these come on the agenda. An external shock, on the contrary, is something I consider more extraordinary. External shocks should not be confused with the mundane maintenance of security items—such items can come from the summary statement of the UNSC, which is, essentially, a long list of items for which the UNSC has not found a definitive solution (Allen and Yuen 2020). Rather, external shocks could be understood as drastic breaches of peace and worthy of a Chapter 7 resolution which offers the strongest institutional tools to address these (United Nations, Article 39 - 42). These events occur less frequently and, depending on interest constellations, often get voted on the agenda immediately (Binder and Golub 2020).

Following this reasoning, I am suggesting that we can use this chapter to set up a plausibility probe: Investigating my claim that external shocks promote thematic dominance by analyzing the occurrence of a shock and checking whether it is correlated with a dominant theme. It should be noted here that this kind of analysis remains suggestive (as I am effectively selecting on the dependent variable) and is meant to generate plausibility for my conditional statements in the theory chapter. In the conclusion, I offer a more detailed explanation what the benefits and limitations of this approach are. To facilitate this tracing of themes efficiently, I propose that we focus on one theme first before gaining additional leverage from all other types of themes (and external shocks).

Figure 4.2 Human Rights Rhetoric over Time



The red line shows the mean proportion of the theme across resolution-debates. Grey-shaded area visualizes a bootstrapped 95% confidence interval for each year.

To begin this plausibility probe, I focus first on the rise and fall of the human rights theme. Figure 4.2 generates plausibility for the assumption that external shocks may influence dominant themes. For example, three external shocks, all marked by Chapter 7 resolutions, namely the Rwandan Genocide, the 2nd Intifada (and the Roadmap for Peace), and the Syrian Civil War, all seem to co—occur with a strong sharing of the HR theme and form peaks in Figure 4.2. Of course, this evidence is merely descriptive, as we cannot causally link the occurrence of an external shock and a rising theme, but the consistency with which external shocks seem to co-occur with a particular peak seems promising.

Ronald Krebs thought that not only the arrival of a new event could compel policymakers to adopt a new kind of rhetoric but also the opposite: The removal of a persisting event or conflict episode can foster a new rhetoric (Krebs 2015a, 829).[89] The aftermath of the Rwandan genocide is in line with his argument. After the killing had seized, the UN seemed to shift towards other themes to make sense of the conflict—indicated by the dropping share of the HR theme post 1995.

[89] Ronald Krebs speaks of narratives instead of themes but the implications of his argument are comparable.

Importantly, Figure 4.2 also underscores the assumption in pertinent literature about the declining momentum of human rights (Hafner-Burton 2019; Moyn 2012). This literature has argued that the prevalence of human rights is largely a product of the 1990s and early 2000s and has been waning ever since. The line plot seems to corroborate this argument, at least on a level of thematic proportions: In 1995, 24-% of all UNSC debate rhetoric belonged to human rights, and in 2018, only 13-% belonged to the HR theme. Yet, this decline has not come as a steady trend but with meaningful peaks in between. Notably, the figure does only represent human rights rhetoric at large and cannot inform us about more fine-grained human rights norms such as the codified convention against genocide or the responsibility to protect (R2P). It is possible that these remain powerful, although the split positions of the P5 concerning the R2P should complicate matters significantly (Scherzinger 2022b; Welsh 2019; 2021)

In contrast to the declining HR trend, the year 2002 forms a rapid and strong outlier of 22.5-%. After reading several resolution speeches manually during that year, it becomes clear that diplomats often refer to the ongoing 2nd Intifada and the revived Israel-Palestine-Conflict as well as the *Roadmap for Peace*.[90] Indeed, on 14th November 2002, President George Bush introduced the roadmap in a press conference (New York Times 2002).

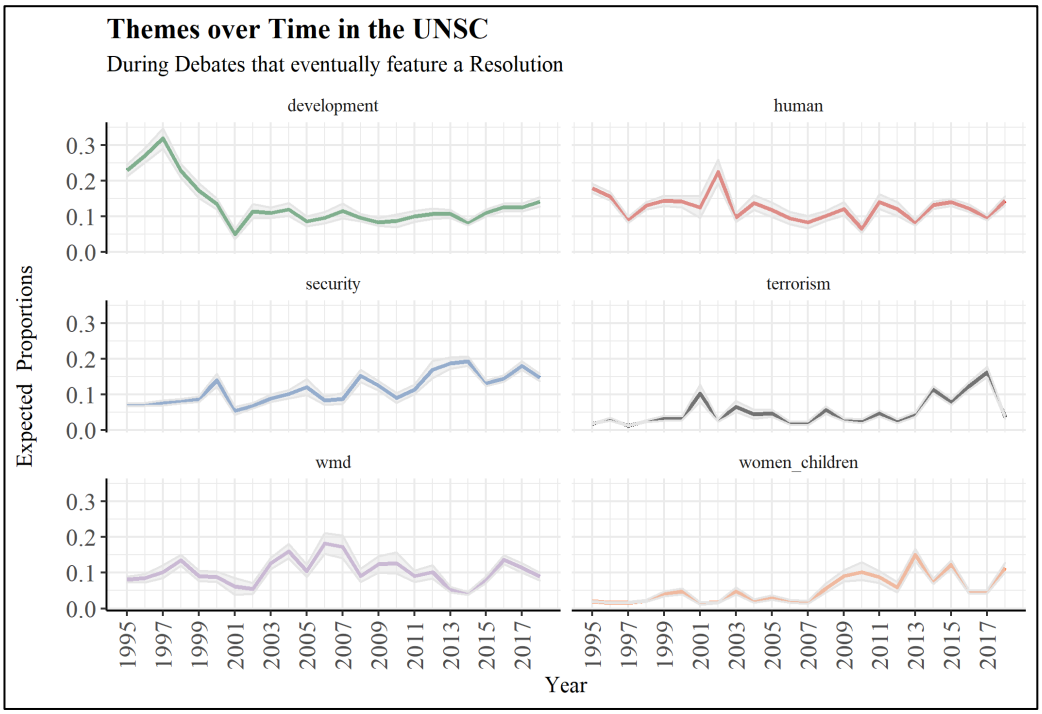
The particular peak of the Israel-Palestine-Conflict is also of political significance. In Chapter 2, I have argued against a fully deterministic idea of functionalism in the way in which Council Members frame certain conflicts or crises. To be concrete, a version of what could be called *conflict functionalism* assumes that particular conflict characteristics determine whether and how IOs, and the UN in particular, will respond to a given problem or conflict (Beardsley and Schmidt 2012; Gilligan and Sergenti 2008; Mullenbach 2005; Voeten 2021, 42–46). While none of these studies claim that *only* conflict characteristics matter, in fact (Voeten 2001) and (Beardsley and Schmidt 2012) are quite vocal on the importance of P5 interests, a more provocative reading could argue that, apart from P5 interests, characteristics are all that matters. With the evidence presented in Figure 4.2, this argument seems overstated, at least in terms of UNSC rhetoric.

[90] Of course, diplomats also discussed the 9/11 attacks and the following Afghanistan war. As could be expected, these events are not expressed in human rights terms but in terrorism and development respectively.

For example, looking at the conflict intensity of the Syrian Civil War, its small share of human rights rhetoric compared to the prominence of the Israel-Palestine-Conflict should be puzzling. Although research has shown that the UN tends to intervene in the most difficult conflicts with the highest amount of human suffering (Benson and Kathman 2014, 352; Binder 2016; Fortna 2004; 2008), it remains far from clear that such conflicts should enjoy the same amount of rhetoric and attention. Indeed, suppose conflict intensity (measured in battle deaths) was perfectly correlated with debate prominence. In that case, the Syrian civil war should feature roughly 37 times more often than the Israel-Palestine conflict, and the Rwandan genocide should feature two times more often than the Syrian civil war (UCDP 2022). Yet, this is not the case. A quick and dirty keyword search on all UNSC speeches reveals 36,331 counts for Israel-Palestine, 21,572 counts for Syria, and 9,035 counts for Rwanda.

Moreover, if conflict characteristics would largely determine rhetoric, then it remains unclear why the persisting Syrian Civil War does not result in an equilibrium of human rights rhetoric. After all, the characteristics of the conflict hardly seem to have changed dramatically over time. Likewise, if human suffering was linearly related to rhetoric, and thus Council attention, why have the massacres against the Rohingya not once been discussed in a public UNSC meeting (Welsh 2021, 232)? The curious absence of the Rohingya underscores the political and interest-based nature of rhetoric. If policymakers repeated rhetoric whenever a specific external shock occurred, simply derived from the conflict characteristics of that crisis, Myanmar's behavior would surely be reasonable grounds for a debate. Its notable absence from any agenda item is a testament to the selectivity of the agenda and the hidden correlation between interest formation and diplomatic rhetoric. To investigate this selectivity of rhetoric further, compare the different themes over time in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3 Six Themes over Time in UNSC



Based on seeded-LDA model with original seed word dictionary. Colored vertical lines represent debate shares over UNSC resolution debates. Grey-shaded areas represent a 95-% confidence interval.

Confirming the trend set by the HR theme, notable external shocks occur in tandem with rising themes. For example, the terrorism theme shows clear spikes at the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center as well as with the rise of the Islamic State in Syria and the Levante (ISIS). In both years, the terrorism theme is also the most dominant compared to any other kind of rhetoric. Further corroborating this trend, the WMD theme rose to dominance in 2003, as the United States talked heavily about weapons of mass destruction before the invasion of Iraq (Powell 2004). The fact that later no weapons of mass destruction were found is another case in point for the argument that themes *do not simply* repeat the characteristics of a given conflict—they can be framed and strategically employed (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998; Krebs 2015a; Medzihorsky, Popovic, and Jenne 2017).

Staying with the WMD theme, a latter spike—in the year 2016, to be precise—closely aligns with North Korea's launch of the submarine-launched ballistic missile (KN-11), which was the regime's first missile generation capable of hitting a US mainland target (CSIS 2016). North Korea's continued non-proliferation violations were the theme of most Security Council speeches during that year (and a series of

sanctions authorized in accompanying resolutions). It is noteworthy, however, that speeches leading up to 2016 also dealt with the *Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action* (commonly known as the "Iran-Deal") or the alleged use of chemical weapons by the government of Sudan (BBC 2016).

As far as rhetorical dynamics go, the development theme has been on a rather stable equilibrium since the early 2000s—notably without having an external shock preceding it. The security theme, on the contrary, has crept up to a substantial rise in the 2010s, culminating with a peak during the Crimean Crisis in 2014. The growing prominence of this theme could be an early indicator for the revival of geopolitics in the 21st century—manifested in the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine, which takes place after the time frame of this thesis. The variation across trend lines could suggest that some themes are more external-shock-driven than others, but this remains, at this point, a matter of speculation. Further research with a systematic and independent measure of "external shock" would be needed to falsify this argument.

In addition to this figure, the appendix offers time trends for the two kinds of observational rhetoric—showing an interesting inverse relationship (item A.C.4.2). While the share of greeting and thus cheap talk has been on the rise in recent years, the share of procedural rhetoric has been dropping over the years. This could mean that the UN spends less time on the authorization of actions and more on meaningless cheap talk because tension within the Council is heightening. This idea is also underscored by a doubling resolution-fail rate, either caused by a veto or an insufficient number of affirmative votes.[91] Additionally, my concluding chapter of the dissertation—chapter 7—will present evidence for a drastically falling unanimity rate, further indicating that the working relationships within the Council and the P5, most of all, are strained.

What is more, when looking at the share of women and children rhetoric, we see a small but significant growth starting during the mid-2000s. This could indicate that instead of a clear loss of momentum for human rights, other protection norms have received attention and momentum (Carpenter 2003; Hultman 2013). This trend could also qualify the sobering assumption that the human rights momentum was only a short-lived era (Moyn 2012). Instead, it could be argued that the broader

[91] Also available in the appendix under item A.C.4.3

human rights theme gave away rhetorical importance to other related but rivaling humanitarian notions. Before closing this section, I want to underscore, once more, that this kind of evidence is suggestive and is meant to generate plausibility for the assumption that external shocks promote a dominant theme—without submitting that we can falsify this claim with the illustrative cases I presented above.

IV.2 Dominant Themes within UNSC Agenda Items

In this section, I leverage the fact that each Security Council resolution mentions the agenda item under which it was discussed. Using regular expression *pattern-matching,* I extracted each session's agenda item from each resolution of my original corpus and connected it with the relevant UNSC debate. In doing so, we arrive at a comprehensive list of Security Council agenda items (and debates within them). However, when it comes to the labeling of these items, a word of caution is in order. Due to political reasons, the UN does not practice great consistency when labeling an agenda item or a security threat, for that matter. Because the Council members sometimes do not even agree on how to label a crisis. For example, the agenda item "The Situation in the Middle East" hosts an amalgamation of conflicts, such as the unresolved Israel-Palestine Conflict, the Yemeni Civil War, or the Syrian Civil War. The latter, however, does sometimes feature under its own agenda item called "Syria". To make things worse, sometimes the UN does not even address specific regions but simply labels the agenda item as the singularized continent. The agenda item "Africa" is a case in point. Thus, from the agenda item alone, it is sometimes hard to tell which conflict or security threat is actually addressed. The way to overcome this caveat lies in the manual reading of speeches within these agenda items. Although time-consuming, such qualitative validation steps remain necessary to investigate the specific content of such data.

By relying on my *semi-supervised topic model* again, I estimated the shares of the different types of rhetoric within each UNSC agenda item to assess what kind of rhetoric dominated them.

Figure 4.4 Dominant Themes in UNSC Agenda Items

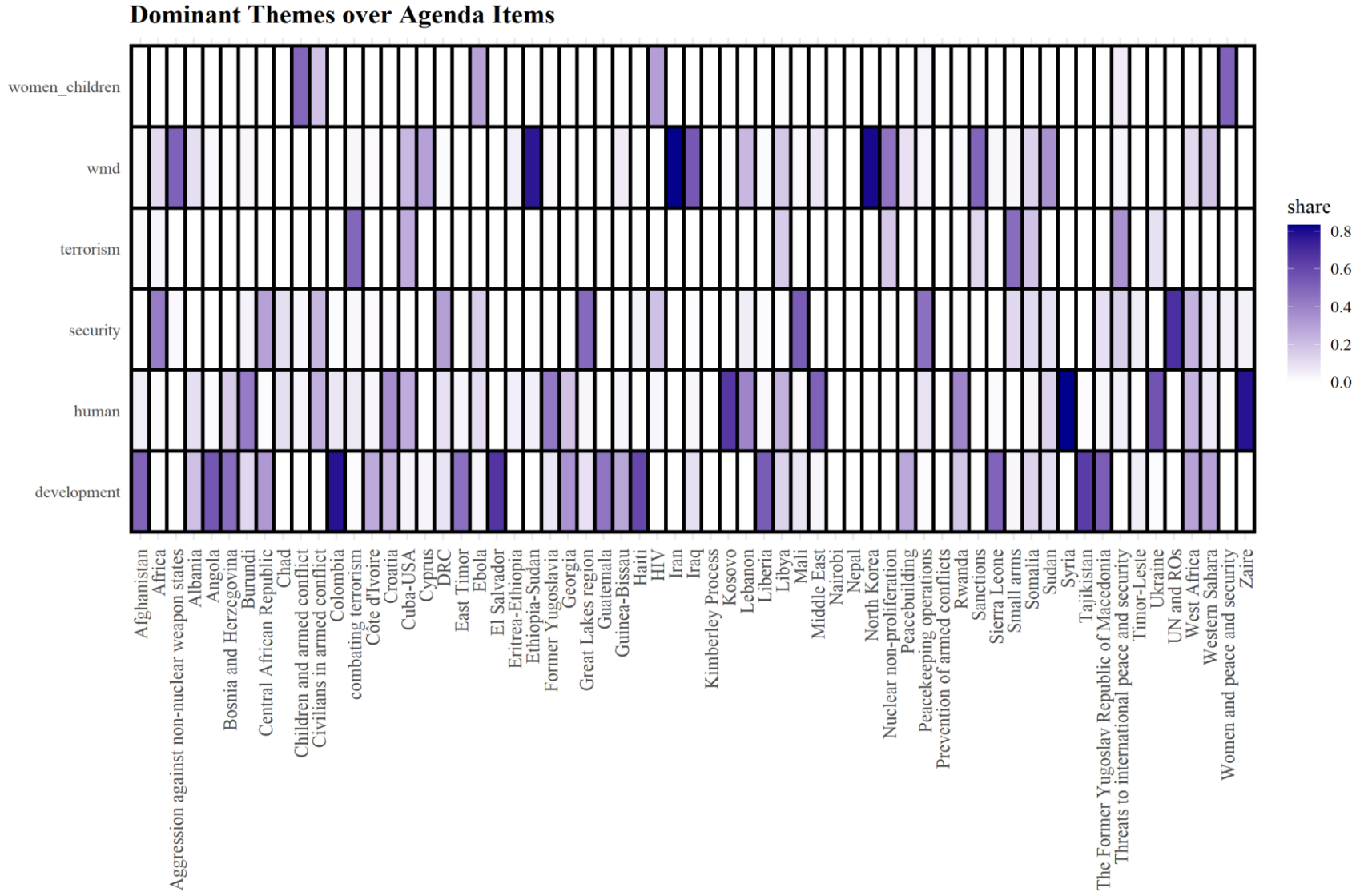


Figure 4.4 provides important descriptive evidence for the understanding of different conflicts. In my theoretical framework, I have argued that themes may be used as a heuristic shortcut to arrive at a shared understanding. A dominant theme, I theorized, can be seen as a *signal of benign intention*—states that bring such a theme to dominance signal to their fellow members that a proposed course of action is legitimate and worth supporting under the normative rubric of a theme. Figure 4.4 shows such dominant themes as a visual frequency table of the type of thematic rhetoric spoken in each UNSC agenda item.[92] For simplicities sake, I removed organizational rhetoric from the plot—another figure with these types of rhetoric can be accessed in the appendix (item A.C.4.4). The y-scale is measured as a fraction of one (1.0 equals a share of 100-%). The color-grading responds to the dominance of the respective rhetoric. The stronger the blue shade, the more dominant the theme within this particular item.

The figure can be read in two ways. When scholars are interested in how often a particular theme comes to dominaance, one can simply start from the left-hand side of the plot, pick a theme and then follow its rise (and fall) horizontally through the alphabetically ordered agenda items on the x-axis. Conversely, if researchers are interested in a particular security threat or conflict, they pick their item on the x-axis and then follow up on it vertically through the different types of rhetoric.

Due to its visual depth, there are a number of notable points. First, every theme reaches dominance in at least one agenda item. In this particular chapter, I conceive of dominance as an ordinal variable, where less than 30-% means no dominance, 30 to 50-% a divided thematic marketplace, and more than every second spoken word (more than 50-%) *signals a highly dominant theme of a particular kind*. Given this metric, all six themes achieve high domination within at least one agenda item. This suggests that each of them has been used, at least once, to have a rhetorical understanding of the publicly stated motivation for action (and the justification thereof).

[92] Importantly, some agenda items were omitted to fit the plot within the page margins. These items featured bureaucratic topics. The list consists of: "Admission of new Members", "Vacancy of the International Court", "Criminal Tribunals", "Tribute to Kofi Annan", "Dag Hammarskjöld Medal", "Navigation on the Danube River".

Unsurprisingly, the WMD theme achieves scores of high dominance in the agenda items "Iraq" (54-%), "Iran" (82-%), and "North Korea" (81-%). What is more, it sets the agenda for two distinct items: "Aggression against non-nuclear Weapon States" and "Nuclear Non-Proliferation". Apart from WMD, only terrorism ("combatting terrorism") and women and children ("Women Peace and Security" and "Children and Armed Conflict") are represented with their own agenda items. This suggests that these three agenda items (and relatedly themes) enjoy strong Council-wide support in light of Council action.[93] Of course, we cannot infer this with causal certainty as there are other ways to land an item on the agenda. As mentioned in Chapter 1, other pathways include the Secretary-General or the less powerful monthly-rotating presidency (Allen and Yuen 2020; Binder and Golub 2020). But the fact that the three themes have their unique agenda items could also indicate that they affect Council decision-making as well.[94] At the very least, these three themes appear to carry some salience, as the Council saw the need to install a unique agenda item for each of them.

The theme with marginally the widest spread is development (DEV), closely followed by the HR theme. Policymakers bring the development theme to dominance in seven agenda items: "Angola" (55-%), "Colombia" (78-%), "El Salvador" (67-%), "Haiti" (60-%), "Liberia" (53-%), "Tajikistan" (64-%), and "The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (54-%). The HR theme is dominant in five cases: "Kosovo" (66-%), "Middle East" (51-%), "Syria" (83-%), Ukraine (56-%), and "Zaire" (78-%). Interestingly, the development theme is only dominant in agenda items that are related to conflicts within Latin America or the African continent but is nearly absent in conflicts that take place in Europe or the Middle East. Recalling the notion of precedents between rhetoric and Council action, this could be a meaningful pattern (which will be further explored in Chapter 6).

The security theme also has a regional focus with seven items pertaining to African countries, regions, or the continent itself ("Africa", "Central African Republic", "DRC", "Great Lakes Region", "Mali", "West Africa"). This finding is in line with research that demonstrated that there is regional selectivity in peacekeeper

[93] It is also no coincidence that these three themes strongly affect coercive civil conflict interventions. See more in Chapter 6.
[94] See Chapter 6.

deployment (Gilligan and Stedman 2003) and bias in deployments within African civil conflicts (Benson and Kathman 2014; Carnegie and Mikulaschek 2020).

Again, this is also an interesting dynamic when we look at the understanding of these conflicts. Conflicts that arise in Eastern Europe are all highly dominated by the HR theme ("Croatia", "Former Yugoslavia", "Kosovo", "Ukraine"). On the contrary, conflicts taking place within African states are mostly discussed in terms of regional security—further underscoring the idea that there might be rhetorical precedents.[95]

When looking at specific conflict items, there is an interesting pattern concerning public health crises. In both agenda items, "Ebola" and "HIV," the only theme to find dominance is women and children. This could generate further plausibility for the idea that the UN perceives women and children as vulnerable groups (Carpenter 2005). Markedly, however, human rights language or development rhetoric is completely absent from these items, which is particularly odd, as these crises intuitively invoke humanitarian and development notions. This further illustrates that the UNSC keeps HR rhetoric purposefully distinct from the language of women and children.

There are two agenda items that are compatible with direct UNSC action, "Peacekeeping Operations" and "Sanctions". While the former is (medium) dominated by general security rhetoric (46-%), most importantly referring to regional security and regional stability, the latter is highly dominated by the WMD theme (50-%)—which could serve as an early indicator that this type of rhetoric might increase the likelihood of authorizing targeted sanctions against NPT-violators.[96]

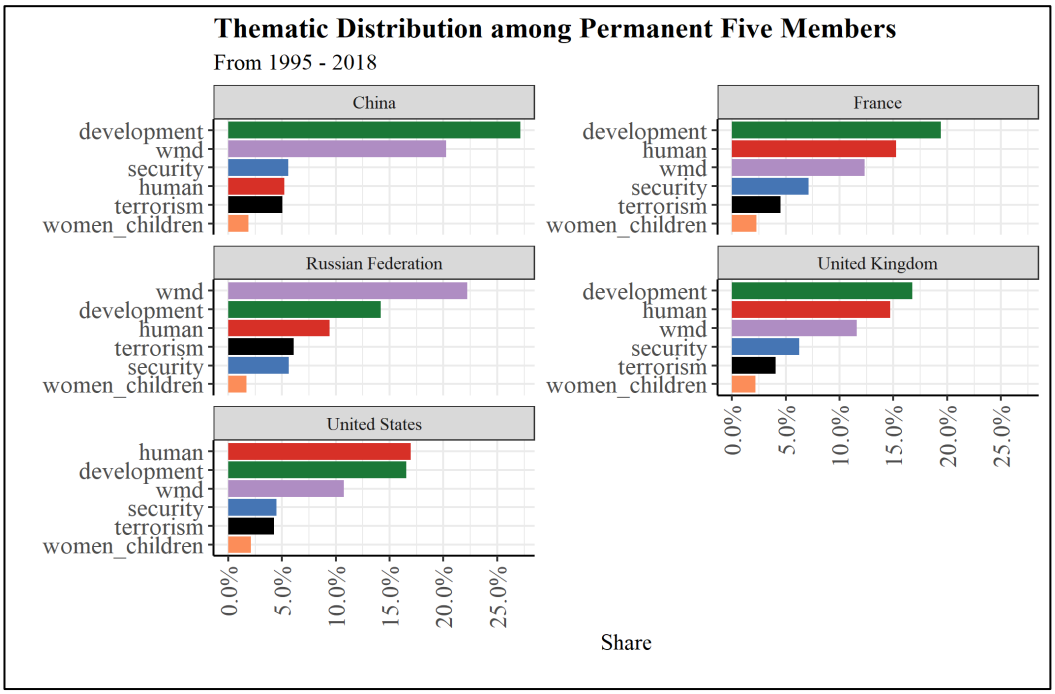
[95] Burundi, Rwanda, and, Zaire form outliers here.
[96] More on that in Chapter 6.

IV.3 The Rhetoric of the P5 vs. E10

My account of rhetoric is guided by interest, but a simple restating of parochial interest is prohibited by the unsayable in world politics. Therefore, states have to select such rhetoric that hones their interests while having at its core a justifiable normative rubric for their actions and positions—a theme. Or, in the words of Oscar Schachter, "whatever their [true] motives for acting, governments are impelled to justify their position on grounds other than their interests" (Schachter 1985, 35). As such, which rhetoric Council Members select is not without meaning. Member states know that, over time, rhetoric gets associated with actions, and so institutional precedents can be borne (Gehring and Dörfler 2019; Sandholtz and Stone Sweet 2004). These precedents can compel them to keep a consistency between word and action to avoid audience costs. Hence, which theme a state shares—how it understands a conflict—has important consequences for future interventions.

With this framework in mind, we should expect some meaningful variation by thematic distribution per Member State. If interest guides action and consistency pressure applies, then there should be variation not only between P5 and E10 but also within them. Importantly, states with problematic domestic human rights records—among the P5, China, and Russia—should be more reluctant to share a human rights theme and thus should have lower values for kind of rhetoric. Conversely, states that see themselves as human rights promoters or outspoken advocates of human rights norms (Simmons 2009), such as R2P (Bellamy 2015), should have higher HR shares. Figure 4.5 bestows considerable plausibility on these assumptions.

Figure 4.5 Thematic Distribution by the P5 Members of the UNSC



Note: Estimates are based on shares (theta values) of a seeded-LDA model run on all UNSC Resolution Debates, 1995- 2018. Organizational Rhetoric is omitted from the figure.

Crucially, Figure 4.5 implies a correlation between interests and rhetoric. For instance, the United States, a country that is known for its affinity for human rights promotion (Simmons 2009, 58), shares most prominently the HR theme among the P5.[97] In a similar vein, China, which is known to place importance in its foreign policy on state-led development projects (Bräutigam 2011; Stephen and Skidmore 2019), understands conflicts mostly through a rubric of development.

The Russian Federation, on the contrary, talks most often about WMD. Indeed, Russia talks almost nine percentage points (37,5-%) more about weapons of mass destruction than any other theme. With the hindsight of the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine, the strong prominence of weapons of mass destruction—most often nuclear weapons—in Russian speeches could be read as a rhetorical strategy, keeping this kind of language purposefully in line with actions and forceful interventions. However, since the text model is agnostic to the intention of speakers, it could also be the case that the Russian Federation does genuinely

[97] I speak of affinity here, as the United States is perhaps a bit of an odd outlier among human rights supporting states, since its domestic track record shows substantial respect for human rights, but it has failed to ratify a number of significant human rights treaties, such as the CEDAW or CRC, due to domestic hurdles and partisan resistance Simmons (2009, 58).

perceive most conflicts in light of a nuclear threat. In this case, the high share of the WMD theme could be read as an indicator of what types of threats the Russians perceive as most important.

Moreover, the figure also underscores the notion that interest can only guide but cannot perfectly determine rhetoric. For example, even though China can be seen as a human rights dissenting state, it still devotes a share of 7.2-% to speeches to human rights rhetoric. If interests were solely the source of rhetoric amongst the P5, surely China would simply omit the theme altogether and try to focus even more strongly on framing crises in terms of development issues. This shows that Council member states cannot solely follow their interests but have to acknowledge a theme if there is mounting pressure to talk about an issue.

By reading some of those speeches manually, when China is called upon to discuss human rights, it might reluctantly do so but state that human rights should *not* allow for the authorization of the use of force. Further, in some cases, China specifically uses HR language but defines it in a way that the arguable core of these rights is watered down or non-congruent with liberal understandings of what constitutes a human right (Foot 2020; Welsh 2019, 61). To summarize, themes should not be taken as interest stand-ins. Although they are plausibly correlated with them, theme repeating may also be affected by external or group pressure. In such instances, a state would either try to push a countervailing theme or reject the idea that this particular theme warrants action.

Notably, amongst the P5, women and children are the most equally shared theme. The marginal difference between these powerful members is below one percentage point. The second most evenly shared theme is terrorism, where only Russia maintains a slightly higher speaking count. When we recall that apart from women and children, terrorism (and WMD) were the only themes to receive independent agenda items, then it might be no coincidence that those themes are so evenly shared by the great powers in SC debates. This can be read as further evidence that the P5 have largely similar perceptions about these themes and are largely in agreement when using them in agenda items.

When I compare the rhetoric of the P5 against the E10 (due to brevity sakes available in the appendix under item A.C.4.5), important notions are again affirmed. The lowest shared theme by the E10 is weapons of mass destruction—mostly likely

because most of them possess none. Interestingly, the E10 speak seven times more about women and children than the P5 (share at 14.2-%). This could be read as an early indication that to get the E10 on board; this might be a particularly good sell in the marketplace of themes. States that speak mostly about human rights are either states with strong domestic human rights or states that are directly affected by violent civil strife (for example, Zaire speaks nearly a hundred percent about human rights). Still, the strongest shared theme is development, with an average share of 20.5-%. By and large, many of the E10 nations are interested in international cooperation and, or, are the receivers of some developmental aid. Thus, it is no surprise that this theme outweighs the rest. The United Nations itself maintains a relatively evenly shared rhetoric. Its marginally biggest shares belong to regional security and women and children.

Conclusion

Mapping themes over actors, time, and agenda items has generated strong plausibility for some of my theoretical expectations in Chapter 2 and has generated new insights into the rhetoric of the UNSC. To begin, themes are actually not the most prevalent type of rhetoric spoken in the UNSC. That is organizational rhetoric in the form of *procedural talk* forms the biggest share among Security Council speeches which are eventually related to the passing of a resolution.

As theorized, external shocks can be seen as a starting point for a dominant theme. Several landmark events such as the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, the first nuclear missile test by North Korea (capable of hitting US soil), the Syrian Civil War, and the Rwandan Genocide formed particular spikes in UNSC debates and were related to a dominant theme in those years.

However, I cautioned against a simple functionalism between external shocks, their crisis characteristics, and themes. Policymakers do not seem to simply repeat the characteristics of a given crisis and share a related theme. Instead, I would argue selecting a theme is always a political choice. An anecdotal case in point for this argument was the fact that although the most dominant theme in 2003 was weapons of mass destruction, the Hussein regime did possess any WMD at the time of the

American invasion. Thus, the repeating of a theme seems to be a process guided by interests.

Furthermore, not every crisis makes it to the agenda, and relatedly not every external shock is discussed in the Chamber of the UNSC. The omission of the mass killings of the Rohingya in Myanmar is a further testament to the political, selective nature of rhetoric (Welsh 2021, 232).

Comparing all UNSC agenda items from 1995 to 2018, I found that, indeed, the HR theme has been on a decline ever since a peak momentum in the 1990s. This underscored the findings of existing studies that questioned the enduring momentum of human rights and saw their political pull as a short era in world politics (Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui 2005; Moyn 2012). Yet, my analysis also found that some particular protection norms, most importantly relating to a theme of women and children (Carpenter 2003; 2005), have been rising ever since the mid-2000s. This descriptive observation can be read in two ways. Either, things are not as bad as assumed, and instead of general human rights rhetoric, more specialized protection norms have taken over as logic of action in the Security Council. Or, a theme of women and children forms a rare case of agreement amongst Council Members at large—because this kind of rhetoric is less politicized than human rights, and this explains its rising share. The latter argument was supported by the fact that a rhetoric of women and children was equally shared among P5 members and was the only theme (together with terrorism and WMD) to receive its own agenda item.

As a last exercise, I provided plausibility to the idea that interest may guide but does not determine rhetoric due to the unsayable in world politics. To do this, I leveraged variation both between and within P5 vs. E10 Members. As assumed, human rights dissenting states, such as China and Russia, spoke less about human rights than other P5 Members. Overall, the diplomats of the great powers talked most often about development and least about women and children—yet women and children rhetoric was equally shared among them.

In stark contrast to other P5 members, Russia spoke mostly about WMD. With the knowledge of the Ukraine war in mind, this could be read as a rhetorical strategy by Russia, keeping nuclear threats closely associated with actions. On the other hand,

this could also be understood as a genuine perception. In this reading, Russia would mostly be concerned about nuclear threats and would mention them accordingly.

Compared to the P5, the E10 spoke seven times more about women and children—an early indication that this theme could be a particularly good sell for unanimity and action in the Council. E10 diplomats spoke the least about WMD—mostly likely because most states do not possess such weapons.

Before we leave this chapter, I want to, once again, acknowledge that there are limitations to my quantitative text analysis. The first is technical: Any quantitative text model, and therefore also my seeded-LDA, is agnostic to the intention of speakers. This means that I cannot rule out the possibility that states simply 'speak their mind' in a genuine manner. I can also not rule out the opposite, that each statement is strategic. Because I did not assess the sentiment of speech acts, we lack a qualification on *how* rhetoric is shared. For example, we already know from other research that sentiment around the low share of Chinese human rights rhetoric is often critical or negatively framed (Foot 2020; Scherzinger 2022b, 11), but since I did not estimate sentiment in this analysis, we cannot qualify the rhetorical shares of the P5 vs. E10. Most probably, such a qualification would further support the assumption that interest guides (but does not determine) rhetoric, but due to the brevity of this dissertation, this is relegated to future research and remains a limitation of the analysis.

I have offered qualitative arguments and some suggestive evidence, why I think that states are selective in the way they talk about external shocks and crises in general, and why they want to repeat a theme—bringing it to dominance. But ultimately, I have to concede that we need further, careful, systematic analysis to falsify this claim in the future. For such an analysis, we would need some sort of independent measure of a crisis and then see whether speakers adopt a thematic rhetoric towards it. As things stand, I have effectively selected on the dependent variable, as I have analyzed such crises that were marked with a Chapter 7 resolution. This is, of course, a severe limitation to the generalizability of this analysis, and so the evidence remains suggestive. This means that I can generate plausibility in answering my first research question, *why do some themes become dominant?* But I cannot prove this with causal means or systematic descriptive inference. I fared in this way due to two important constraints—accordingly, overcoming these in future research would be an important contribution to the study of the UN and rhetoric in general.

First, to test whether external shocks are a 'driver' for a dominant theme, one needs to have an independent measure of 'external shock' and then estimate its effect on the sharing of a theme. But this is easier said than done. Because agenda items are not randomly distributed (so instances where speakers could even talk about an external shock) but are a selection bias of what the UNSC Members want to speak about, selecting only such crises that receive an agenda item is essentially drawing a severely biased sample (of an unclear underlying population). Part of this problem derives from the broad mandate of the UNSC, "maintaining international peace and security" is (decidedly) far from clear. Which crises or external shocks deserve to be discussed at the Security Council? What is even the whole universe of cases (true population)? How can we draw a random sample here? Once we arrived at a valid sample, overcoming this selection bias could come in the form of an instrument that introduces a change in the likelihood of setting an agenda item but not in the occurrence of external shocks. But in a world of social sciences, discovering this instrument seems to be a herculean task.

One could scale down one's level of ambition here already, only investigating, in a correlational fashion, the occurrences of shocks and the rise themes in specific thematic areas. The problem with this approach is that, as I have argued, there is not a perfect correlation between the characteristics of a crisis and the way diplomats talk about it (because of strategic framing and interests). Is the newly invigorated conflict between Israel and Palestine an instance where we would expect dominant human rights rhetoric, or dominant WMD rhetoric (Iron Dome), or dominant regional security and territorial integrity rhetoric (settlements, divided status of Jerusalem)? All of these seem plausible, but in case we want to control for characteristics, we need to gather and include different behavior variables for each type of rhetoric to receive the 'pure' correlation between one theme and the occurrence of one external shock. This goes far beyond the scope of this dissertation and requires substantial future research.

The second limitation is that I only offered plausibility to the assumption that rhetoric is correlated with (hidden) interests, and the existence of thematic agenda items could show interest homogeneity (women and children, terrorism, and WMD received their unique agenda items). To overcome this conundrum, I would propose that we should treat revealed preferences as something of the next best alternative compared to the daunting task of assessing vested (hidden) interests over

actors nested in agenda items. Instead, future research could do the following: Collect sentiment on all six types of themes for all actors in the UNSC, and correlate its score with the agenda item vote (so the vote on whether to adopt a given item). These types of votes can never be vetoed, so variation on the dependent variable should be much higher—the lacking variation is also the reason why we cannot simply use UNSC country resolution votes. "NO" votes should be correlated with a negative sentiment score and positive sentiment scores with a vote of yes. While this still falls short of showing a correlation between interest and rhetoric, it could be a first meaningful step towards it.

Nevertheless, the plausibility probes of this Chapter have shown two illustrative paths to how themes can become dominant. First, external shocks could form the starting point for a dominant theme. Yet, whether states talk about an external shock seems to remain a political question. Selecting rhetoric and, therefore, themes seem to correspond to parochial interests. However, there seems not to be a linear correspondence between interests and rhetoric because of the unsayable in world politics and because other states may pressure a given country to talk about a given theme. Next, there are some candidates for dominant themes because these either enjoy consensus amongst Council Members as a signal of benign intentions, such as women and children, or the threat of terrorism or because most UN member states have an interest in promoting or combatting them.

With this knowledge of dominant themes in mind, we turn now to the second research question, investigating what effects dominant themes have on the actions and decisions of the UNSC.

Chapter 5 – Rhetorical Signals and Unanimity in the Council

What are the effects of dominant themes in Security Council debates? In prior chapters, I have followed themes from their rise to their fall, set the theoretical scope conditions for their dominance, and analyzed descriptively in which agenda items which theme served as a signal for benign intention. In this chapter, we enter new territory. We will see that themes have effects outside the realm of mere language. That is, we will see that thematic rhetoric affects important actions and decisions of the UN.

To begin, my argument (as introduced in the theory chapter) is that institutional rhetoric affects the decision-making of such international organizations that have, qua their mandate, a public venue where speakers are supposed to justify their actions and positions to vital audiences. Most of the scholarship assumes that these audiences must be external to the institution so that diplomats' statements are meant to convince some third party of the rightfulness of an action or the legitimacy of the institution as a whole (Busby et al. 2020; Chapman 2012; Niemann 2018; Rauh and Zürn 2020; Thompson 2010; Zürn 2018, Chapter 3). Although these studies have advanced our knowledge in important ways, I would argue that they overlook another important audience. My argument, to be precise, is that there is also *an intra-institutional audience* relevant to these speakers, and this audience consists of other Member states.

In my conception, thematic rhetoric does not only function to post hoc justify a specific course of action or a position; it may also be used as a signal of how this particular speaker understands a given crisis or conflict. Applied to the Security Council, repeating a theme and sharing this signal becomes meaningful for Council decision-making. Security Council Members know that when a state shares a theme—it is giving a clue that it is—understanding a conflict in the same light and agreeing to a route of plausible action. Thus, themes are tools to craft decision-making in the Council, they can be seen as heuristics to arrive at a decision (Hanrieder 2011; O'Mahoney 2017). While I argue that themes are relevant to all kinds of decision-making, in this Chapter, we test my argument in the domain of voting and unanimity production on the Council.

By operationalizing my theoretical framework via a textual machine-learning model (introduced in Chapter 3), transferring UNSC debates into a 'marketplace of themes' through the use of Hirschman-Herfindahl-Indexes, I am able to demonstrate that dominant themes may threaten unanimity in the Council—as mere dominance thwarts outlier positions—but that this trend can be ameliorated if the E10 repeat a dominant theme.

Against my theoretical expectation, dominance is not curvilinearly related to unanimity but forms a distinct U-shaped curve. This finding suggests that to reach unanimity, debates should either focus on a whole variety of themes, meaning as little dominance as possible—so that speakers can individually focus on different normative justifications—or within debates, only one theme should be dominant. Everything in between rather hurts than helps unanimity. In connecting to my theoretical mechanism—consistency pressure—this finding suggests that states want to mainly justify actions and positions on their own normative justifications, to be consistent towards domestic audiences and their past rhetoric. However, if one of them rises to high dominance, even outlier states yield to the pressure of the collective or remain silent on the matter.

Most importantly, however, I find that the more the E10 repeat a dominant theme, the higher the likelihood for unanimity for five out of six types of themes—providing strong empirical evidence for the assumption that themes may serve as *signals of benign intention*. Only human rights rhetoric consistently divides instead of unites the Council. The conclusion and discussion section offers an explanation of why this could be the case and opens a detailed discussion of alternative explanations and limitations to my approach.

V.1 Towards a Baseline and an Improved Model of Council Unanimity

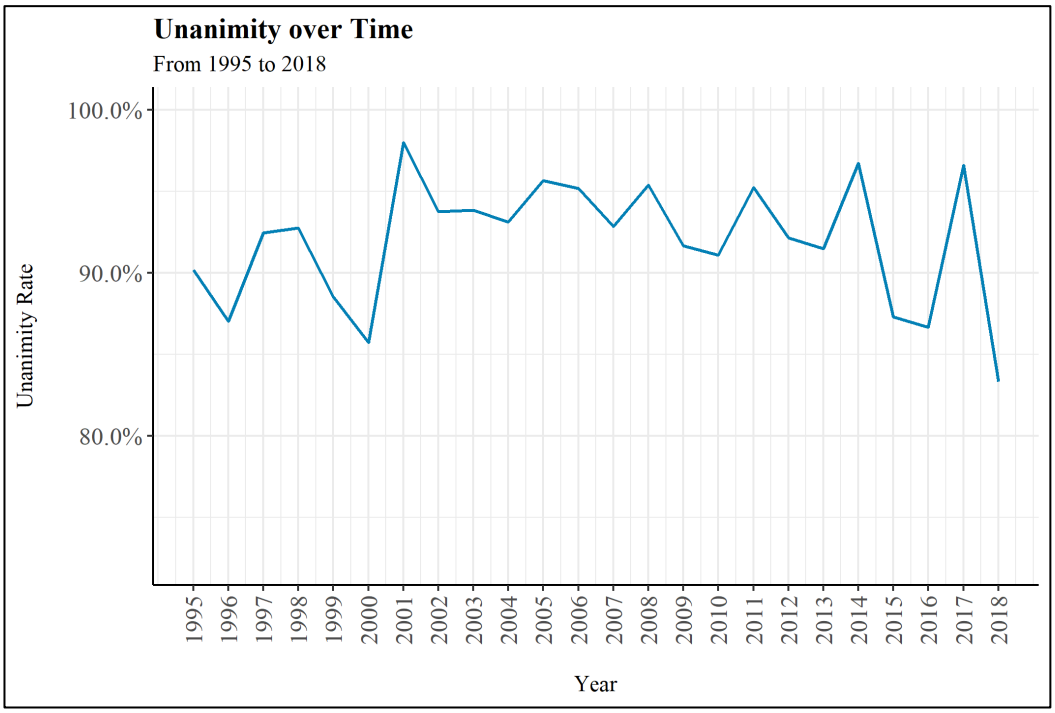
There is almost universal agreement in scholarship that unanimity is extremely important for the UN due to a number of reasons. First, many scholars assume that unanimous resolutions lead to strong signals of legitimacy for a proposed action (Chapman 2012; Krisch 2008, 7; Thompson 2010). Unanimity may "appear as the voice of the 'international community' as a whole" (Krisch 2008, 7). Further, unanimously authorized resolutions may become "reference points" for future

discussions and similar interventions (Hurd 2005, 506). Ultimately, for some scholars, approval in the form of a unanimous UNSC resolution is said to boost compliance with the decision and lead governments across the globe to cooperate voluntarily (Grieco et al. 2011; Thompson 2010; Voeten 2005, 528).

So, unanimity is desirable for Council Members, perhaps the P5 most of all, since these reap the benefits of unanimous decisions long term. But also, E10 members are said to benefit from unanimous decisions, as they can claim that during their tenure, the Council was producing 'legitimate actions', thus raising their status in world politics (Franck 1990, 150; Hurd 2002). Therefore, Council Members show a great willingness to obtain unanimous decisions (Mahmood et al. 2022, 22; Voeten 2005, 533–34). This point was also supported by virtually all P5 and E10 interviewees for this dissertation.[98] To be clear, whether there actually is a causal relationship between unanimity and compliance remains an open empirical question, as I found no study that actually tested this claim. However, instead of disregarding this assumption, I would argue we should take the perception of Council Members (and the literature) seriously. Council Members behave at least as if it is important to secure unanimity in UNSC resolutions.

[98] Series of confidential background interviews with senior E10 and P5 diplomats between October 2020 - June 2022.

Figure 5.1 Unanimity in the UNSC



Note: Unanimity is calculated as 15 affirmative votes over a resolution. The unanimity rate is the average unanimity over resolutions per year.

This perceived importance is also reflected by the average unanimity rate in the Council, standing at an impressive 92-% between 1995-2018.[99] The high share of Council unanimity is also a function of a major scope condition for Council action. The P5 hold de facto veto powers over resolutions, as the Council needs 9 out of 15 affirmative votes to pass any resolution, *with the concurring votes of the P5* (Sievers and Daws 2014, 295). As such, there is an unobserved selection effect impacting the drafting of resolutions. If P5 do not agree with a particular draft, they may simply veto it. Moreover, the P5 possess penholdership over almost all issues. Hence they are the first instance to draft a resolution. Importantly, they can decide to submit only when they think that there is a solid chance of adoption—otherwise, they might not opt for a vote and scrape the effort. This means that any resolution, any sizeable action really, is contingent on the preservation of P5 interests (Gilligan and Stedman 2003).

This great power contingency has led to two arguments in the literature. First, the P5 basically call the shots in the institutional decision-making, and the E10 are of marginal importance at best (Bosco 2009; Bosco 2014; Voeten 2001). Second, that

[99] Author's calculation based on an original dataset of Security Council Votes from 1990-2019.

rhetoric plays no role in the formation of Council actions and decisions, as states discuss whatever they want, but ultimately they act according to "what they would have done in any case" (Mearsheimer 1994; Sandholtz and Stone Sweet 2004, 256).

In line with their argument, these scholars have assumed that Council decision-making must be facilitated secretively behind closed doors in bilateral or multilateral negotiations (Claude 1966; Feurle 1985). However, because private negotiations are completely 'off-the-books' and no records are being kept, it remains speculation what goes on in them and who really gets their way. Confidential background interviews conducted for this dissertation have revealed that diplomats questioned the extent to which these private meetings necessarily foster agreement and unanimity in particular. Several E10 delegates reported that during their tenure in the Council, the P5 did not invite them once for a private negotiation. P5 states admitted that they secured an agreement between themselves behind closed doors but rejected the idea that they often negotiated with E10 Members on substantial issues. [100]

Furthermore, I had given descriptive evidence in Chapter 1 that the President of the Security Council indicates before a vote whether there was substantial agreement in background negotiations citing the phrase "the Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations" (Hurd 2002, 43). However, the background agreement rate was never high, to begin with (average of 16-%), and has severely plummeted post-9/11 (see Figure 1.2). After 2011, virtually no meaningful vote has been accompanied by said phrase. These assertations lead to an interesting puzzle: If the P5 do not extensively pre-negotiate with the E10, why is the Council unanimity well above 90-% for most years? How is unanimity created in the Council?

Against these important ramifications, we know surprisingly little about the *factors* that drive unanimous decision-making in the Council. In fact, apart from the common understanding that unanimity is seen as starkly important, we generally lack a clear set of factors that drive unanimity in the UNSC. To fill this gap, I will propose a baseline model of Council unanimity by consulting relevant secondary literature. Then, in a second step, I will populate this baseline model with rhetorical and participatory explanatory variables because I believe that unanimity is

[100] Confidential background interviews with high-ranking P5 and E10 diplomats from March till June 2022.

substantially facilitated in public Security Council debates—leading to an improved model of unanimity production in the Council.

V.1.1 Institutional Variables and External Shocks

Quite perplexingly, although many agree that unanimity is of great importance for Council Members and the international community, very few have an account of how unanimity is obtained. Christoph Mikulaschek is a rare exception (Mikulaschek forthcoming). For Mikulaschek, unanimity results as a byproduct of intentional power-sharing between the permanent and non-permanent members. According to him, every Member state is keen on unanimity, and the Permanent Five know that they need the Elected Ten to vote with them to attain it. Therefore, the Permanent Five are willing to make some concessions to the Elected members. Conversely, because the Elected members can partially constrain the great powers, they tend to be pleased with the outcome and vote in favor of a given resolution, resulting in unanimous decision-making (Mikulaschek forthcoming, 3).

The strength of Mikulaschek's analysis lies in his emphasis on the Elected Council members. I also contend that the E10 play a crucial role in bringing about the much-desired unanimity. However, my argument underscores their verbal importance. Unlike Mikulaschek, I do not think that the permanent and non-permanent Members have entered into an intentional power-sharing-arrangement. As evidenced by my background interviews, the P5 rarely seek the input of the Elected Ten. In fact, several high-ranking E10 diplomats underscored that during their tenure in the Council, the Permanent Five did not privately consult with them once.[101] If the Permanent Five truly entered into a power-sharing agreement with the E10—facilitated in backdoor diplomacy—they would surely spend some time negotiating such an arrangement with them. The low and even falling backdoor agreement rate should raise some serious concerns against this argument (compare Figure 1.2).

Still, the assumption that the E10 are not merely pushover actors in the arena of world politics is important and validated by a small but burgeoning literature establishing their importance in UNSC conduct (Binder and Golub 2020; Carnegie

[101] Confidential interviews with high-ranking E10 diplomats between March-June 2022.

and Mikulaschek 2020). I also subscribe to this reasoning. In my view, the E10 and their preferences matter towards the resolution of conflict.

Adding to this, as stated in my theory chapter, my account of unanimity production is complementary to existing literature which has undeniably shown that P5 interests (trivially) matter in the adoption of resolutions, as any action is predicated on their agreement (Beardsley and Schmidt 2012; Gilligan and Stedman 2003). Relatedly, relevant scholarship has argued that it might be the homogeneity of interest constellations between P5 and E10 actors that allows for Council intervention. Because assessing vested P5 and E10 interests in over 28,000 votes is a daunting task, I rely on preference homogeneity (Allen and Yuen 2020; Allen and Yuen 2022; Binder and Golub 2020) as an imperfect stand-in proxied through preference alignment through ideal-point voting for all Council Members per year—a common strategy in the relevant literature (Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten 2017). To this end, I use United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) voting data to arrive at ideal-point preferences (via a dynamic ordinal space model) for each Member state (Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten 2017). I rely on UNGA voting data to derive preferences to avoid conflating my independent measure with the outcome unanimity. Then, I take the ideal-point preferences for each UNSC member (not UNGA member) for each debate year and transform the variable in such a way that the average preference alignment greater or equal to one indicates preference homogeneity.

The next factor in my baseline model is an external shock disturbing the everyday politics of the Council. Such shocks are more ambivalent in their direction of Council action. External shocks which make it onto the Council agenda often contain serious human suffering in the form of humanitarian crises, natural disasters, or extremely violent civil conflicts, which may be accompanied by global visibility. Extant literature has shown, time and again, that the UN intervenes in the most gruesome conflicts with the highest amounts of human suffering (Beardsley and Schmidt 2012; Binder 2016; Fortna 2004; 2008; Mullenbach 2005). Yet, this says little about whether such interventions are authorized unanimously. Indeed, in Chapter 4, I have shown that states can talk and perceive the same external shock quite differently (think Iraq War in 2003 or the Israel-Palestine Conflict).

External shocks often come with global visibility and a particular pressure to respond. Relatedly, some studies have shown that heinous war crimes increase intervention speed—especially if such acts use sexual violence as a weapon of war against women (Benson and Gizelis 2020). Still, this increased reaction speed might be at the cost of ensuring unanimity. If there is heightened pressure to act and ongoing media coverage suggesting the UN must immediately respond to an external shock, consultations and pre-negotiations (if there are any) should receive less time.

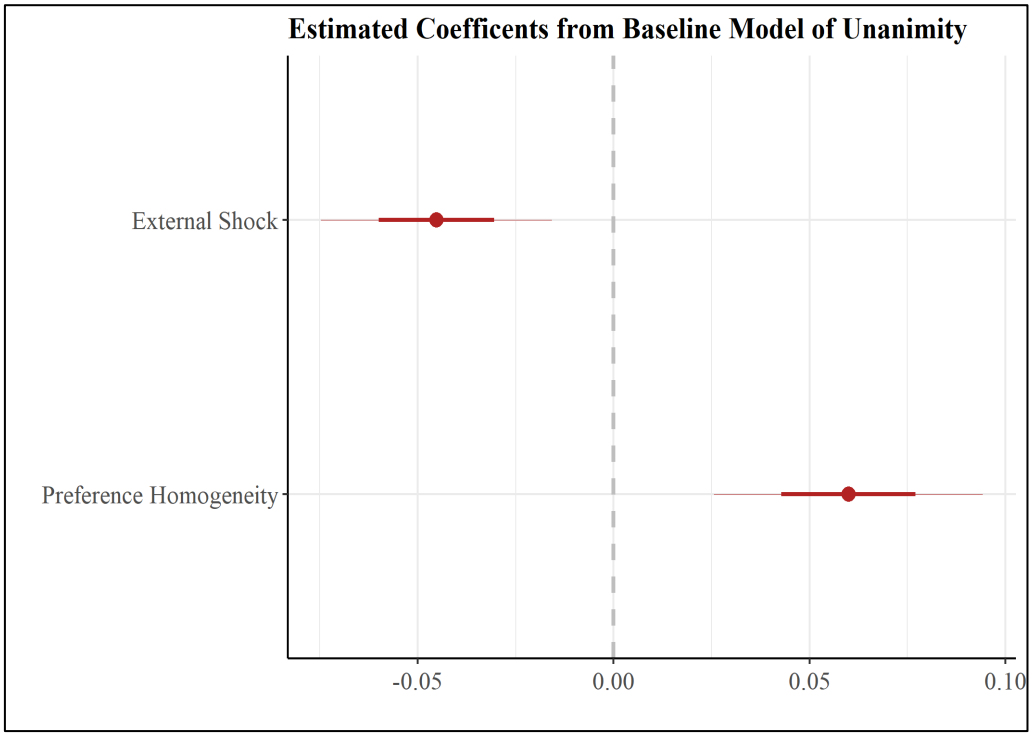
More importantly, there also would be less time to search for themes and, therefore, a common understanding in Security Council debates, as states might need to present a possible solution as soon as possible. This, in turn, decreases the certainty of resolution drafters over voting choices. If there is not enough time to repeat a theme over days, weeks, or even months, the sponsors of a resolution might not know when to submit a resolution to a vote. Thus, external shocks pressure Council Members into quick action, decreasing the time for a careful reading of the room. In all, external shocks should be rather negative for Council unanimity.

These two factors form my baseline of Council unanimity. They are derived from a diverse literature that stipulates Council unanimity to be a function of the characteristics of an external crisis (mostly human suffering) and a constellation of preference homogeneity among Council members (next to the basic scope condition of P5 agreement).

To put this logic to the test, I gathered novel and, so far, unavailable Council unanimity data. To do this, I web-scraped all 27,780 UNSC Member votes between 1995-2018 from the UN webpage for all UNSC resolutions during the same time frame. For each resolution, I summarized the votes by the 15 voting Member states. If 15 states voted affirmatively per resolution, I counted the resolution as adopted unanimously—denoting a score of 1. Otherwise, I denoted the resolution with a score of 0. I follow the established practice of counting E10 abstentions as violations of unanimity, as they increase the quorum for a successful resolution (Sievers and Daws 2014, 317). I also removed 15 resolutions where there had been no vote, but Member states adopted these resolutions by consent without a formal public vote behind closed doors. During my time of the study, this adoption is only used for the election of judges to vacant posts of the International Court of Justice

(ICJ).[102] While these could also be read as showing great unity, their agreement differs from the ordinary occurrence of unanimity. Therefore, these 15 resolutions were omitted from the analysis. I used logit models with a year-fixed-effects estimator to control for time-related change to predict my baseline model of Council unanimity.

Figure 5.2 A Baseline Model of Council Unanimity



Note: Preference Homogeneity is calculated from (Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten 2017) as preference alignment for all Security Council Members in a given resolution-year. The variable has been dichotomized so that average values (for all Council Members during the year of the debate) equal to or greater than 1 indicate homogeneity. External Shocks are proxied through a Chapter 7 reference in the submitted resolution draft on the day of voting. The variable is dichotomized so that values of 1 indicate an external shock. Thick red whiskers show 95-% confidence intervals. The model employs year-fixed effects.

Crucially, Figure 5.2 supports the assumptions made in Hypotheses U1 and U2 (in II.6.1) and thus confirm relevant literature—the regression analysis on which the table is based is available in the appendix (under item A.C.5.1). Both preference homogeneity and external shocks influence Council unanimity. A one-unit increase in preference homogeneity is associated with a 6-% increased likelihood for Council unanimity in UNSC resolutions. As predicted, external shocks affect unanimity negatively; the occurrence of an external shock is associated with a 4-% decreased likelihood of unanimity. Because my baseline model employed year-fixed-effects,

[102] There is also the practice of secret votes for the post of the Secretary-General. However, these are taken behind closed doors and are never circulated.

we essentially controlled for any time trend inherent in the data, such as a growing likelihood for preference alignment or a growing likelihood of external shocks due to a higher likelihood of civil conflicts after the end of the Cold War. The effects are highly statistically significant ($p<0.001$) and unaffected by model choices. This baseline model is a simplified account of how unanimity is obtained in the Council and will now be augmented further.

V.1.2 Linguistic and Participatory Explanatory Variables

The last section has established my baseline model of Council unanimity—being a function of external shocks and preference homogeneity among Council members. Yet, this model, I argue, is an imperfect understanding of how the Council is operating. In my theoretical framework, I have explained that Council debates are often misrepresented as 'theatre' (Feurle 1985), where states present arguments and exchange positions, but at the end of the day, they do whatever they always wanted to in the first place (Sandholtz and Stone Sweet 2004, 256).

In my reading, on the contrary, these public debates are best understood as a *marketplace of themes*. States search for a mutual understanding of how to justify individual and collective conduct. States know that they cannot merely state their parochial interest as a justification for actions and positions because the Charter demands the impartial pursuit of international peace and security (Franck 1990; Johnstone 2003). Or, in the words of Oscar Schachter, "whatever their [true] motives for acting, governments are impelled to justify their position on grounds other than their interests" (Schachter 1985, 35). This means that states search for a plausible normative rubric in SC debates to justify their positions and, later on, actions. Using such normative justificatory rhetoric—what I term a theme—is therefore meaningful as it tells others states that this given Member state understands a conflict and tells others how an intervention should be justified (Franck and Weisband 1971, 121).

The P5 monitor these debates quite meticulously because repeating a theme may signal agreement towards a plausible route for action and post-intervention justification.[103] Although the P5 could easily pre-negotiate with the E10 in backdoor

[103] Background interview with senior P5 officials May 2020.

meetings, securing their approval behind closed doors and thus securing unanimity, they may rarely choose to do so. To put it bluntly, the Permanent Five are not keen on pre-negotiating with the E10 as this would allow them to influence the win-set of the final resolution. To get the E10 to vote with them and attain the much-desired unanimity, they purposefully distribute their preferred themes—hoping that the E10 'buy into their signal', bringing it to dominance.[104]

Yet, dominant themes are a double-edged sword in institutional decision-making. On the one hand, they show that states which repeat a dominant theme understand a given conflict in the same light, leading to a signal of benign intention—demonstrating the worthiness of intervention. However, high dominance threatens outlier positions. Yet, unanimity requires even outlier positions, as it literally *means 15 out of 15 affirmative votes*. This means that dominance can be thought of as some sort of tipping point scenario (a curvilinear relationship). The P5 want some degree of dominance, so they know that their resolution draft is ready to be tabled (and voted on), but the dominance may not be so high that no state may speak out against it—appearing as a spoiler to their peers (compare II.6.1). Consequently, dominance is caught between *two levels of consistency pressure*. States face pressure to be consistent towards their past rhetoric, and states know that there is also pressure to be consistent between collective rhetoric and action. A highly dominant theme—something that the collective evidently views as a plausible normative justification—may clash with the individual track record of one outlier state. This suggests that dominance has a curvilinear relationship with unanimity, where little dominance hurts unanimity, moderate dominance helps unanimity and high dominance hurts unanimity again (hypotheses U3a-c in Chapter II.6.1)

Furthermore, the crucial takeaway from the marketplace of themes is that unanimity is built on the thematic rhetoric of the E10. Or conversely, if the Permanent Five solely 'called the shots' in the game of unanimity-reaching, then the rhetorical E10 participation would not matter. Yet, without the participation of the E10, the P5 do not know whether their favored resolution-draft has a chance of winning over everyone in the room—achieving a unanimous outcome.

Consequently, the participation of the E10 in a Security Council debate is important for the P5 so that uncertainty over voting preferences decreases. If or when the

[104] Hence the term marketplace.

E10 speak, they show whether they understand the conflict in the same light. Even if the E10 may not share the dominant theme, their mere participation in the debate may be important for them, showing their domestic audiences that they are making meaningful contributions towards maintaining international peace and security. As such, their participation may also satisfy shared notions of democratic participation in global governance, making them more receptive towards a consensual outcome.[105] Furthermore, only when a crucial threshold of E10 Member repeats the P5's desired theme a signal of benign intention reached. This leads to two important observable implications. First, that the participation of the E10, in general, is beneficial to produce unanimity, and second, that the more E10 members repeat a dominant theme, the better (hypothesis U2a and U2b from the theory chapter).

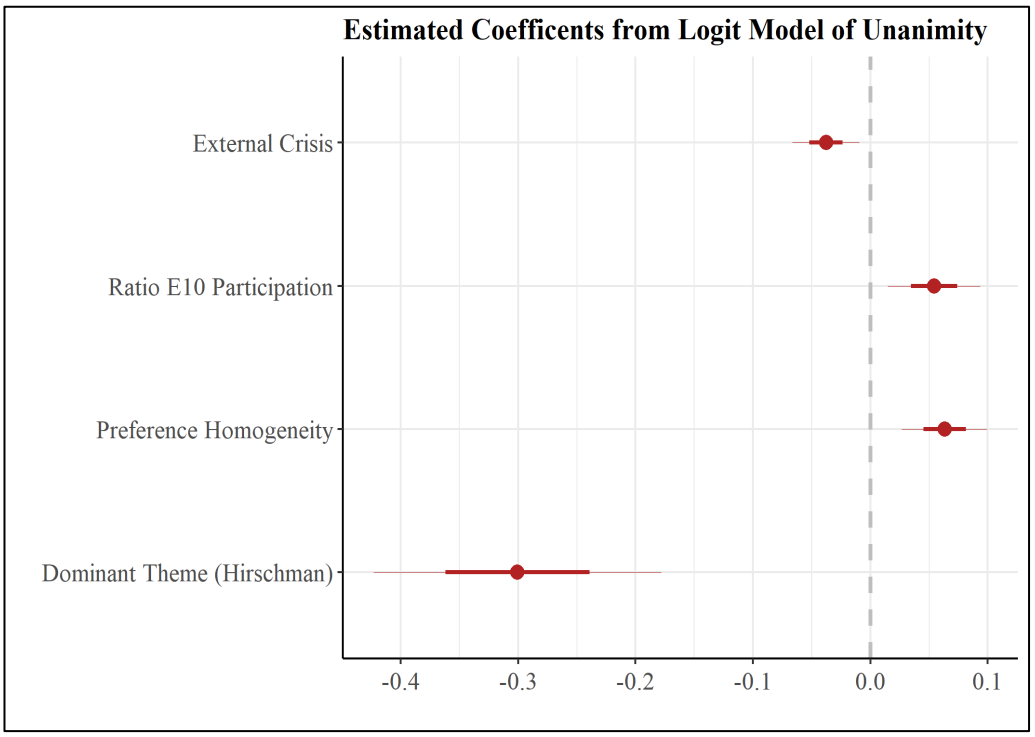
Before I investigate the more complex relationship of the interplay between unanimity, E10 participation, and degrees of dominance, I first update my baseline model of Council unanimity. To do this, I collected all UNSC debates from 1995-2018 (Schönfeld et al. 2019) and merged them via their session number, the so-called SPV number, with my original UNSC voting data and their resolutions (Scherzinger 2021). I arrived at a dataset that contains all speeches nested in 1,449 *UNSC resolution debates*. Then, I measured the themes spoken in these debates by relying on my semi-supervised machine learning model introduced in Chapter 3. After detecting these themes, I calculated their shares over each entire debate.

Next, to operationalize the idea of a marketplace, I transform these shares into a market concentration index, using the *Herfindahl-Hirschman-Index* (often shortened as Hirschman Index or HHI) used macroeconomics and competition law (United States Department of Justice 2018). The Hirschman index is meant to quantity thematic market dominance intuitively by applying a measure of market concentration.[106] The idea is here to have a measure of the degree of how unipolar (or exclusive) a debate is. The more the debate is focused on only one theme, the higher the index. The scale is measured as a degree of concentration (exclusivity of one theme present in a debate). I transformed the variable so that when the market of themes is fully equal (i.e., the shares of my six themes are equal), it takes on a

[105] Confidential background interview with high ranking E10 officials.
[106] The Hirschman Index is the sum of the squared share of each market competitor (in my case themes). The result is divided by 10,000 to obtain a simple 0 to 1 scale.

value of 0. The more concentrated the market is, i.e., the more one theme is dominant (and the others absent), the closer it gets to the value of 1. The latter can only be attained if one theme is dominant and all others are absent from the debate. The lowest observed value in my dataset is 0.16 (indicating a strongly equal market), and the highest observed value is 0.9, indicating a hugely dominant theme and nearly no other theme present (note that the same word can appear in different themes so the value will not perfectly approximate 1). For this analysis, I removed organizational rhetoric from the Hirschman Index (the HHI over debates is available in the appendix under item A.C.5.3). The average market concentration is 0.3—showing that the public debates are, most of the time, not dominated by one theme but are rather divided. Figure 5.3 then tests the additional hypotheses of the improved model.

Figure 5.3 An Improved Model of Unanimity in the UNSC



Note: Preference Homogeneity is calculated from (Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten 2017) for all Security Council Members in a given resolution-year. The variable has been dichotomized so that average values equal to or greater than 1 indicate homogeneity. E10 participation is calculated as the share of E10 members speaking during a debate. Dominant Themes are measured using the Herfindahl-Hirschman-Index for market concentration. Its values have been transformed so that a fully equal marketplace (where the shares of all themes are equal) has a value of 0, and a debate with only one dominant theme (and all others are absent) has a value of 1. Furthermore, all variables have been nominalized to range between 0 and 1. The model employs year-fixed effects.

Importantly, my improved model validates several hypotheses. First, as theorized, E10 participation is advantageous to produce unanimity. On average, a one-unit

increase in E10 participation is associated with a 4-% increased likelihood for unanimity. This is an important finding as it offers evidence against the assumption that the interests of the P5 perfectly explain unanimous decision-making. The E10 and their participation matter towards unanimity production in the Council. This bestows evidence to the idea that the E10 want to be seen as 'making good use of their time on the Council' and underscores arguments about the importance of democratic input in global governance institutions.

Crucially, as explained in Chapter 2, dominant themes are divisive rhetorical tools without the added benefit of who uses them; these make unanimity less likely. On average, a dominant theme is associated with a decreased likelihood of unanimous voting by 30 percent. In line with prior research, both external shocks and preference homogeneity remain statistically significant toward unanimity production ($p < 0.0001$).

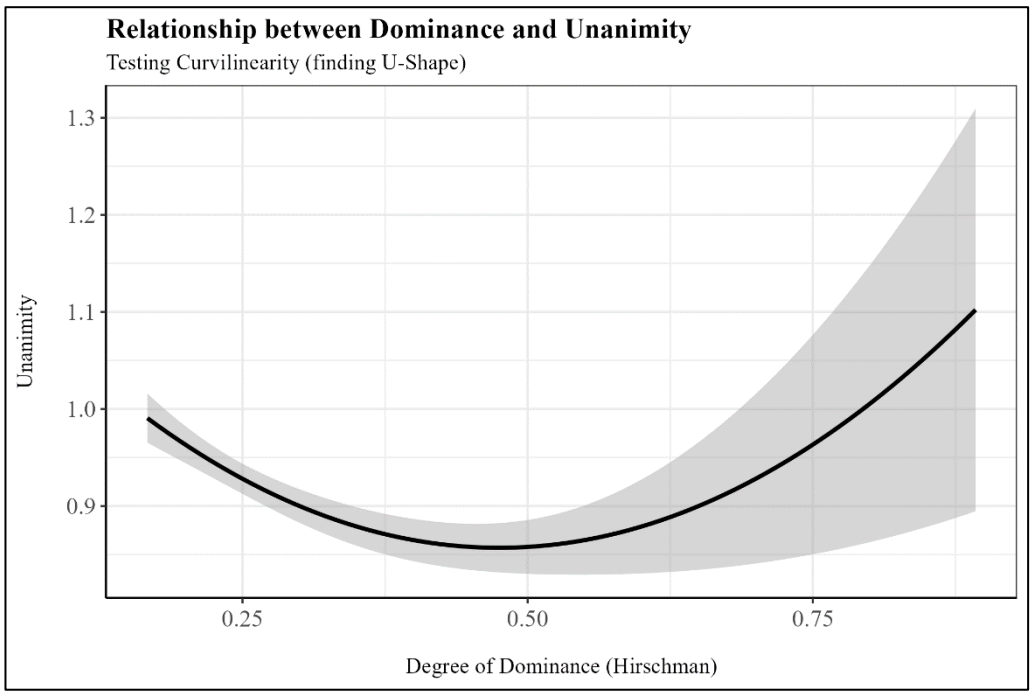
Now that we have seen the full picture, we can compare the baseline to the improved model. In terms of model fit, the appendix offers a variety of parameters (AIC, BIC, AUC/ROC) that all confirm that the improved model *does explain* unanimity significantly better than the baseline model (item A.C.5.3). To name just one metric if we think of these two models as binary machine learning classifiers (as logistic regressions are technically a form of machine-learning), then we can calculate the area under the curve (AUC) which the model explains. Or, put in simpler terms, the amount of unanimity explained by my two models. Crucially, the improved model, containing rhetorical and participatory explanatory variables, explains the data 12 percentage points better than the baseline model.[107] Thus, adding rhetoric, and participation, significantly improves our explanatory power. Without including rhetorical and participatory variables, one cannot fully grasp the complexity of unanimity production in the Council.

[107] The AUC changes from 0.6 (baseline) to 0.72 (improved model)—out of a zero to one scale. The reason why the AUC still does not approximate 1 is, I would argue, because preference homogeneity is an imperfect stand in for interest constellations. Both AUC curves available in the appendix, together with additional metrics of model fit—all confirming an improved explanatory power for the improved model.

V.2 The Interplay of Dominance, Unanimity, and the Participation of the Elected Ten

Up to this point, I have investigated the statistical significance of the two models of Council unanimity. Now, I want to shed light on the more complex relationship between dominance and unanimity, on the one hand, and the interplay between dominance and E10 participation (on unanimity), on the other. Specifically, I have proposed that dominance has a *curvilinear relationship* with unanimity. A low degree of dominance was said to be hurtful towards unanimity (as no signal of benign intention was reached). But a high degree of dominance should also be hurtful because very high dominance excludes outlier positions, yet outlier positions are needed—since unanimity literally means 15 affirmatives out of 15 votes. As such, moderate to high levels of dominance should be the space where the likelihood of unanimity is highest. Figure 5.4 plot the relationship between the degree of Dominance (HHI), taking squared values of the HHI to approximate curvilinearity on the likelihood of unanimity.

Figure 5.4. Testing Curvilinearity Between Dominance and Unanimity



To my great surprise, the relationship between thematic dominance and unanimity does not approximate a curvilinear trend but a U-curve instead. This finding is more

or less the opposite of what I expected. The trend is highly statistically significant—although uncertainty increases for values greater than 0.6 as there are very few debates with such high dominance (< 5-% of the data). This means that unanimity is likely on two poles of dominance. *Either on very low dominance*, so a debate where speakers talk about a number of themes or a debate where speakers *focus on only one theme*. This falsifies my assumption that too much dominance can threaten outlier positions.

Instead, I discover that very high dominance makes unanimity most likely. This is an important finding which qualifies my assumptions about consistency pressure in a different way. Consistency pressure was said to function on two levels between individual rhetoric and action and collective rhetoric and institutional action. In my reading, the figure underscores the two levels of consistency pressure but in an unexpected way. That is, the UNSC debates seem to have an idiosyncratic nature, whereby speakers seem to anticipate whether this is a moment of individual or collective justification for action and positions. In debates where everyone can justify their course of action on their desired theme—in a sense, 'you justify on your normative grounds, and I justify on mine'—leads to a high likelihood for unanimity, *as every state can conform to their individual rhetorical track record* (and thus consistency pressure), pleasing domestic audiences and avoiding audience costs.

Or, speakers anticipate over the course of a debate that *one* theme is rising to dominance, and when enough speakers are on board, bring it jointly to high dominance. In such situations, the collective pressure for consistency might be higher than the individual need for consistency. This means that either states with outlier positions yield towards, the collective and repeat the highly dominant theme, or states with outlier positions remain silent but still vote affirmatively in the end to avoid the costs of going against the collective. Those might be precisely situations where the dominant theme was in the past used by the collective to justify a particular intervention (and might have created a precedent). Because there are few debates with such high scores of dominance, it could mean that there are few instances where 'everybody can get on board'. To put it in another, most of the time, individual consistency trumps collective consistency.

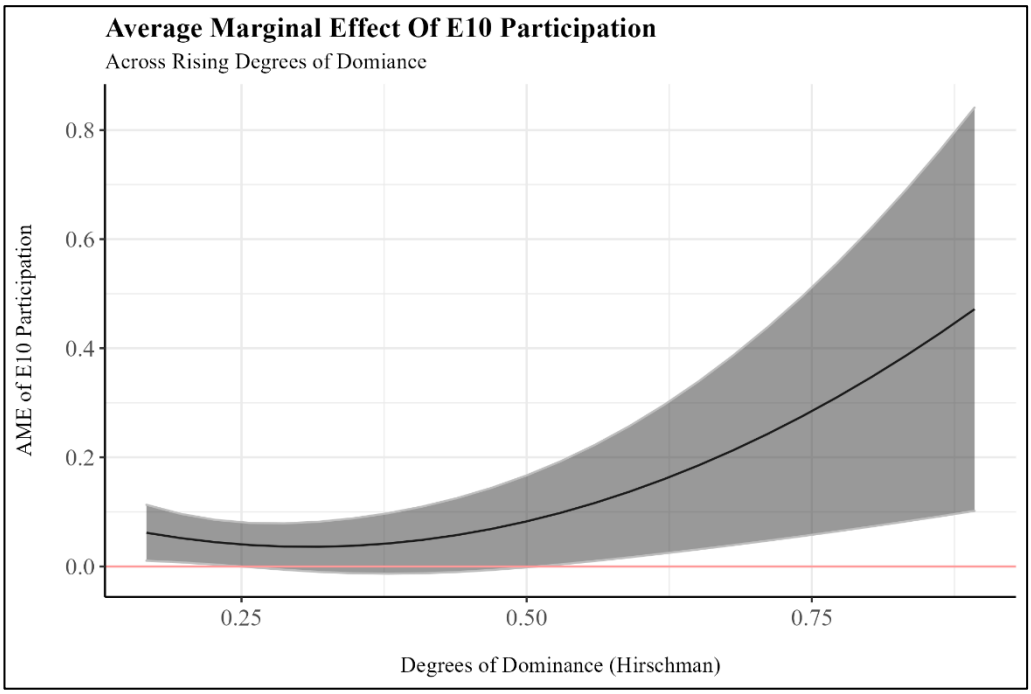
Of course, for now, we have merely measured dominance without qualifying the type of dominant theme. For example, it could be the case that some states share only such themes from which they expect that they have a chance of reaching a

signal of benign intention. Or, it could mean that the P5 selectively steer only such themes from which they expect that no state will hold an outlier position.

In opposite to these two scenarios, when a debate falls in the murky space of a medium dominance, so where speakers discuss two or three themes, but no clear, highly dominant pattern emerges, the likelihood for unanimity drops severely. This could be the case because there is neither a signal of benign intention nor could speakers cherry-pick their preferred rubric for individual justification.

The second part of my theoretical argument was that unanimity is brought about at the behest of the E10. Crucially, the signal of benign intention can only set in if the E10 repeat the dominant theme, thereby increasing the likelihood of unanimous voting. Put simply, the higher the dominant theme (when shared by the E10), the better for unanimity. To investigate this proposed relationship, I run an average marginal effect on the interaction between rising degrees of dominance and E10 participation on the likelihood of unanimity. In the logit model, I include a quadradic term to approximate the nonlinear relationship I discovered above. The appendix contains the full regression output and formula (item A.C.5.4). Figure 5.5 plots the relationship of E10 participation on unanimity across rising degrees of dominance.

Figure 5.5. Relationship between E10 Participation on Unanimity across rising Degrees of Dominance



The average marginal effects plot regresses the interaction between E10 participation across squared degrees of dominance (measured as HHI) on the outcome unanimity. The regression includes its constitutive terms (E10 and Dominance) and controls for preference homogeneity and external shocks.

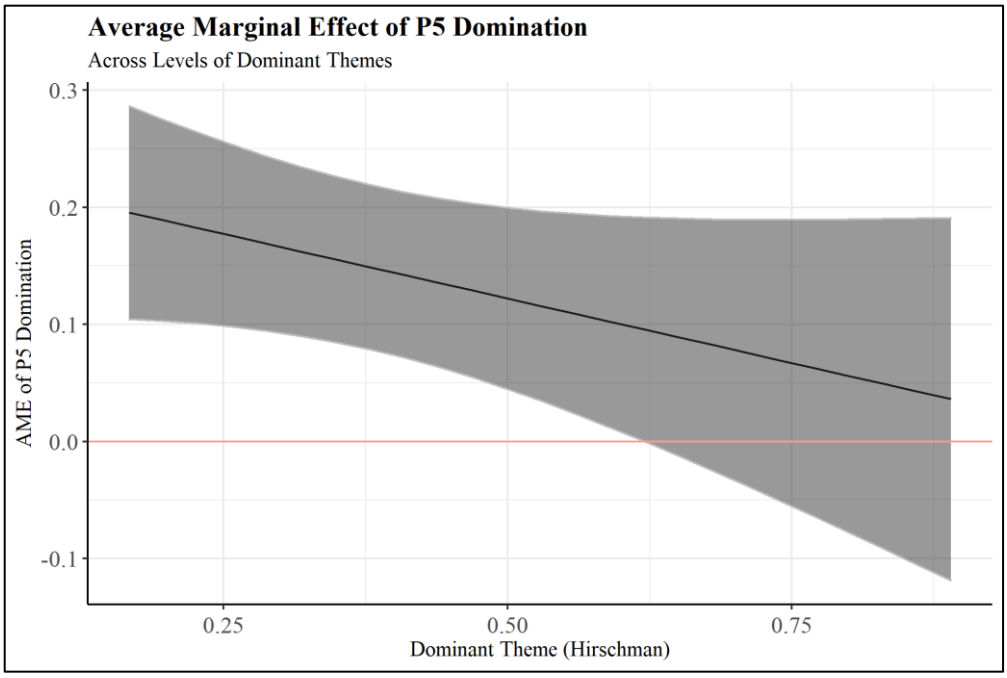
Crucially, the average marginal effects plot confirms my expectations set in the theory chapter (Hypothesis U2b, Chapter II.6.1). When dominance rises and the E10 repeat the dominant theme, the likelihood for unanimity grows drastically. For the highest degree of dominance (a value of 0.9), the AME of E10 participation increases the likelihood of unanimity by almost 48-%. This empirical finding bestows considerable evidence to the argument that dominant themes, told and retold by the E10, become signals of benign intention, increasing the likelihood of unanimity. This was a major claim of my theoretical framework and has received strong empirical support.

V.3 Steering the Debate

With the improved model in mind, I can now move further into uncovering the institutional dynamics of rhetoric and voting. Prior background interviews pointed towards an interesting tactical strategy of the Permanent Council members (cf.

Chapter II.6). While the P5 want to lead into the debate, or, to stay with my metaphor of a marketplace, they 'open up shop first,' they are careful not to appear to impose their will onto everyone else. This suggests that an overbearing of the P5, a dominant theme that is fully driven by their rhetoric, should be harmful to unanimity—because the E10 will reject such posturing on the grounds of *great power overreach*. We can test this claim by employing an interaction model, coupling the effect of P5 debate participation with a dominant theme on the likelihood of unanimous voting. Figure 5.6 plots such a relationship.

Figure 5.6. The Effect of Great Power Overreach



Note: P5 Debate domination is a dummy variable, taking on the value of 1 when at least 50% of all speakers during a debate come from P5 member states. The model holds every factor from my improved model at their means and employs year-fixed-effects.

The interaction plot falsifies my argument about great power overreach. Holding everything else at their means, the average marginal effect (AME) of P5 debate domination across different levels of dominant themes does have a negative slope (significant at the 10-% level). However, the net effect is still positive—although diminishing over increasing dominance. For thematic dominance exceeding values of 0.62 (so high dominance), the results are statistically insignificant. This suggests that while the tendency is correct, stronger imposing of the P5 is not as hurtful for unanimity as I assumed.

In fact, the P5 may push for their desired theme as long as the marketplace is still relatively divided. And even if one theme becomes highly dominant, the net effect is statistically not significant. In my data, 312 resolutions out of 1,449 (22% of all cases) have a P5 dominant debate and a divided marketplace of themes. This finding also falsifies assumptions made by my interview partners. Indeed, many senior diplomats assumed that an overbearing of the P5 should diminish the chances for unanimity. This assumption is not supported by the interaction plot. The P5 may overbear in a debate, putting themselves again and again as speakers on the agenda.

This last thought deserves more consideration. In my improved model, I have shown that E10 participation and themes matter towards Council unanimity. Now, we have seen that the P5 may dominate a debate. But what about the E10? Can they impose their rhetoric on everyone else? May they solely push a dominant theme, forcing the P5 to accept their signal? When have seen in figure 5.4 that the likelihood of unanimity is highest when the E10 bring a theme to high dominance. Does that mean they can do this even against the will of the P5?

To investigate these questions, we can dissect the UNSC resolution-debates more deeply. Let us assume, for a moment, that unanimity was solely a function of E10 vs. P5 participation and dominant themes. Of course, we already know that preference homogeneity and external shocks matter (they explain about 60% of the data), but let us set these aside for a moment. If we focus on the remaining explanatory power of the participatory factor and the rhetorical factor (participation and dominant themes), we can unpack whose rhetoric matters more.

To visualize this, I propose that we can think of a UNSC resolution-debate along three dimensions. First, we can ask who speaks more (E10 vs. P5 participation)? Second, what is the likelihood of unanimity at the end of the debate? And third, how much data (how many resolution debates) can be explained in this way?

Figure 5.7 uses tile-plotting to illustrate the interplay of these three dimensions across all UNSC resolution debates. The logic of the plot is easily explained. I slice each debate into four equally large shares (participation shares on the y-axis and thematic dominance on the x-axis). Then, I predict the likelihood of unanimity for each slice and calculate how many resolutions (out of the total of 1,449) can be explained in this way. I use color coding schemes to show visually a) the number of

resolutions explained and b) the average likelihood for unanimity. Put simply, the darker the quadrant, the better.

Figure 5.7 Unpacking the Impact of Rhetorical & Participatory Variables on Unanimity

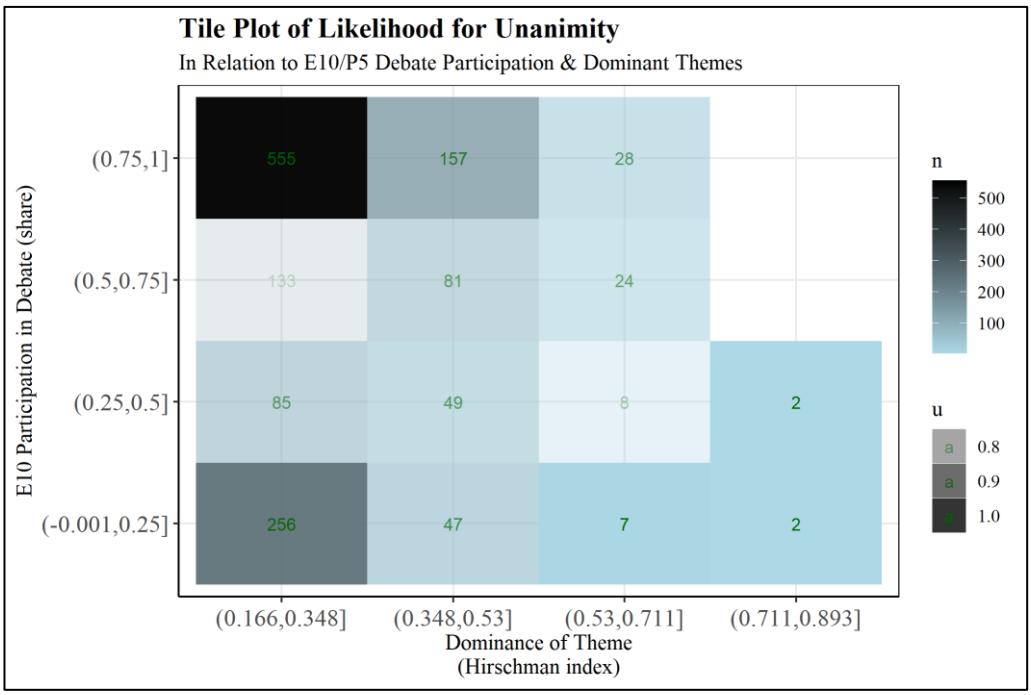


Figure 5.7 strongly underscores the importance of the interplay between themes and the participation of the E10. 555 resolutions (38-%) are perfectly explained solely by their low thematic dominance and very high E10 participation (*unanimity rate at 100%*). Even if they fully dominate a debate—so no P5 Member spoke after them, resolutions are unanimously adopted. This is the largest explanatory share across all resolutions. Hence, we can confirm once more—the participation of the E10 is most crucial in attaining unanimity.

Specifically, the avenue that covers the most cases is that the E10 should have the most—if not almost all speaking time—and should be allowed to pick and choose their preferred theme on which to justify their action and position (the first pole of unanimity). Or, one theme should rise to very high dominance, then the likelihood for unanimity is still very high—contigent on very high levels of E10 participation—but this explains fewer resolutions (because few debates have that high thematic dominance). There is another cluster where E10 participation is very low (bottom left), meaning P5 participation is high, and thematic dominance is also rather low. These might be debates where an agreement was facilitated behind

closed doors prior to the debate, and the P5 do most of the talking. Its share among all resolution debates (~ 17-%) also comes very close to the share of debates discussed in Chapter 1 that have been adopted with 'consolidating agreement in prior consultations' (which was around 16-%). This finding could suggest that debates, where the P5 can overbear, have been mostly agreed upon in background negotiations.

Markedly, pure dominance and a hundred percent debate participation from E10 Members does empirically not exist. This is further testament to the idea that if a theme becomes dominant against which a particular E10 member state has spoken out in the past—and the collective pressure of consistency applies—this particular state might remain silent in the debate to maintain consistency towards its own rhetoric and to avoid going against the consistency of the collective.

As a last measure for this chapter, I want to investigate whether a signal of benign intention can be reached with any of my six themes. The tile plot, in combination with the logic of consistency pressure, has suggested, that if a theme becomes dominant against which states have spoken out in the past, these states avoid repeating the theme. In other words, when the E10 *do speak up*, what theme are they actually bringing to dominance, and how does this improve the chances for unanimity?

V.4 Speaking in Dominant Themes

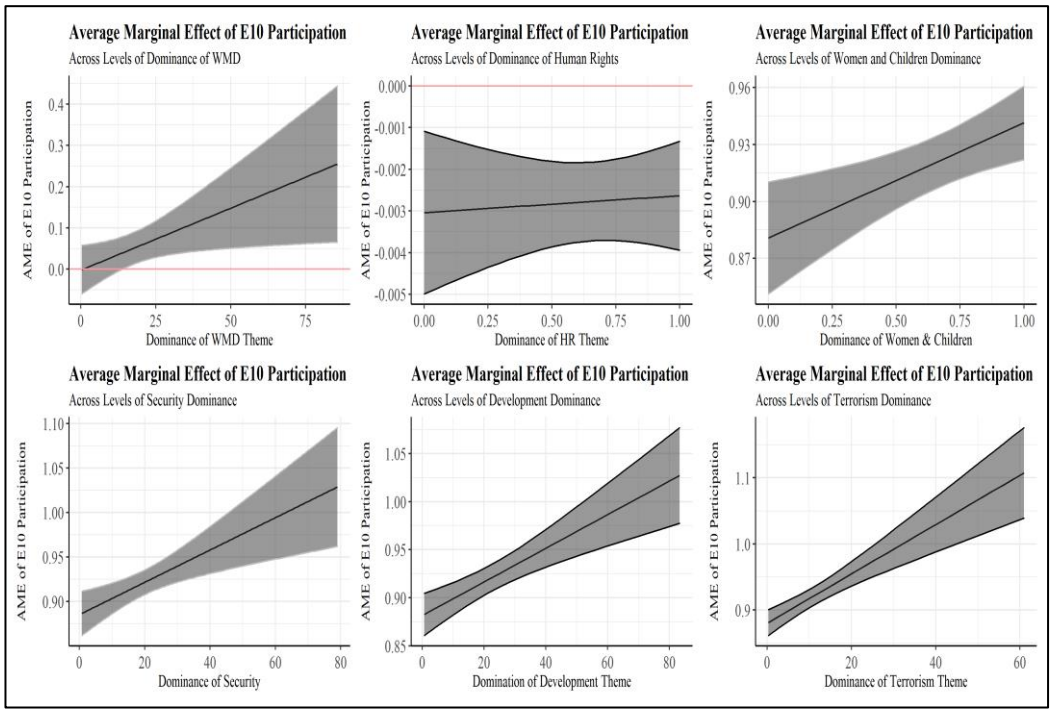
The prior sections provided evidence that the E10's debate contribution is crucial to attaining unanimity in the Council. Yet, these sections also casted doubt on whether any theme could be used to achieve unanimity via debate signaling. More specifically, and this goes back to the theoretical core assumptions of Chapter 2, the E10 might not repeat *any* kind of theme, but the pushed theme must be in line with their past rhetoric to adhere to consistency pressure. Essentially, in this section, we move from the question of whether E10 participation and rhetoric matter to which theme matters in increasing the effect of E10 participation on achieving unanimity?

In Chapter 2.5, I argued that themes that can be said to have a global reach should be better geared at compelling E10 participation because widely shared normative convictions could trigger their signal. Along these lines of thinking, I stipulated that

new security threats like weapons of mass destruction (Tannenwald 1999; 2005), terrorism, and protection norms (Hultman 2013), especially those targeting women and children in warfare (Carpenter 2003; 2005) should work particularly well, since these can be said to be globally diffused. If speakers successfully frame their speeches to make a thematic connection to these motives, E10 participation should strongly affect unanimity.

To further this point, Chapter 4 has shown that when the E10 talk, they speak seven times more about women and children than the P5. Their highest shared theme was development. As such, these two themes could be some prominent predictors of E10 support. Furthermore, only three themes received independent Council agenda items: 'Protecting Women and Children', 'Combatting Terrorism', and 'Preventing the Proliferation of WMD'. Thus, these themes could exert a strong pull towards unanimity. To test these assumptions, Figure 5.8 plots the average marginal effect (AME) of E10 participation across different types of rising themes while controlling for preference distribution and the occurrence of an external shock and time dynamics.

Figure 5.8 AMEs of E10 Participation by type of Dominant Theme



Crucially, the figure underscores the importance of the *type* of dominant theme in strengthening the effect of E10 participation on Council unanimity. Starting with

WMD thematic dominance, the average marginal effect (AME) of E10 participation increases the likelihood of unanimity on a highly dominant theme by 25 percentage points—the effect is statistically highly significant ($p < 0.001$). This is the highest value among all themes and the marginal effect of E10 participation. This could be read in a way suggesting that norms that prohibit weapons of mass destruction are deeply internalized amongst the E10, and thus, we observe this strong statistical effect. Or, since almost all of the E10 countries do not possess any WMD—specifically, no nuclear weapons, this might be a moment of interest homogeneity among the E10.[108] However, in this regard, we should recall that we controlled for preference homogeneity in the Council, so the latter argument should have less sway.

In a similar direction and with considerable magnitude, falls dominance of the terrorism theme. From a debate that virtually features no terrorism to a debate dominated by the theme, the AME of E10 participation rises by 23 percentage points. In line with the fact that WMD and terrorism were (with women and children) the only themes that received an independent agenda item, this finding is not surprising. Keeping in mind that there is no homogenous definition of what constitutes terrorism in the Council, terrorism might be a particularly good thematic sell as diplomats may be able to frame the phenomenon according to their preferred understanding of terrorism—giving them leverage over what the term should cover.

Smaller statistical power comes from appeals to the security theme and calls for a theme of development. A rising security theme increases the AME of E10 participation; going from a debate that features no security talk to a debate where the theme is highly dominant increases the AME by 13 percentage points. Going from a resolution-debate with no development talk to a debate with high development dominance increases the AME on unanimity by 14 percentage points.

Women and children' dominance during a debate has a substantially smaller effect size. Going from zero to full thematic dominance increases the effect of E10 participation on unanimity by around five percentage points. However, if we measure this effect again in 'open debates'—so debates where there was no agreement in prior consultations—the magnitude rises again by 13 percentage points (available in the appendix under item A.C.5.5). The smaller magnitude of the

[108] Past Council Member India, Pakistan are outliers here. Technically, Israel would also be an outlier but the country has never sat on the Council.

effect is somewhat interesting as the E10 talk about this theme so much more than the P5. Still, its share is not as powerful in promoting unanimity in the Council. It falls behind a logic of mandate upholding (development and security) or new security threats (terrorism and WMD).

Interestingly, the human rights theme remains a negative factor in promoting E10 participation', even with rising levels of dominance. While the effect size is negligible, the upshot is that human rights have no compelling effect on E10's participatory effect and are *even harmful* to unanimity production in the Council. This finding underscores literature that has worried that the power of human rights has mainly been a short-lived momentum in the 1990s (Hafner-Burton 2019; Moyn 2012). Seeing in this way, the high thematic dominance of human rights during the 1990s might have been a unique moment in history rather than a long-lasting trend (Ikenberry 2009).

Furthermore, if we remember that consistency pressure affects the sharing of a theme, this finding might be all the more logical: There are some human rights critical or even dissenting states represented in the Council—even amongst the P5—these states necessarily 'sit out' debates where human rights rhetoric rises to dominance. Another reason for this behavior could also be that, over the years, there have been sporadic claims that human rights rhetoric might be a trojan horse for intervention (Hehir 2010; Thakur 2013). States who have used rhetoric to this end are then forced to remain silent on the matter to avoid audience costs.

Secondly, given that the responsibility to protect (R2P) loads very prominently in my modeling of the human rights theme (it's the 7th highest FREX term), it is plausible that the negative effect of human rights is partly driven by the heterogenous stances towards the norm within the P5 and the Council at large (Börzel and Zürn 2021, 295; Welsh 2019, 61). This finding then further underscores the idea that dominant themes that have at their core a signal which goes against central interests of at least one Member foreclose an avenue towards unanimity. The finding also gives evidence to the idea that the credibility of some rhetoric might erode over time and eventually become counterproductive talk (Scherzinger 2022a).

In Chapter 2, I used pertinent literature to classify my six themes into three logics of Council action. The *mandate-upholding logic* (security theme & development theme)

has received strong support from Figure 5.8. Both thematic dominance of security and development increased the E10's participation effect on Council unanimity. From an institutionalist perspective (Barnett and Finnemore 1999; Fearon and Wendt 2002), this finding could suggest that the socialization into the UN community has made the Elected members susceptible to mandate signals in resolution debates. On the other hand, it might also be read as suggesting that states respond to this logic because they think that by conforming to it, they may reap the benefits of a legitimate institution upholding its mandate (Schimmelfennig 2000, 116).

The second logic, *new security threats* (WMD & Terrorism), has equally received strong support. Framing a debate in such a theme animates the E10 participation and strongly impacts unanimity production. These instances are rarer than a logic of mandate-upholding (they cover only about 18% of the debate), but if they do get shared and become dominant, the likelihood of unanimity is drastically improved.

The last logic, protection norms (Human Rights & Women and Children), has received little or even negative empirical support, which goes against my theorizing in Chapter 2. I assumed these norms would be a great connector with a thematic dominance because their signal should be widespread and globally recognizable. The contradictory evidence from the Human rights theme calls into question some of the stronger assumptions of the power of human rights as a weapon of the weak (Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 2013; Sikkink 2017).

Yet, the marked difference between human rights and women and children immediately alerts us to the different political connotations of the themes. Women and children promote unanimity, but human rights do not. While women and children may seem like a cause where 'everybody can get behind', human rights come with a much more charged level of politics. Human-rights-dissenting states might not be willing to repeat a rising theme of HR but might be willing to share a theme of women and children—allowing them to be 'seen as doing something morally valuable' while maintaining critical stances towards human rights rhetoric—which they reject (Foot 2020; Welsh 2021).

It is also worth noting that this chapter has focused on the production of unanimity, not on the effectiveness of providing swift action. While the human rights themes

does not spur unanimity production, it might well be that they positively influence the strength of UN action in general.[109]

V.5 Discussion and Limitations

The last sections have provided mounting evidence that thematic rhetoric matters to achieve unanimity in the Council. When deriving my hypothesis, I already mentioned that there is a large part of the literature that would not agree with these findings. From a power concert perspective (Bosco 2009; Bosco 2014), the preferences of the permanent members should be necessary and sufficient for unanimity production. In this reading, the P5 would hash out all differences between them and then simply impose their will onto everyone else. I have already provided criticism against this perspective because the share of E10 participation is significant, even controlling for preference homogeneity and external shocks. But even if imposing is an option, as great power overreach is not as harmful as assumed, the tile plot of unanimity production showed us that there is a strong unanimity equilibrium when the E10 can justify their positions on their preferred theme. This suggests that the E10 participation and the rhetoric of the E10 remain important for Council unanimity, even against all other factors.

To put it another way, while we know that there is a strong selection effect operating in the background of the Council (16% of resolutions might be perfectly agreed upon behind closed doors)—working against my argument—the E10's participation remains a statistically significant predictor of Council unanimity. Conversely, if the P5 perfectly determined unanimity, Council rhetoric should be superfluous to unanimity production. The magnitude of the statistical significance of the E10's debate contribution shows that even against a selection effect in P5 backdoor diplomacy, rhetoric, and E10 participation matters in the Council.

A counterpoint here is that E10 rhetoric might simply be a shoehorn for P5 power. In this reading, the P5 would tell the E10 what to say, and that is why we observed the statistically significant effect of E10 participation. There is a strong argument against this line of thinking. The E10 participation is still significant when the marketplace of themes is divided—in fact, that forms one productive route towards

[109] This notion is further investigated in the next chapter.

unanimity. In other words, if the P5 tell the E10 what to say, why are they not all using the same theme? Surely, if the P5 imposed their will behind closed doors, they would make sure to tell everybody to use the *same* theme so that their story of necessary Council action is coherent. The fact that E10 participation is significant, even in a divided marketplace of themes (so low dominance), is strong evidence against perfect collusions or backdoor-imposing of the P5.

To be sure, my argument is not that the interests of the Permanent Council members do not matter. On the contrary, my analysis has shown that they do. Also, in a trivial sense, the interests of P5 members necessarily matter, as the passing of any resolution needs the agreement of P5 (Gilligan and Stedman 2003). My argument was merely that the stand-in preferences of the P5, not even those of the entire Council, perfectly determine unanimity.

Notably, dominance did not form a curvilinear relationship with unanimity but *approximated a U-curve*. This means that unanimity is either likely on low dominance—so states can justify actions and positions on their preferred theme, leading to a diversified thematic debate. Or, unanimity is highly likely with high dominance. To me, this underscores the logic of consistency pressure but in an unexpected way. In settings with low dominance, states can individually justify a position, cherry-picking their desired theme to conform to their past track record—adhering to consistency pressure. In debates where one theme rises to high domination, the collective faces the consistency pressure of prior rhetoric and intervention. In such situations, states that have maintained countervailing rhetoric remain silent and yield towards the consistency pressure of the collective. The fact that there are much fewer debates with high dominance than with low dominance means that *individual consistency pressure* seems to outperform the collective in most situations.

Crucially, my theorizing concerning the *signal of benign* intention received strong empirical evidence. Unanimity is most likely if a theme rises to dominance at the behest of the E10.

An alternative explanation against my findings, also addressed in the hypothesis section, could be that it is not so much the rhetoric but the content of the rhetoric that makes all the difference. In this reading, themes matter, but they matter only because they describe the characteristics of a crisis (see also Chapter 4.1). Put in

another way, is it the thematic signal that is driving unanimity, or is it the 'things on the ground' that these Member states merely repeat? I have to concede towards this line of reasoning that I cannot rule out this alternative explanation with causal clarity. My analysis has used observational data, so the causal arrow could point in two directions. However, I want to underscore that my models controlled for external shocks that usually cover some of these characteristics quite well (human suffering, conflict intensity), but, of course, these are no perfect controls for the characteristics of the conflict.

More importantly, however, in Chapter 1 and Chapter 4.2, I have time and again provided plausibility for the argument that there is not a perfect resemblance between the characteristics of a conflict and the way policymakers *talk about a conflict*. If this was the case, the WMD inspector of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) would have found WMDs in Iraq in 2003. Rhetoric is partly driven by interests. As such, themes can be used to *frame* a certain crisis without having a perfect link to the feature of the crisis on the ground (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998; Medzihorsky, Popovic, and Jenne 2017). This is why we should maintain that themes matter and should refrain from treating them as stand-ins for conflict characteristics.

Yet, I also do not want to rule out that the themes and conflict characteristics have to share *some* plausible overlap. Otherwise, such framing might seem absurd or contrived. Therefore, I do not position myself fully against a reading of functionalism in how crises are addressed. But showing this empirically—differentiating rhetoric from the thing it describes—will remain an impossible task without experiments in the Council performed on decision-making diplomats. Something that seems unlikely in the future, given the confidentiality and decorum of the institution. Still, this remains a major limitation of this analysis and has to be acknowledged.

Last, I have to concede that the participation of the E10 (in a divided thematic marketplace) matters more than sharing a theme—bringing it to high dominance and, therefore, invoking a signal of benign intention. While this dynamic works exactly as proposed, and the highest likelihood for unanimity sets in with a highly shared theme by the E10, most cases are explained by low thematic dominance and high E10 participation. This suggests that the E10 want to be part of the process towards unanimity, they want to justify their *own* positions, and as long as they can

do that, they have a high likelihood of voting affirmatively for a resolution. In my view, this relates to procedural notions of institutional decision-making and legitimacy (Gronau and Schmidtke 2016; Lenz and Viola 2017; Schimmelfennig et al. 2020, 38–43; Tallberg and Zürn 2019). Seen in this vein, the P5 might strategically anticipate that the E10 want to present their own justifications for actions and positions and might let them take the mantle of dominating a debate once they set their preferred theme. In such a scenario, the dominant theme is perhaps less relevant, as the E10 want to mostly have their individual justification before a debate than search for a common understanding. This means that under which conditions individual justifications trump a joint searching for themes remains something that needs further research.

Conclusion

At the end of this chapter, I take stock and collect the findings of the previous sections. I started with the observation that there is much scholarly emphasis on the importance of unanimity in the UNSC and international organizations in general. As a first contribution, I leveraged existing literature and original UNSC voting data to arrive at a baseline model of Council unanimity. Then, I operationalized my concept of a marketplace of themes by transforming the rhetorical shares of my semi-supervised topic model into market shares using the Herfindahl-Hirschman-Index.

Then I augmented this model once more, including rhetorical and participatory explanatory variables—showing that this model explains unanimity, on average, 12 percentage points better than a crude baseline model. This is a strong testament to the claim that rhetoric and E10 participation is important in institutional decision-making, and without it, we are working with an incomplete picture of how the Security Council functions.

Against my theorizing in Chapter 2, I found that dominance is not curvilinearly related to unanimity but approximates a U-curve shape. This means that—to reach unanimity—you either need low or very high dominance. Regarding consistency pressure, this suggests that states either want to *individually justify actions and positions* to conform to their prior individual track record. Or, states anticipate that one

theme is rising to high dominance. Then, states who have spoken out against a theme in the past remain silent—yielding towards the pressure of the collective. Because many more resolutions could be explained by high E10 participation and low thematic dominance, we can infer that individual justification (and consistency) seems to trump collective justification and consistency in most scenarios.

Following this finding, I investigated the political dynamics of the Council further. Background interviews with UN diplomats suggested that who speaks and who repeats might affect the negativity of dominance. To explore this thought, I build interaction models between dominant themes and E10 vs. P5 debate participation, respectively. I found countervailing evidence to my idea that *great power overreach* necessarily hurts unanimity production. Instead, it seems some imposing of the permanent members seems permissible as long as their pushed theme is not highly dominant. Even then, the net effect was not statistically significantly negative towards unanimity.

Because a highly dominant theme and a hundred percent E10 debate participation did not exist (as shown in my tile plot), I suspected that not every theme has the same chance of reaching dominance and, thus, unanimity. To investigate this idea, I differentiated by the type of thematic dominance and the AME of E10s participatory effect on unanimity production. To my surprise, themes that upheld the mandate of the UN (security & development) and themes that addressed new security threats (WMD & terrorism) strongly impacted the effect of E10 participation. Faring much weaker, the dominance of women & children increased the E10's debate participatory effect only by a smaller margin, and human rights even harmed unanimity production. This finding debunks the idea in my framework that truly globalized protection norms are great signals to connect with via a dominant theme.

On the contrary, although some protection norms can be shown to be distributed and endorsed globally, they do not fare greatly in producing unanimity. This can be read as a weakening efficacy of human rights rhetoric in some specific issue areas, such as facilitating unity in IOs, and may highlight the declining power of human rights in general.

What is more even, even a rising theme of human rights remained negative towards unanimity production, even if the E10 repeat this theme. This means that human

rights divide the Security Council, regardless of who uses the rhetoric. This finding is further underscored by the fact that women and children were, indeed, productive towards unanimity. As such, it seems highly plausible that human rights dissenting states, such as China and Russia, choose to talk about women and children instead of human rights, avoiding the politicized nature of the theme whilst still being able to present themselves as doing something 'morally valuable'.

Given the fact that terrorism, WMD, and, among protection norms, women and children, were particularly good sells in the marketplace of themes, we can conclude the following three routes towards unanimity: Themes that have a high propensity towards unanimity should be less politicized, like women and children—representing a cause 'where everybody can get behind' without incurring any reputational costs. Or, they should be so malleable that individual states can use them in such a way that the framing of the phenomenon is close to their individual preferences—such as terrorism. Or alternatively, they should be of such nature that interests constellations are relatively homogenous, so past rhetorical track records might have been relatively similar—as in the case of WMD where the P5 and the E10 can agree that no one else should possess weapons of mass destruction—particularly not nuclear weapons.

Lastly, I want to underscore that my account is complementary to existing literature—preference homogeneity matters, and external crises must be accounted for. However, this chapter has also shown that a considerable degree of data could only be well explained by considering rhetorical and participatory variables. Omitting these variables from the analysis of Council unanimity fails to give credit to the complex and nuanced way the Council operates in world politics.

Chapter 6 - The Power of Thematic Talk and Civil Conflict Interventions

In this chapter, I further explore the power of thematic talk on Council decision-making. The prior chapter has demonstrated considerable evidence that thematic rhetoric, when brought to dominance by the E10, strongly increases the likelihood of unanimity. In this chapter, I shift gears once more and demonstrate that thematic language can even affect the type of real-world Council interventions.

To this end, I first recall the theoretical foundations on which the following analyses rest. I restate my expectations from the theory chapter concerning Council action. Then, I present a diverse toolset of automated content analysis that I use to analyze thematic rhetoric and a variety of Council actions. I leverage a series of panel-regression analyses to arrive at the finding that specific types of thematic talk are significantly associated with an increase in the odds of authorization, sanctions, third-party intervention, and even the use of outright force. Dominance, however, fails to reach significant levels of promoting action, and thus some theoretical assumptions of the marketplace of themes have been falsified. In the conclusion to this chapter, I offer an inductive explanation of why not each kind of thematic rhetoric affects all intervention types and raise awareness of the limitations to this analysis.

VI.1 Language and Actions in Civil Conflicts - Six Hypotheses

My main goal in this chapter is to assess whether public thematic rhetoric has an independent effect on the actions and decisions of the UN. The traditional view has been that not even IOs have an effect on world politics as their decisions simply reflect the interests of their most powerful members (Mearsheimer 1994). From this perspective, public rhetoric in these organizations represents cheap talk or "decorations for what they would have done in any case" (Sandholtz and Stone Sweet 2004, 256). If rhetoric was said to be meaningful, then only to infer publicly revealed preferences from their speeches (Baturo, Dasandi, and Mikhaylov 2017; Kentikelenis and Voeten 2020). Moreover, some early UN scholarship assumed that the P5's interests fully determine more or less any important outcome (Bosco 2009; Voeten 2001).

In contrast, two adamant and important kinds of literature diverged from this view. The first pointed to a series of case studies to argue that public rhetoric could affect UN actions (Hurd 2002; 2005; Johnstone 2003). A second burgeoning literature made the claim that the Elected Members (E10) are understudied actors in world politics and that their preferences mattered for the way the Council addressed international crises to peace and security (Binder and Golub 2020; Mikulaschek forthcoming). My theoretical framework has built on these literatures by arguing a) that the rhetorical participation of the E10 matters and b) that thematic language may affect outcomes. In particular, I have advanced the idea that in the institutional context of the UN, six overarching themes can affect Council actions. Because speakers have to maintain an artificially coherent rhetorical foreign policy record over time (consistency pressure) coupled with the need to use normative rhetoric to justify conduct, gives rise to the usage of normative thematic talk that may pressure actors through their public motive into action.

Now, I want to bestow empirical weight on this assumed causal mechanism by demonstrating its working via observable implications in one type of crisis: Civil conflicts. Earlier, I have made the point that it is exceedingly hard to control for the specific elements of different types of crises (so-called *conflict characteristics*) because these are often not perfectly observable or hard to verify for broad agenda items (Africa) or issue areas where the sheer range of possible confounders seems endless (like climate change). Instead, I want to focus on one type of crisis to achieve greater comparability for the variable selection, and for this reason, I choose civil conflicts.

At the same time, focusing on civil conflicts represents an arguable 'hard case' for my analysis and rhetoric in particular. First, the P5 possess penholdership over civil conflict items, so their preference over a specific resolution, coupled with their veto power, should go some way to explain outcomes (and leave smaller room for the participatory effect of the E10 and the power of rhetoric). Second, civil conflicts are often politically and materially costly, with long-term implications in the case of military occupations, and feature considerable spillover potential in the form of refugees and regional instability. Because, arguably, the brunt of these costs has to be shouldered by great powers, the E10 might even be more sidelined than usual in the bargaining process. This suggests that if we find a systematic association

between thematic rhetoric and action here, it is plausible that we find it in many other issue areas as well.

In light of my framework, table 6.1 recapitulates the wording of each relevant hypothesis and the logic of Council action.

Table 6.1 Recalling relevant Hypotheses from Theory Chapter

Theme	Hypothesis Text
Regional Security	H1a**:** *The theme of regional security in a Security Council debate should affect the actions or decisions in the subsequent resolution.*
Development and Cooperation	H1b: *The theme of development in a Security Council debate should affect actions and decisions in a subsequent resolution.*
Human Rights & Humanitarian Action	H1c: *The human rights theme in a Security Council debate should affect the actions and decisions and the subsequent resolution.*
Women & Children	H1d: *The theme of women and children in a Security Council debate should affect the action and decisions in the subsequent resolution.*
Weapons of Mass Destruction	H1e: *The theme of Weapons of Mass Destruction in a Security Council debate should affect the actions and decisions in a subsequent resolution.*
Terrorism	H1f: *The theme of terrorism in a Security Council debate should affect the actions and decisions in the subsequent resolution.*

In my theory chapter (cf. II.5.1-II.5.3), I have given a detailed rationale explaining that each of the six has been used to justify intervention in the past and has been used as a collective justification for actions in debates as well as resolutions. Therefore, all six of them could affect the actions and decisions of the Council in civil conflicts as well. As the secondary literature is not fine-grained enough to make more nuanced predictions on the effect of specific types of themes on specific *types of actions,* I simply state that they all should promote action. A priori making qualitative statements over which theme should be better geared at achieving action seems, to me at least, hard to justify logically, and post-analysis is ethically problematic. Thus, to remain consistent and transparent, I opt for each of them should promote action. Of course, in a world of social sciences, expecting that *each*

type of rhetoric should affect each possible *type of action* might be an unrealistic expectation. To have a reasonable benchmark, I consider the hypotheses to have received empirical support as long as a type of rhetoric affects at least one *type* of Council action.

VI.2 Prior Civil Conflict Research

I am not the first to examine how public rhetoric in the SC affects decisions or outcomes in the Council. Two illustrative case studies have pathed the way before me. Conceiving the Council as a discursive forum, Ian Johnstone argued that legal discourse and "concerns about precedent and reputation" (Johnstone 2003, 437) had influenced the SC's response to the war in Kosovo, putting constraints on the behavior of powerful states. In a similar vein, (Hurd 2005) has shown how Libya has successfully employed a rhetoric of liberal norms to undermine the legitimacy of the Council's sanctions regime against Tripoli.

Recent research has begun to focus on language and text in the Council in more systematic ways. Benson and Kathman (Benson and Kathman 2014) show that bias in SC resolution text in favor or against individual parties to the conflict affects UN force deployments on the African continent. Likewise, (Hauenstein and Joshi 2020) examined the language used in UNSC resolutions to find that resolutions influence compliance with peace agreements. Following the same methodological vein, Hananina (Hanania 2021) uses an LDA model to classify resolution language into three meta-subjects, tracing changes in the behavior of the Security Council at specific historical events such as the Helsinki Accords and the end of the Cold War.

Schönfeld et al. (Schönfeld et al. 2019) go beyond resolution texts to analyze a corpus of United Nations Security Council speeches from 1995-2018, containing over 80,000 speeches in over 4,500 meetings. They show that the UN bureaucracy can act as an autonomous speechmaker, introducing new topics to established debates (Eckhard et al. 2021b). Also, analyzing rhetoric in Council debates in the context of the Syrian civil war, Medzihorsky et al. 2017 examine the responsibility to protect (R2P) as an emerging prescriptive norm using supervised dictionary scaling (Medzihorsky, Popovic, and Jenne 2017). They show that rhetoric representing the conflict in terms of human rights violations is associated with rhetorical support for coercive outside intervention.

While each of these studies has added important mosaics to the canvas of Council civil conflict resolution, there remains a gap in systematicity and scope. For example, while the finding that coercive outside intervention is associated with the R2P underscores the importance of human rights talk in particular (Medzihorsky, Popovic, and Jenne 2017), the Council may use (as shown above) five other relevant tools to resolve civil conflict. Moreover, the UNSC member states may not only talk in human rights vernacular but may, of course, use other normative rhetoric to motivate action and justify conduct—hence focusing only on one *type* leaves open the question of how other thematic talk may affect action.

A significant part of this problem derives from the fact that scholars lack systematic data on civil conflict-resolution-debates. While we do have some data on civil battle deaths in conflict (UCDP 2022) and can leverage UNGA voting data, as preference alignments for Council Members over given years (Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten 2017), we do lack any systematic combination of speeches that are held before a civil conflict resolution is authorized. To this solve this problem, I build an original conflict-resolution-debate database that combines the strengths of existing UN speech datasets (Schönfeld et al. 2019) with resolution-Debate markers (Scherzinger 2021) and resolution action types (Benson and Tucker 2022), including novel and so far, unattainable measures on thematic talk and E10 participation.

VI.3 Methods - How to create a Conflict-Resolution-Debate Database

A series of hurdles have prevented scholars in the past from compiling a rigorous conflict resolution debate database. First, while the UN may issue a whole number of resolutions on specific civil conflicts, this may be a gradual process that unfolds over time. In Chapter 1, I have underscored the fact that UNSC debates may last days, weeks, over even months, with breaks in between. Furthermore, such debates can end and be picked up at any point in time as long as 9 out of 15 members agree to bring the item again on the agenda. This means that, just as civil conflicts may drag on over time, freeze, and start to erupt again, the relevant UNSC item (featuring the conflict) may come on the agenda—with some measures being taken—only to disappear again. This process may repeatedly happen, resulting in a large number of resolutions that are nested in specific conflicts without a clear ordering provided by the UN regarding which resolutions belong to which conflict

(or agenda item). With the advent of automated content analysis methods and machine-learning algorithms, scholars have begun to web-scrape, clean, and harmonize some portions of these resolutions (Hauenstein and Joshi 2020), but neither all of them nor did they collect the relevant agenda items under which they were adopted. In addition, while sometimes the resolution text was available, there was no systematic collection of the actions authorized. This changed with a recent publication of a dataset by Michelle Benson and Colin Tucker providing resolution data on civil conflict actions (Benson and Tucker 2022).

With these excellent data and the seminal UN Debates by Schönfeldt et al. (Schönfeld et al. 2019), an opportunity presented itself to leverage these individual building blocks to form a database that contains conflicts, linguistic variables collected from speeches (my original contribution), and behavioral confounders from a series of established peace and conflict literature. First, however, to bring all these data together, I needed an identifier that is able to connect resolution action data with my original UN resolution corpus and Schönfeldt's debates.

To this end, I identified all Security Council resolutions from the UN archival webpage and connected them to the specific debate in which they were adopted using an annual running meeting number (*SPV number*). In doing so, I arrived at a comprehensive dataset including all speeches and meetings and their final resolution from 1995 to 2018. My dataset includes the full text of each speech, as well as the full text of each resolution.

Because I want to control on a variety of variables that are not collected *linguistically but behaviorally*, such as Council preference alignment over years or civilian battle deaths, I need to find a common denominator on which to merge data. Schönfeld et al.'s data include an agenda topic variable that details the subject matter of each Security Council meeting. However, the agenda topic variable itself is web-scraped from the UN Digital Archive. Due to political reasons, the UN is not exercising great consistency in labeling the subject of all of these meetings.[110] For example, the *Israel-Palestine Conflict* is sometimes denoted as "the situation in the Middle East". In other situations, however, the humanitarian conflict in Yemen is called "the situation in the Middle East". At times, the coalition to fight the terrorist organization ISIL is also referred to as the "situation in the Middle East". It follows

[110] Some crises are so politically charged in nature that agreeing on a name for an agenda item may present already a challenge. Therefore, some agenda items are purposefully vague.

that the title of the agenda topic alone is insufficient in discerning which conflict is being addressed.[111]

Because I know that for most conflict dyads, the UN will list the two most notable actors (e.g., Ethiopia and Eritrea, Iraq and Kuwait, etc.), I exploit the agenda topic of each session to give me state dyads that form a conflict. To extract each dyad, I rely on automated *pattern matching*. If there is a match, I extract the names of the matches and store them in a separate variable. Otherwise, if there is no match, I know that the agenda topic is either thematic or that it is something as broad as "the situation in the middle east". Then, I pattern-match these values with a global list of country names and cities and store these entries in a separate variable as well. If the matched result delivers only one country or only one city, there is a high propensity for this specific country to be plagued by civil conflict.

After manual cleaning and validation, my indicator identifies 1,014 resolution targets, which address either an interstate or intrastate conflict, corresponding to 69-% of all 1472 resolutions passed during the same period (the remaining 31-% are thematic in nature). Of these 1,014 resolutions, 467 address a civil conflict and are therefore included in our analysis. Merging on the country name, I include the UCDP conflict-id as a numeric identifier for each conflict (UCDP Georeferenced Data 2022) to control for specific conflict characteristics in the preceding. At this point in the data-collection process, I have each resolution (with full text and actions authorized) nested in conflict agenda items.

VI.3.1 Independent Variables

I argue that thematic language partly explains the types of Security Council actions. Therefore, I need to construct all my explanatory variables linguistically.[112] In the previous section, I theorized which types of language are plausible candidates to compel the UNSC into actions and decisions. I, therefore, need to translate these rhetorical patterns into an automatic machine-learning classification scheme that is able to tell which segments of thousands of speeches belong to which theme.

[111] This is particularly bad for the Middle East. Dyadic conflicts and interstate conflicts in general, are much better labeled.

[112] Even E10 participation, which could be considered a behavioral variable and not a linguistic one, has to be observed during debates—since Council members cannot sign themselves unto the agenda and then remain silent. Thus, I would contend that even though participatory, E10 participation belongs more in a realm of linguistic variables than in a control logic of other behavioral variables.

To facilitate this, I rely once more on my state-of-the-art *seeded-LDA* model introduced in Chapter 3. Following Watanabe and Zhou (Watanabe and Zhou 2020), I have demonstrated that semi-supervised machine-learning is superior to both unsupervised and supervised models because of its synthesizing abilities.

Also, in Chapter 3, I have given detailed instructions on how to optimize and validate a semi-supervised model to identify when a diplomat uses a) a theme (or organizational rhetoric) and b) how to estimate which parts of a speech—and in the aggregate which share of a debate—belong to a specific theme. I took the same validation steps as discussed before. First, I calculated the model and reran the entire analysis allowing for residual features in an additional garbage category without impacting the findings.

Moreover, I hand-validated a sample of the conflict resolution speeches to see whether the expected thematic proportions were similar to my coding of speech paragraphs. Finally, I estimated FREX[113] words by computing the most distinctive words for each type of theme (Phi-words) and weighted them by their respective salience across themes. Through FREX words, scholars have access to an intuitive word metric that shows them which words are highly likely to be associated with a specific theme while also being salient to the respective theme. To give the readers a visual representation of my data, I present the 10 most likely FREX words for each theme from my conflict-resolution debates.

Table 6.2 FREX Words for each Theme

Human Rights	**WMD**	**Development**	**Women & Children**	**Terrorism**	**Security**
Humanitarian	Chemical	Implementation	Women	Terrorism	Military
Respect	Disarmament	Reconciliation	Children	Terrorist	Armed
Refugees	Capabilities	Reconstruction	Atrocities	Taliban	Arms
Civilian	Capability	Developments	Abuses	Terrorists	Attacks
Responsibility	Safeguard	Capacity	Victim	ISIL	Army
Violations	Energy	Demobilization	Vulnerable	Terror	Destruction
Suffering	Nuclear	Reintegration	Girls	Al-Qaida	Fight
Displaced	Darfur	Donor	Sexual	Crime	Fighting
Responsible	Lakes	Developing	Child	Extremist	Secure
Responsibilities	Monuc	Develop	Abuse	Extremists	Conflicts

[113] Frex is a compound word of Frequency + Exclusivity.

Table 6.2 gives us already a first glimpse into the structure of the underlying speech data. For example, in the HR theme, the term "responsibility" loads as the 5th most distinctive and salient feature. This high placing is pushed by the *responsibility* to protect (R2P). Because the norm has been quite controversial in its military application (Scherzinger 2022b; Welsh 2019; 2021), its prominent loading could be an early warning sign for the efficacy of human rights rhetoric to produce forceful action—particularly if we recall the negative finding of the previous Chapter on unanimity.

Notably, the first and, therefore, most distinctive and most salient term for the WMD theme is "chemical". In civil conflicts, the use and supply of chemical weapons is a much more common threat than its nuclear counterpart (which only places at the 7th position). In my data, talking about chemical weapons should be most relevant in the Syrian civil war and in Sudan, where there is strong evidence that these have been used (BBC 2016). Relatedly, the word "lakes" (9Th position) does not address water masses in general but is indicative of the Great lakes region on the African continent bordering the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Burundi, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, and, Zambia. Since my dataset covers years before the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) went into force, this region is likely to be associated with the stockpiles that were either about to be destroyed during times of civil conflict or afterward.

Some FREX words from the terrorist theme are actors such as "Taliban", "ISIL", and "Al-Qaida," which further bestows face-validity to the classification. Additionally, it gives me an indication of what type of actors the UNSC prominently recognizes (and names) as terrorists. The most prominent mention belongs to radical religious fundamentalism stemming from conflicts in the Arabian peninsula, North Africa, and the Levante.

To finalize the linguistic variables of my original dataset, I aggregated all speeches to a debate level—taking the share of each theme and organizational rhetoric during all speeches—and connected them to the final resolutions. Furthermore, I calculated the participation of E10 or P5 members during each of these debates (by also taking their share of participation during each meeting). In all, I arrived at *467 conflict-resolution debates* nested in *31 unique conflicts* discussed over *24 years* (from 1995

to 2018).[114] Table 6.3 shows the distribution of my selected explanatory variables below.

Table 6.3 Descriptive Statistics for selected Explanatory Variables

Explanatory Variable	Share Across Debates (rounded) (%)	SD	Total Dominance in Speeches	Share of Dominance Across Debates (rounded) (%)
Terrorism	38.3	9.7	407	8.1
Security	20.5	8.9	420	14.2
Development	15.5	9.4	461	11.6
Women & Children	13.5	7.5	321	7.5
Human Rights	8.6	9.6	463	13.2
WMD	3.6	9.3	421	7.7

Observing the table, there are a few noteworthy descriptive findings. First, the most salient theme in civil conflicts is terrorism, with a share of 38.3-%. This considerable proportion may derive from several conflicts that feature elements of terrorist activity, such as Syria, Afghanistan, or Iraq. However, its high share may also derive from the loose definition and strategic application of the theme (as shown in Chapter 4). Interestingly, although terrorism is very salient in UNSC debates, the theme itself does not achieve dominance overwhelmingly. Of the 38.3-% of debates that feature the theme, in only 8.1%, the theme rises to dominance. This suggests that other thematic language is better at achieving a common understanding.

The security theme, for example, fares better in achieving dominance. When mentioned, the theme rises to high dominance in 14.2-% of resolution-debates. As this is the highest dominance score, it suggests that speakers most often understand civil conflicts as threats to regional security or regional stability. Conversely, the human rights share seems comparatively small. Only 8.6-% of resolution debates are devoted to human rights language. When mentioned, however, the human rights theme rises to high dominance in 13.2-% of resolution debates. This means that when diplomates talk of human rights in the context of a civil war, there is a considerable chance that this kind of language will dominate the debate. The women and children theme also fares comparatively well (especially compared to its general salience in UNSC debates, see Chapter 4) with a share of 13.5-%.

[114] A table for these conflicts is available in the Appendix under item A.C.6.1.

The lowest scores come from the WMD theme—only 3.6-% are devoted to weapons of mass destruction talk. In my dataset, Israel is the only power to have nuclear weapons and experience a civil conflict at the same time. Hence, the nuclear element of the WMD theme might be 'a hard sell'. The 3.6-% might rather revolve around the chemical element of the WMD theme applied to the Syrian's regime usage of Sarin gas or alleged chemical weapons use by Sudan.

VI.3.2 Dependent Variables

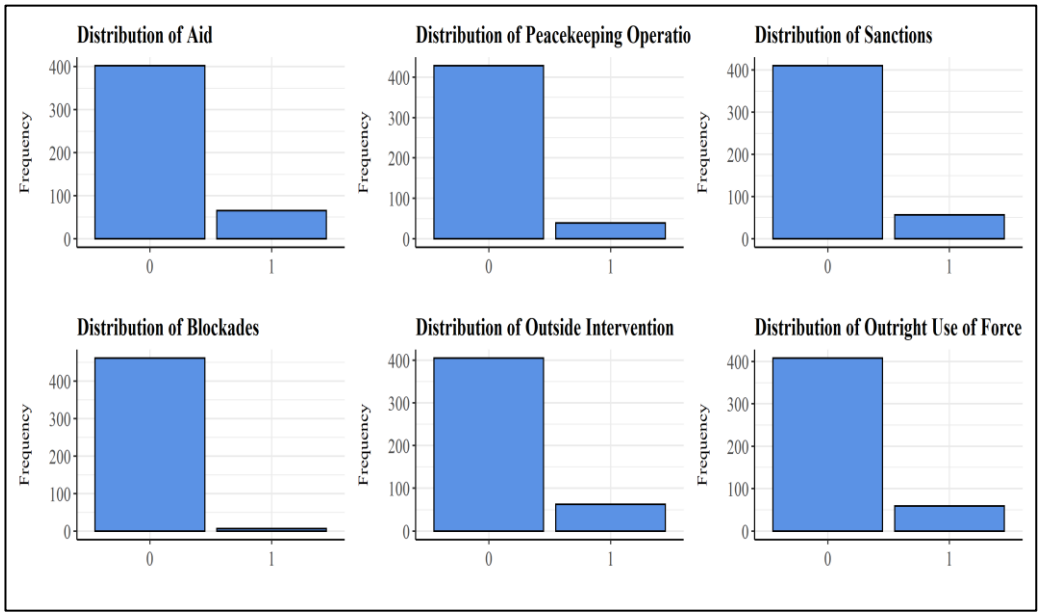
To capture the types of the SC's response to civil conflicts, I examine Security Council resolutions. I do so by relying on a novel UNSC resolution action dataset (Benson and Tucker 2022) in addition to my own authorization of force data (Scherzinger 2022a). Because I have aggregated each debate to its resolution-conflict, I can incorporate these data by merging it on the UCDP conflict indicator.

In my reading, the Council may use six types of actions to address civil conflicts.[115] First, the Council may call for aid (from *all* UN member states) to alleviate a suffering population in a civil conflict. Second, the Council may send a *consensual* peacekeeping force under Chapter 6 of the Charter, which requires the consent of the current government (Fortna 2008; United Nations, Chapter 6). Third, if civil conflicts are unlikely to be resolved by consensual or diplomatic means, the Council may move into the terrain of coercive measures via the authorization of sanctions (Biersteker, Eckert, and Tourinho 2016). Four, if targeted sanctions fail to produce any meaningful change, the UN may release an entire blockade, cutting- off the relevant country from any air, sea, or land access (Giumelli 2015; United Nations, Chapter 7). Five, the UN may, for strategic, political, or other reasons, defer the mandate to a third party to act militarily on its behalf. Six, the UN may, for the strongest breaches of peace, authorize an outright use of force, allowing for "all necessary measures" (United Nations, Article 42). All necessary measures are as wide-ranging as it sounds. Under such a mandate, the UN may deploy any kind of land, sea, or air forces—including aerial bombardment (Scherzinger 2022a, 9). Because there is a hierarchy immanent in these actions, going from non-coercive

[115] The UN may also use verbal actions such as lauding or condemning actors. However, the analysis is meant to establish when rhetoric affects non-rhetorical actions. Therefore, such decisions are excluded from the analysis. In addition, the UN may take institutional measures within its own capacity as an agent installing fact-finding missions, monitoring groups, or mediating offices. These types of actions seem less relevant for the resolution of civil conflicts and are thus excluded.

voluntary measures such as offering aid to coercive non-consensual ones, I speak of the strength of Council action as the outcome of my analysis. Still, I analyze each type of intervention individually. Importantly, I do transform Benson and Tucker's data by combining first-time authorizations with mandate renewals because these kinds of actions will be publicly discussed in the Security Council as well. Figure 6.1 shows the distribution of all my six dependent variables over conflict-resolutions.

Figure 6.1 Distribution of Council Action Types



While civil conflict interventions remain, in general, a rare phenomenon, five out of six types occur (comparatively) more frequently. These are: Calling for aid (65 times), deferring the mandate to an outside coalition (62 times), authorizing the outright use of force (59 times), and ordering sanctions (57 times). Moreover, the Council authorizes a consensual peacekeeping force in 39 cases. Consensual peacekeeping missions have sometimes been found to be inadequate to deal with armed rebel forces or terrorist threats (Hultman, Kathman, and Shannon 2016). Especially with the lessons learned from the genocide in Rwanda and Srebrenica, the Council began to authorize multidimensional missions (missions where objectives also include the protection of civilians), almost always with special prerogatives to use force. Thus, after the year 1999, all multidimensional peacekeeping missions were authorized under Chapter 7 (Howard and Dayal 2018, 72). This relegates consensual peacekeeping to a lower status.

Finally, only six resolutions authorize either a land, sea, or air blockade to cut off the country (hosting the conflict) from any possible trade.[116]

Although the Council can technically authorize several measures within one resolution, in my data, there is almost no overlap between actions—with the exception of outside military intervention and the outright use of force. In 42% of outside military interventions, the acting alliance (such as NATO or ECOWAS) may use "all necessary measures" to accomplish their goals.[117] Therefore, I assess each intervention type separately in the following regression analyses.

The most common type of Council action is to collect aid from UN member states at large: 65 civil conflict resolution call for aid, or 14-% of all resolutions. Through a lens of rational intuitionalism, this finding is unsurprising (see for example: Voeten 2021, 57). Calling for aid from the entire UN membership (not just the Council) is the least costly form of intervention for the SC while offering a cost-efficient crisis relief to fulfill an institutional mandate (Martin 1992, 772). At the same time, this high amount of aid collecting might also be a function of the conflict intensity. The types of Council action have an implicit escalation scale attached to them. In the first instance, when a conflict erupts for the first time, the Council may not immediately opt for strong coercive measures but may first try to solve the crisis by employing consensual forms of intervention—offering aid is the least intrusive action and thus a logical first step to mitigating conflict.

A materialist perspective could be used to explain the high amount of mandate deferrals to a third party (13.2-% of all resolutions). Since military interventions are costly, especially in civil conflicts, as these may transform into a long-lasting occupation (Hultman, Kathman, and Shannon 2014), the UNSC might want to defer the mandate to an alliance or coalition acting on its behalf. However, since most deferrals are relegated to either NATO (the exception being in my data ECOWAS and Australia in the case of East-Timor) or multinational coalitions led by the United States, the brunt of the costs seem to be paid by at least one P5 member—the USA.

[116] These cases are: Resolution 1132 in Sierra Leone (1997), resolution 1973 in Libya (2011), resolution 2146 in Libya (2014[Extension]), resolution 2182 in Somalia (2014), resolution 2208 in Libya (2014[Extension]), resolution 2213 in Libya (2015[Extension]).
[117] The correlation amongst the Dependent Variables is accessible in the Appendix under Item A.C.6.2.

Instead, another plausible explanation for the high number of deferrals could be that—since the UN lacks enforcement mechanisms anyway—the UNSC might naturally opt to defer the mandate so that other more militarily capable entities act on its behalf. Giving the UNSC the option to focus on the bargaining process and not on the enforcement of the action (Fearon 1998; Voeten 2021, 47).

However, in the special case of deferrals to ECOWAS, the UN may actually recognize ECOWAS's knowledge over a region-specific resolution. As such, the UN may defer the mandate as a combination of the recognition of the epistemic authority of ECOWAS coupled with its military capabilities (Regan 2002; Zürn 2018, 52–53). In addition to the present data, the appendix offers concrete information on which conflicts have received which kinds of actions (item A.C.6.3).

VI.3.3 Controls

I have argued that my account is complementary to existing research on Council action. In particular, I understand two predictors to be most important for any SC action. First, as prior research has consistently shown (Beardsley and Schmidt 2012; Binder and Golub 2020; Gilligan and Stedman 2003), the preferences of Council members (perhaps most importantly, the P5) matter when resolving a crisis. Because I believe that the preferences of the Elected Ten also matter, I calculate the Council preference range amongst all Members in a given year by using UN General assembly ideal-point data (Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten 2017). Values >0 indicate Council preference homogeneity, and values <0 indicate Council preference heterogeneity.[118] Furthermore, Gilligan and Stedman have made the important and intuitive argument that P5 *interests* do necessarily matter as otherwise, any of the P5 members may veto a proposed resolution (Gilligan and Stedman 2003). Since I am only analyzing authorized resolutions, I have to add that, of course, all of these are conditional on P5 agreement and are thus likely to be biased towards P5 interest protection.

Second, pertinent research has demonstrated that the UN responds to the most difficult and gruesome conflicts (Fortna 2008; Hegre, Hultman, and Nygård 2019; Mullenbach 2005). I follow this line of thinking by including a UCDP civilian death

[118] I do this by calculating the sum of the highest idealpoint minus the lowest idealpoint for each Council member over resolution years: $\sum$ (Ximax – Ximin) for Xin over (reso-year).

count variable for the number of civilians who died during the resolution-year in the respective civil conflict (Gleditsch et al. 2021).

Moreover, there is a whole host of literature that shows that different conflict idiosyncrasies—what I term conflict characteristics—may influence Council action to varying degrees of certainty. However, which characteristics, in particular, are said to be conducive to council action remains hotly debated. For example, Beardsley and Schmidt found no effect of oil-producing countries to be a determinant of UN involvement (Beardsley and Schmidt 2012, 43).[119] However, general civil war research has argued that this may be one of the most, if not the most, important cause of civil conflict (Collier and Hoeffler 2004, 580). At face value, this would mean that conflicts may erupt due to a dependency on crude oil export, but UN involvement is seemingly unbiased when resolving these conflicts.

Moreover, there is no great agreement on which characteristics should even be considered when assessing civil conflicts. For example, Beardsley controls for conflict intensity and conflict history, finding them insignificant in predicting UN conflict management (Beardsley 2013). Binder, on the contrary (Binder 2015), finds both conflict intensity and conflict history (in the form of prior UN involvement) to be important predictors of (renewed) Council involvement. What is more, Binder and Golub control for neither conflict history nor intensity but find that the number of migrants, which could be externalized from a conflict, is significant for UN agenda setting—in some models (Binder and Golub 2020)—something that Beardsley did not control for. Markus Lundgren and Mark Klamberg also do not control for conflict history or intensity[120], yet they do find that conflicts that are fought over government vs. conflicts that are fought over territory significantly affect council agenda-setting and involvement (Lundgren and Klamberg 2022). To make matters worse, none of the cited literature investigates more fine-grained conflict characteristics such as religious or ethnic conflict, characteristics of local governing structures such as tribes, or characteristics of local peacebuilding and transitional justice resources (Salehi 2022; Salehi and Williams 2016), which other studies have shown to be important in achieving UN mission success and long-lasting peace (Autesserre 2009; 2019).

[119] Except for particular regions.
[120] They do however control for migrants and arrive at a similar finding as Binder and Golub.

Taken together, these studies produce the uneasy finding that conflict characteristics are something that is important for UN involvement but hard to control for systematically in depth and scope. Because I am also dealing with a diverse set of civil conflicts that span more than 20 years of action and three continents, I am cognizant of the fact that the conflict characteristics are important unknowns in this chapter as well.

To solve this conundrum, I am proposing to calculate an additional series of models using a *conflict-fixed-effect* estimator. I argue that such a within-estimator is superior to selectively picking one over another conflict characteristic and plucking it into a model—seriously affecting the model fit. Instead, conflict-fixed-effects would control for *all* potential bias that comes from the idiosyncrasies of the specific conflict by estimating all change 'within' these conflicts. To this end, all relevant time-invariant characteristics, be it the nature of the conflict—such as a religious or ethnic conflict—spheres of influence or local culture or political structures, are all controlled for. With such a model, we cannot estimate the effect sizes of individual characteristics—since we 'removed' them from the analysis. However, since this chapter is not interested in investigating the individual determinants of Council action but wants to investigate whether language has an effect on the strength of Council action, I would argue that this is completely in line with the research objective.

VI.4 Results

I proceed with my analysis in two steps. First, I investigate whether I can claim (sufficient plausibility) that thematic rhetoric has an independent effect on the type of UNSC actions. I do this by estimating 12 linear probability models in the main text (two for each of the six action types).[121] The first six models include all relevant independent variables and all controls explained above. The second wave of models repeats the analysis but adds *conflict-fixed-effects* to control for time-invariant bias that comes from the characteristics of the individual conflicts. In a second step, I follow my theoretical model by employing interaction effects between the dominant themes and E10 participation. The idea here is that specific dominant themes when

[121] The appendix offers 19 additional regression analyses which strongly support the main text findings.

told and retold by the E10, become signals of benign intention and increase the associated likelihood with action.

VI.4.1 The Independent Effect of Thematic Rhetoric

In all my main text models, I rely on linear probability models.[122] I choose linear probability models for two statistical reasons. First, for probabilities between 0.2 and 0.8, the relationship between probabilities and log odds is linear, so model outputs will be nearly identical (Hippel 2017).[123] Since linear models work much better with fixed-effects estimators, I opt for them as my baseline models. Second, the model interpretability with linear models is much higher as you can take coefficient sizes directly from the output table—adding additional value to the use of linear probability models. To facilitate comparison within models, I z-standardized all variables. For the main text models, I refrain from clustering my standard errors. I do this for two reasons. First, because I already use conflict-fixed-effects and have many resolutions-debates (467) nested in a few conflicts (31), the clustered standard errors would be off, most probably by a wide margin. Second, the newest econometric research has shown that when researchers use within estimators not a sample but a full population of interest (as in my case, all Security Council civil conflict interventions), combing fixed-effects with clustered standard errors is ill-advised as confidence intervals grow unnecessarily large (Abadie et al. 2022, 34). Still, even using clustered standard errors merely changes the statistical results.[124] Table 6.4 shows the first step of my statistical analysis.

[122] The appendix offers a replication using logit and rare events models.
[123] In the appendix, I provide evidence that the relationship between the logit models and linear probability models is indeed linear with my data.
[124] The only two notable changes occur in model 2 and model 8. In model 2, development is then only barely statistically significant towards calling for aid ($p = 0.12$) and in model 8 terrorism is then not significantly associated with release of a blockade. However, the latter finding is most certainly related to model misspecification as there are so few blockades in the data. Rerunning this result with rare event logits (firth logit) finds the same effect as in the main text. In every other case, the results are identical.

Table 6.4 Regression Output on Type of Council Action

	Aid		Sanction		PKO		Blockade		Outside Int.		Auth. Force	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
WMD	-0.003	-0.019	0.011	-0.027	0.034**	0.021	-0.003	-0.005	0.018	0.028	0.099***	0.054**
	(0.019)	(0.025)	(0.017)	(0.024)	(0.015)	(0.021)	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.018)	(0.023)	(0.017)	(0.022)
Human Rights	0.036	0.010	-0.012	0.003	0.013	0.022	-0.004	-0.009	0.059**	0.022	0.024	-0.012
	(0.026)	(0.036)	(0.024)	(0.033)	(0.021)	(0.030)	(0.008)	(0.012)	(0.025)	(0.033)	(0.024)	(0.032)
Women & Children	-0.031*	-0.036*	-0.040**	-0.070***	0.002	0.010	-0.004	-0.006	0.104***	0.054***	0.062***	0.030*
	(0.018)	(0.020)	(0.016)	(0.019)	(0.014)	(0.017)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.017)	(0.019)	(0.016)	(0.018)
Development	0.050***	0.044**	-0.015	-0.017	0.037**	0.044**	-0.002	-0.005	0.0005	0.018	-0.010	-0.013
	(0.019)	(0.022)	(0.018)	(0.021)	(0.015)	(0.019)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.018)	(0.021)	(0.018)	(0.020)
Terror	-0.041	-0.300	1.533***	1.340***	0.066	0.161	0.485***	0.197*	-0.173	-0.406	0.018	-0.333
	(0.308)	(0.359)	(0.286)	(0.336)	(0.248)	(0.299)	(0.099)	(0.117)	(0.295)	(0.332)	(0.287)	(0.320)
Security	0.020	0.271	-0.009	0.340	-0.317*	-0.390	-0.004	0.105	-0.025	0.082	-0.172	-0.170
	(0.233)	(0.301)	(0.217)	(0.282)	(0.189)	(0.250)	(0.075)	(0.098)	(0.224)	(0.279)	(0.218)	(0.268)
Council Preference Range	0.013	0.052	0.010	0.049	-0.005	0.006	0.006	0.013	-0.098***	-0.047	-0.038	0.044
	(0.036)	(0.039)	(0.034)	(0.036)	(0.029)	(0.032)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.035)	(0.036)	(0.034)	(0.035)
Civilian Deaths	0.009	-0.083**	-0.075***	-0.009	0.008	0.054	-0.022***	-0.004	0.006	0.013	-0.010	-0.013
	(0.019)	(0.042)	(0.017)	(0.039)	(0.015)	(0.035)	(0.006)	(0.014)	(0.018)	(0.039)	(0.018)	(0.037)
E10 Participation	-0.004	-0.0003	-0.0001	-0.008	0.001	0.002	-0.002	-0.001	-0.012	-0.015	-0.005	-0.008
	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.014)
Confl.Fixed-Effects	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Constant	0.141***	0.190	0.074***	0.221	0.105***	0.028	-0.003	-0.052	0.138***	0.070	0.141***	0.070
	(0.026)	(0.146)	(0.024)	(0.137)	(0.021)	(0.122)	(0.008)	(0.047)	(0.025)	(0.135)	(0.024)	(0.130)
N	467	467	467	467	467	467	467	467	467	467	467	467
R^2	0.050	0.201	0.085	0.216	0.030	0.135	0.069	0.203	0.088	0.288	0.102	0.312
Adjusted R^2	0.032	0.128	0.067	0.145	0.011	0.056	0.051	0.130	0.070	0.223	0.084	0.249
Residual Std. Error	0.341 (df = 457)	0.324 (df = 427)	0.317 (df = 457)	0.303 (df = 427)	0.275 (df = 457)	0.269 (df = 427)	0.110 (df = 457)	0.105 (df = 427)	0.328 (df = 457)	0.299 (df = 427)	0.318 (df = 457)	0.288 (df = 427)
F Statistic	2.690*** (df = 9; 457)	2.758*** (df = 39; 427)	4.699*** (df = 9; 457)	3.020*** (df = 39; 427)	1.594 (df = 9; 457)	1.705*** (df = 39; 427)	3.772*** (df = 9; 457)	2.783*** (df = 39; 427)	4.919*** (df = 9; 457)	4.433*** (df = 39; 427)	5.738*** (df = 9; 457)	4.970*** (df = 39; 427)

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Observing the table, I notice a number of important findings. Crucially, there is a systematic association between thematic rhetoric and Council action. Models 1 & 2 lend strong support to **Hypothesis 1b** in that development rhetoric during a debate increases the associated likelihood of calling for aid in a subsequent resolution. On average, a one-standard-deviation increase of development rhetoric (about 9% more development rhetoric) during a debate increases the associated probability of calling for aid by 4.4-%--even controlling for conflict characteristics, civilian casualties, and the range of Council preferences.

Similarly, development rhetoric during a debate is systematically associated with the authorization of a consensual peacekeeping mission (models 4 & 5). A one standard deviation increase in development rhetoric increases the associated probability of sending a peacekeeping mission also by 4.4%. These two findings fit very well with the logic of the development motive. Consensual peacekeeping missions often do not need to 'enforce peace' (in comparison to its forceful cousin under Chapter 7). Instead, they are meant to preserve and nurture peacebuilding efforts on the ground. A thematic language of development increases the probability of sending such a force because states who have used this rhetoric in the past to build up a war-torn society have to follow in the same way when this type of rhetoric is mentioned again. Since there are a number of legal precedents that have justified such types of interventions under the rubric of the development as well, its associated rhetoric quite plausibly increases the likelihood of such kinds of consensual intervention. Interestingly, the nature of the development theme—being cooperative and supportive in spirit—is also in line with its negative direction in regard to sanctions and blockades (although failing to reach statistical significance). Such measures imply coerciveness and punishment, something that is contradictory to a theme that emphasizes cooperation, capacity-building, and support.

Faring in a similar fashion, the WMD theme is systematically associated with Council action. Models 11 & 12 bestow strong evidence to **Hypothesis 1e** — demonstrating that weapons of mass destruction talk increases the associated probability for military intervention with "all necessary measures" by 5.4-% ($p < 0.05$). This finding is of considerable importance. Talking about WMD in a debate increases the associated likelihood of intervention—even controlling for latent characteristics in the respective conflicts. Since I also control for human rights talk

and civilians on which these weapons could be possibly used, it seems that policymakers in the UN respond more to the *talk* of weapons of mass destruction than to any human rights-related indicator. To me, this finding underscores the importance of threat perception during ongoing debates. Moreover, it highlights the importance of including linguistic predictors in models of Council action.

The strongest explanatory variable concerning the logic of protection norms comes from the women & children theme. On average, the rhetoric of women & children during a debate increases the associated probability of third-party military intervention by 5.4-% ($p< 000.1$) and of the outright use of force by 3-% ($p < 0.09$), respectively. Hence corroborating **Hypothesis 1d**. This finding is even more remarkable given the fact that the Human Rights theme fails to increase the likelihood of any of these actions.

In general, the human rights theme fails to reach my levels of expectation in almost all models.[125] This is disappointing from a normative standpoint. Human rights talk does not affect the decision-making of the Council. The Council may respond to the suffering population on the ground, but the talk of it fails to reach any satisfying level of statistical certainty. Therefore, H1c is false; the HR theme does not influence Council action in a subsequent resolution. This result echoes the finding of the last chapter—that HR rhetoric was also irrelevant to produce a signal of benign intention (it was actually harmful to unanimity).

In model 9, the HR theme is strongly associated with a mandate deferral. It is likely that this effect is driven by invoking R2P before authorizing third-party interventions, most controversially the Council authorized NATO to install a no-fly zone over Libya—which ended up producing a regime change and left the country with prolonged civil strife (Morris 2013; Thakur 2013). One possible explanation for the insufficient power of human rights rhetoric is that policymakers learned the lesson from Libya a bit too well (Thakur 2013, 70)—disregarding any form of human rights talk as a trojan horse for intervention. However, considering that human rights talk fails to promote *any* form of Council action (also shown in Chapter 5), rather underscores the idea that the 'dawn of human rights' is finally coming to an end (Moyn 2012). At least on a level of rhetoric, human rights

[125] With the exception of model 9 but the conflict-fixed-effects control for a suffering population in model 10, making the result insignificant again. This means that in this case, it is not so much the talk about human rights but the suffering population in civil conflicts that produced this effect.

language does affect any type of UNSC action. This finding might be slightly remedied by other research, showing that when NGOs pick up Security Council resolutions' texts that shame actors and call for human rights compliance, violations on the ground seem to decrease in frequency (Allen and Bell 2022).

Moreover, this finding should also be contrasted with the fact that women & children rhetoric does indeed increase the likelihood of third-party intervention and even the authorization of the outright use of force. It seems that some protection norms (Hultman 2013) are quite strong predictors of Council actions. This can be read in two ways. First, this could highlight that some norms have found more internationalization through a much wider diffusion globally (Acharya 2004). In this regard, the statistical power of the women and children theme would be an indicator of this dynamic. Such a diffusion may work particularly well within the Council as the concept of protecting vulnerable groups may be something globally recognized, something that unites a diverse Council. One could link this finding to the idea that a "habermasian lifeworld" is connecting diplomats in the Council with each other through such shared experiences as being a father or mother to a child (Habermas 1995[1981], 192). In an institution as diverse as the Security Council, such a shared experience might be the only commonality amongst diplomats and thus exert some considerable pull towards action. A critical take on this reading would be that the Security Council is essentially victimizing women here, infantilizing them with the suffix 'and children', ridding them of agency (Carpenter 2005; Shepherd 2008).

The second reading is that the theme of women and children is, of course, much less politicized than human rights. Women and children may be a 'common cause' where everybody can get behind. As such, the theme may offer human rights dissenting states like China and Russia the possibility to uphold a language that they favor without walking into dangerous precedent territory of human rights whilst still appearing to do 'some good in the world' (Foot 2020).

Terrorism rhetoric is also systematically associated with Council action. A one standard deviation increase in terrorism rhetoric (about 9.7% more terrorism talk) during an SC debate increases the associated probability of authorizing sanctions by an astounding 134-% ($p < 0.0001$). With a magnitude of that size, even after controlling for conflict characteristics, some omitted variable bias seems likely. However, after rerunning the model controlling for outlier observations identified by a QQ-plot (via the appendix item A.C.6.5.1.1) and using numerous alternative

model specifications, the size of the coefficient does not decrease significantly (in some models, it even increases). Therefore, we should take seriously the idea that terrorism rhetoric may increase the likelihood of sanctions drastically.

However, this may be a good moment to restate that my analysis cannot discern whether actors use language strategically or principled. In the scenario described above, this could mean that actors genuinely perceive terrorist threats to be paramount in dealing with civil conflicts. Or, it could also mean that speakers strategically use such thematic language, knowing that it will prime the Council to authorize sanctions while offering a malleable concept that may be used according to one's preferences.

Models 3 & 4 also demonstrate another interesting dynamic: Women & children rhetoric decrease the associated probability for authorizing sanctions by 4-% and 7-%, respectively. Although the finding may appear counterintuitive at first, there is actually sound literature that may help to explain it. In a nutshell, within the sanctions literature, there has been a heated debate about whether sanctions help or harm a civilian population (Crawford and Klotz 1999; Drezner 2003). Especially mass sanctions in opposition to targeted sanctions have been found to be detrimental to the well-being of a civilian population (Marks 1999). Since the UNSC has employed a wide range of mass sanctions, many of them targeting Iraq, the women and children rhetoric may plausibly decrease the probability of authorizing sanctions, as diplomats during a debate raised this kind of talk to warn of unintended victims of such a sanctioning regime—thereby hoping to reduce the likelihood of authorization. Such a use of women and children language would, again, also be in line with Laura Shepperd's argument that women and children are essentially victimized in UN discourse (Shepherd 2008)—when they appear in speeches, they are victims of actions and never agents of action.

Studying the Council preference range, I find that—although they just fail to reach acceptable levels of statistical certainty in most models (with p values between 0.12 and 0.2)—their relationship is in the right direction. Furthermore, model 9 shows that Council preference *heterogeneity* increases the probability of a mandate deferral, but its statistical effect is later eaten up by the conflict characteristics under study. In the appendix, I measure the direct effect of the Council preference range on SC action (controlling for civilian deaths and dominant rhetoric). There, Council preference homogeneity is statistically significantly associated with *each* type of

action ($p < 0.001$). This suggests that, although a crude measure, the preference range work in the intended direction, but taking the range of the entire Council may be too broad of a stand-in. Instead, in a renewed study, one should take the range of E10 preferences and the range of P5 over resolution-years separately.

The civilian deaths variable mostly fares in the right direction but is statistically insignificant (most models reach $\sim p < 0.15$) when controlling for conflict characteristics. The most likely explanation for this finding is twofold. First, the conflict characteristics actually overcorrect the statistical effect of civilian deaths. Secondly, taking the civilian deaths per conflict-resolution year may be an insufficient operationalization of suffering. Future analysis could try to use either the total deaths of combatants and civilians alike per conflict or use more fine-grained violence variables distinguishing between rebel-armed forces and government forces.

Without failure, the addition of conflict-fixed-effects has increased the respective fit of the model (indicated by the increased R^2 value). To the best of my knowledge, this chapter was the first to employ conflict-fixed-effects in a study of Council action. While country and year-fixed-effects are quite common in political science research, conflict-fixed-effects have not been used. The presented analysis has shown that they offer the added value of controlling for measurement bias when the unit of analysis is not applicable to conventional fixed effects estimators.

Disappointingly, E10 participation is not conducive to promoting Council action. The variable is insignificant in all 12 model specifications (and also in all 19 additional model specifications in the appendix). In contrast to facilitating unanimity in the Council, where actually the E10 participation is of considerable importance, their participation does not affect the strength of Council actions. This finding suggests that the E10's participation (and their rhetoric) is of particular value to the P5 when they want to make sure that 'everyone is on board', i.e., that there will be unanimity. But their participation seems of less relevance when they simply want to adopt actions and decisions. This relegates the E10 to the status of kingmakers of unanimity. But these are more or less poor kingmakers as their talk seems only to matter as long as the P5 want 15 affirmatives out of 15 votes. Nevertheless, it is conceivable that in many situations, the P5 actually seek a strong signal of benign intentions when authorizing actions. Therefore, the next section investigates what happens when dominant themes are being retold by the E10, i.e.,

it investigates whether dominant themes told by the E10 affect the type of UNSC actions.

VI.4.2 Dominant Themes, E10 Participation and the Types of UNSC Action

My theoretical framework placed a special emphasis on the role of the E10 in the domain of Council decision-making. In particular, a dominant theme told and retold by the E10 should become a signal of benign intention—increasing the likelihood that the Council will come to a swift decision. Since the P5 need four more votes to authorize any action, a dominant theme retold by the E10 should spur Council action, as the E10 reassure each other that the proposed course of action is 'benign' and worth supporting. To validate this theoretical expectation, I ran a series of additional linear probability models interacting E10 participation with a dominant theme. To do this, I transformed all my thematic talk into a marketplace of themes using the Herfindal-Hirschman-Index (HHI) introduced in Chapter 5. The HHI allows me to measure how divided the marketplace of themes is. Then, I ran a series of six linear probability models with the same specifications as shown above—regressing the interaction of a dominant theme with the participation of the E10 on the six types of Council action. Table 6.5 reports my findings below.

Table 6.5 Linear Probability Models on the Interaction between Dominance and E10 Participation

	Aid	Sanction	PKO	Blockade	Outside Int.	Auth. Force
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Dominance	0.025	-0.050***	-0.002	-0.007	-0.007	-0.036**
	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.014)	(0.006)	(0.017)	(0.016)
E10	0.001	-0.003	0.001	-0.005	-0.008	0.001
	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.013)	(0.005)	(0.016)	(0.016)
Civilian Deaths	0.005	-0.016	0.003	-0.004	-0.011	-0.023
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.012)	(0.005)	(0.015)	(0.015)
Council Preference Range	0.040**	0.033**	0.019	0.014**	-0.014	0.035**
	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.014)	(0.006)	(0.017)	(0.017)
Dominance*E10	0.017	0.0002	-0.013	-0.002	0.010	0.002
	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.013)	(0.005)	(0.016)	(0.015)
Constant	0.141***	0.122***	0.085***	0.013**	0.132***	0.127***
	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.013)	(0.005)	(0.016)	(0.015)
N	467	467	467	467	467	467
R^2	0.026	0.025	0.007	0.016	0.006	0.019
Adjusted R^2	0.016	0.015	-0.004	0.006	-0.005	0.008
Residual Std. Error (df = 461)	0.344	0.325	0.277	0.112	0.340	0.331
F Statistic (df = 5; 461)	2.500**	2.409**	0.634	1.535	0.559	1.772

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Disappointingly, there is no statistically significant effect of E10 participation—in tandem with a dominant theme—on the type of Council actions. This finding holds across all relevant types of Council action. Notably, the output table reports the slope of the predictors and *not* β-coefficients (effect sizes). This means that the numbers in the table indicate in which direction a change occurs (whether it is positive or negative) and whether this change in direction is statistically significant. It does *not* inform us whether this change results in a statistically significant effect. Yet, even when plotting the marginal effects of E10 participation on rising levels of a dominant theme, there is no discernable statistical effect on most UNSC actions.[126] The only notable effect exists between dominant levels of a terror theme and E10 participation. Indeed, a four-standard-deviation increase in terror dominance increases the effect of E10 participation on calling for aid by roughly 45%.[127] In other words, the E10's participation matters only when terrorism talk

[126] The appendix offers marginal effects for dominance interacting with E10 participation on all six action types.
[127] Available in item A.C.6.2.3.

becomes dominant—and then significantly increases the likelihood that the UN will require financial aid to mitigate a civil conflict. Curiously, however, when E10 participation is zero, dominance does have a negative direction for the authorization of sanctions and the outright use of force. This means that when the E10 do speak up and repeat a dominant theme, its direction becomes positive for these actions—but the net effect is still statistically insignificant. What is more, when E10 participation is zero, the slope of the Council preference range is highly associated with authorizing aid, sanctions, blockades, and the outright use of force. This further underscores the importance of the preferences of Council members—regardless of whether they speak up.

In spite of this finding, the E10's role in affecting the types of Council actions seems marginal. Only when the UNSC is calling for aid is when the E10 can bring some weight to the decision table. Consequently, an important part of my theoretical framework has been falsified. The E10's role in Council decision-making is of smaller importance than I assumed. Although rhetoric remains important as the analysis has offered strong (indirect) support for consistency pressure, it is not important that this rhetoric comes from the E10. Instead, the publicly presented theme is of central importance and explains the strong statistical significance of the linguistic variables. This also qualifies implications made concerning the value of E10 participation due to democratic or participatory norms within global governance.

Dominant themes have also not produced the intended effect I had hoped to discover. While dominance remains important in regard to unanimity production, it fails to achieve any notable levels of statistical significance in spurring Council action (apart from calling for aid). This qualifies my idea about dominance as an information transmission beltway. Dominance carries with it no impetus for action; rather, dominance is something that needs moderation. The conclusion will tie the findings of the Chapter together, offer arguments about alternative explanations, and will leave us with an outlook on the role of thematic rhetoric and E10 participation.

Conclusion

A small but burgeoning literature has examined rhetoric in IOs, including the UN, to estimate revealed preferences (Baturo, Dasandi, and Mikhaylov 2017) or to investigate the rise of norms through focal point references (Hanania 2021). My chapter has contributed to this work by examining the effects of thematic rhetoric on IO decision-making in a more systematic way. Specifically, I have examined whether thematic rhetoric in public Council debates matters for the Council's responses to civil conflict over the period 1995-2018.

I argued that thematic rhetoric in Council debates is not random but is systematically associated with various types of Council action in response to civil conflict decision-making (aid, blockade, sanction, consensual peacekeeping, third-party intervention, and the authorization of outright use of force). Because speakers want to adhere to an artificially consistent foreign policy track record over time, they may opt—again and again—for specific thematic language and specific Council actions. I used a novel machine-learning algorithm in combination with an original seed-word dictionary to quantify my theoretical concept of a marketplace of themes. Then, I used a series of regression models on an original Security Council conflict-resolution-debate dataset to estimate whether there is an *independent effect* of rhetoric on the strength of Council action. With overwhelming evidence, I discovered that, indeed, thematic rhetoric matters in the way the Council addresses and tries to solve these conflicts.

In particular, language on "women and children" were systematically associated with the strongest interventions—either by deferring the mandate to a third party—or by a robust peacekeeping mission, allowing for the use of force including "all necessary means". This finding remained robust against a series of model specifications, including controlling for suffering civilians in a conflict, a range of council preferences, and other latent conflict characteristics. On the whole, this finding demonstrates that policymakers in the UN pay increased attention to the language of women and children in conflict. The occurrence of such language may become a public justification and, over time, a determinant to intervene, even controlling against conflict characteristics that can be assumed to correlate heavily *with the actual number of women and children suffering in a conflict*. Such language may provoke policymakers to offer the strongest actions because they view women and

children as particularly vulnerable groups and operate on this assumption regardless of whether women and children are particular targets in a specific conflict (Carpenter 2003). This means that UN debates may be an imperfect representation of 'things on the ground' and may be a starting ground for genuine debate effects that would not exist if such debate was not happening. Thus, the presented evidence underscores the importance of including linguistic analysis (and variables) in models of Council action.

On the contrary, this finding could also be read in a countervailing way. Women and children could be seen as a cause 'where everybody can get behind' whilst having a markedly less politicized nature than, say, human rights. As such, women and children rhetoric might be precisely used when states already want to intervene, and the occurrence of such rhetoric is then not a cause for intervention but an effect of wanting to intervene in the first place. With observational data, like the one I am using, causality can run two ways. Further down, I will offer some arguments why I think that the effect might be more driven by psychological dynamics, but ultimately, I have to concede that I cannot 'prove' this with causal means. Therefore, this remains a limitation of the analysis.

What is more, other thematic language—namely talk of terrorism, development, and weapons of mass destruction increased the associated probability of authorizing sanctions, blockades, consensual peacekeeping missions, or the likelihood of the use of force, respectively. These findings further underscore the importance of thematic language in Council decision-making and beg the question of whether a similar dynamic could be observed in other multilateral organizations as well. Relatedly, these findings should spur some considerable debate in the fields of international negotiation (Allen and Yuen 2022; Risse and Kleine 2010), literature on the deliberative turn (Barabas 2004; Schimmelfennig 2003; Stephen 2015; Ulbert and Risse 2005), and UN scholarship in particular (Beardsley and Schmidt 2012; Binder and Heupel 2021; Coleman 2007; Mahmood et al. 2022; Voeten 2005).

Still, although almost all themes were statistically strongly associated with at least *one* type of conflict action, not all of them promoted interventions. Notably, human rights rhetoric failed to consistently increase any action (same as in Chapter 5), and security themes were only in one model associated with intervention (and then negatively so). This further qualifies the power of thematic rhetoric. In addition, none of the themes promoted *all types* of intervention. While this might be an

unrealistically strong expectation in the world of social sciences, the fact that particular themes were related to particular types of interventions offers an inductive answer to the question, why do themes work with some but not all types of intervention? After assessing the data, it seems that there is something like *a plausible sell* in the marketplace of themes. To be more concrete, it seems like no coincidence that a theme of development increases non-coercive cooperative intervention types (such as offering aid and consensual peacekeeping) and a theme that implies punishment and coerciveness, like terrorism, promotes sanctions and blockades. Thus, I submit that themes that have a particular pull towards actions must share some properties with the conflict of the ground—to appear as a logical or intuitive intervention tool. Following this line of reasoning, rhetoric and conflict characteristics seem to jointly affect Council actions. But what characteristics a theme and a conflict must share to appear 'authentic' remains unclear. This could suggest that speakers who frame a conflict during a debate, using particular thematic rhetoric, must be careful in the way he or she picks up characteristics of the conflict; otherwise, such rhetoric may appear contrived or dishonest. Future research could try to investigate this more nuanced relationship between rhetoric and conflict characteristics. Instead of assessing whether rhetoric matters (which this analysis has shown that it does), scholars could investigate the combination of conflict features with types of rhetoric, affecting Council interventions using more fine-grained units like arguments or justifications in line with conflict features.

Unfortunately, the analysis has also falsified some tenets of my theoretical framework. Against the conventional wisdom of great power domination (Bosco 2009; Bosco 2014; Voeten 2001), I build my framework on burgeoning scholarship on the importance of the Elected Ten Council members (Binder and Golub 2020; Carnegie and Mikulaschek 2020; Mikulaschek forthcoming). My argument was that through dominant thematic talk, the P5 signal to the E10 the benevolence of a proposed course of action. By doing so, the P5 seek to gather the consent of the E10 through public negotiations instead of winning it through private behind-the-scenes talk, where they would have to offer greater concessions and thus water down their agreed-upon win set. Yet, against my expectation, the E10's participation was—statistically speaking—insignificant in producing any viable Council action. Only in relation to calling for aid, and only when a theme of terrorism is dominant, do the E10 matter for the resolution of a civil conflict. This

stands in contradiction to my theoretical assumptions about their important role in UNSC decision-making. Owing to their negligible effect on Council action, the E10's importance is mainly visible in one domain; reaching unanimity. Owing to this result, the E10's role in institutional decision-making is on the sidelines. It seems that the powerful actors (P5), assumed to hold sway over most actions and decisions, deserve—after all—their prominent place in UN literature (Voeten 2001). The findings also relativize the importance of dominant themes in Council decision-making. Dominance itself is not associated with any of the six Council actions. This means that dominance itself is insufficient as an information transmission tool; it does not promote action.

Besides this finding, the importance of rhetoric in analyzing UNSC actions and decisions remains untouched. Evidently, rhetoric matters for the resolution of civil conflicts against a host of alternative explanations and controls. This is an important contribution to the study of IO decision-making and civil conflict research in particular. Language is not only a vehicle to transport information, but the wrong kind of language may prevent, and the right kind of language may promote interventions in civil conflicts.

Chapter 7 – Summary of the Dissertation and Conclusion

I have written this dissertation with two goals in mind: First, it should theorize and make plausible, against the backdrop of a literature that sees little importance for rhetoric in institutional decision-making, whether language can affect the actions and decisions of an institution—namely the UN Security Council. To this end, I built a novel theoretical framework that incorporates a triumvirate of language, dominance, and institutional actors (E10 vs. P5) to grasp the complex decision-making of the UNSC.

Second, my thesis needed to present rigorous empirical evidence that thematic rhetoric can indeed affect important outcomes in the world of international security politics. To this end, I have developed an original machine-learning model of thematic language, testing it in the domains of unanimity-reaching and UN intervention politics in civil conflict management. Through a series of important empirical findings, this dissertation has made considerable contributions to the field of peace and conflict studies, international organizations, in particular the United Nations, quantitate text analysis, and the studies of international security politics more generally. However, before I discuss the results' implications for future research and general limitations, I will give an abbreviated summary of those findings—starting with a novel way to approach an old organization in world politics.

VII.1 Reaping the Results

More than 75 years of UN research have produced an immeasurable mountain of social scientific studies. It is thus all the more surprising how profoundly little we know about the inner workings of this arcane institution (Gifkins 2021, 2). Some of this opaqueness is not by mere coincidence. The *provisional* rules of procedure are arguably precisely *provisional* as this informality affords the P5 with much wiggle room for the intricate (and hidden) conduct of power politics in the most powerful body of the United Nations system—the UN Security Council. So, the first contribution of this thesis was to 'unpack the black box' and to reveal some of the more intransparent aspects of UN decision-making. The process of revealing

started with a series of confidential background interviews with senior E10 and P5 members alike. Although there were many interesting insights, one pattern of responses stood out: Diplomats, regardless of rank and status, questioned the theatrical nature of the public Security Council debates. All of them saw value in these discussions as public reassurance of states' positions, publicly held motivations, and, most importantly, as a vehicle to get everybody on board. Moreover, diplomats hastened to question the supposed nature of 'backdoor collusion'. Ever since the end of the Cold War, they argued, this background imposition and the willingness to accept whatever is being dictated by the P5 has shrunken considerably. These assertions weighed heavy because there was a fascinating empirical conundrum: If background collusion has gone down ever since the end of the Cold War, how is it that unanimity rates are well above 90% for most years of UNSC voting?

The answer to that question may not simply be a mixture of aligned preferences and external shocks but could have something to do with the language spoken in public debates. This realization dictated a novel approach to understanding and evaluating these debates and marked a break with conventional UN scholarship. To the utter vast majority of the field, the purpose of these debates may lie in their post-hoc justificatory value (Binder and Heupel 2015; Claude 1966; Coleman 2017). Be it justifications for specific actions or the legitimation of the institution as a whole (Binder and Heupel 2021; Dellmuth and Tallberg 2020; Zürn 2018, 70–77). Most of the scholarship focuses on political statements after a vote has taken place. Accordingly, these studies assume that the only viable UN audience must be *extra-institutional*. My dissertation, however, shifts focus by taking the public debates seriously; it contends that there is an important *intra-institutional* audience, and this audience consists of other UNSC member states (Hurd 2005; Johnstone 2003). Public debates offer then three functions to this intra-institutional audience: They may be used to argue or bargain political courses of action, justify actions or positions, or convey a signal of information. The latter, I term the heuristic function of information transmission: It builds the theoretical core for my empirical chapters.

To make sense of the public debates, my theoretical framework distinguished two kinds of language; normative language that may publicly motivate actors and justify conduct, called *thematic rhetoric*, and such language that is merely used to maintain

rudimentary procedures in institutional workings, called *organizational rhetoric*. The crux of the matter is then to regard the public debates as a *marketplace of themes*. Actors try to sell themes in this institutional arena or are actively looking for themes to make sense of an underlying conflict. Actors, both the P5 and E10, fare in this way, because they know that there is a strong association between a dominant type of theme and chosen actions. Over time, language becomes associated with the kind of chosen intervention. If another conflict comes on the agenda, and actors talk similarly about it than the last, they may have to use similar instruments of intervention as they did before to achieve consistency between words and actions—otherwise, they suffer audience costs. This dynamic, which I term *consistency pressure*, is the underlying causal mechanism in my dissertation, connecting language with outcomes.

Because the egoistical pursuit of state actions is frowned upon, as the UN charter demands the impartial pursuit of international peace and security (and unlikely to be met with multilateral enthusiasm), states base their conduct on six overarching and recognized themes. The need to look for some other normative acceptable rubric to justify one's conduct, I call the *unsayable in world politics*. To use a way out, states justify their positions (and eventual resolutions) on recognized and reoccurring themes.

My theoretical chapter also provided scope conditions to observe these institutional and rhetorical dynamics. The first and most prominent was, of course, that any form of action is contingent on P5 agreement. While this does not hold for the debate, as agenda items can never be vetoed, to have any viable action, the P5 must agree amongst themselves—so that none of them draw a veto. This means that this dissertation is built on the scope condition of P5 agreement; everything that follows is contingent on it.

Moreover, the framework illustrates that external shocks can be sufficient but are not necessary to bring a theme to dominance. I formulated twelve hypotheses to explain causal relations between a type of thematic talk and action while paying attention to the institutional dynamics of unanimity and voting.

To detect, map, and assess themes (and their organizational rhetorical counterpart), I developed an original semi-supervised machine learning model in Chapter 3. This model is able to precisely and accurately distinguish between the six mentioned

themes and two types of organizational rhetoric. The F1 score for the seeded-LDA model lies at a remarkable 0.81—thus strongly outperforming the only other quantitative study of UN language. The model itself will be a significant contribution to the QTA scholarship and students of rhetoric and the United Nations.

Furthermore, in Chapter 4, I applied my original language model for the first time. To my surprise, the biggest share of UN rhetoric is organizational and not thematic in nature—with the procedural rhetoric category outperforming every other language type. When looking at the proportion of themes over time, I realized that there is a rhetorical differentiation taking place: Whereas the early 1990s and early 2000s were dominated by human rights and development talk, more recent years show a diversification of rhetoric. New security threats, like terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, have become strong contenders of top rhetoric. But also new protection norms, symbolized by a growing share of women and children rhetoric, have risen in prominence. Towards the end of the decade, however, regional security rhetoric, imploring the territorial integrity and sovereignty of nation-states, has begun to marginally outperform all other themes—serving as a rhetorical foreshadowing of the resurface of geopolitics in the 21st century. The decline of human rights rhetoric echoes other studies that have questioned whether the widespread and supposedly universal nature of human rights was not based on ambivalent data (Hafner-Burton 2019; Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui 2005; Moyn 2012), underscoring the impression that the enormous global momentum of human rights might have been a rather brief era in world politics (against this view see: Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 2013; Sikkink 2017)

On the level of institutional actors, there was also considerable variety when it came to the question of dominant themes. While the E10 mostly push for women and children and development rhetoric, the P5 often talk about security threats in the form of weapons of mass destruction. Particularly, Russia is of consideration here, where the WMD theme receives almost twice as much rhetoric as any other theme. With the ongoing Russian war of aggression in Ukraine in mind (and its justification by Russian government officials), this dominance of WMD might not be seen as a coincidence but could be seen as a strategic choice. All the while keeping in mind that the automated language model cannot decipher whether rhetoric is principled or strategic in nature. Yet, the model shows that Russia chose to spend most of its

talking on the theme of nuclear (or other weapons) of mass destruction. That in itself can tell us something about the importance that Russia places on this kind of rhetoric.

Unsurprisingly, China talks mostly about development, as it sees this kind of rhetoric to be the cornerstone of the UN mandate. In fact, China is very keen on downplaying the human rights aspect of the UN charter (Foot 2020)—something that is also displayed by their lower HR share. The United States is the only P5 country whose highest share belongs to human rights. Indeed, the United States was institutionally pushing for many human rights issues and has often been regarded as a strong supporter of human rights norms such as the responsibility to protect (Bellamy 2015, 170). In this context, other studies have shown that the US has the most positive tonal attitude towards the R2P compared to other P5 members (Scherzinger 2022b, 13). However, in recent years the outspoken support has marginally waned, and no other nations, at least within the UNSC, seem to have taken up a forerunner role in promoting the norm and the HR language more broadly.

Chapter 4 also added plausibility for some of the expectations and propositions of the theory chapter. For example, external shocks—just as assumed—were ideal candidates to sell a theme—contributing to their dominance. The 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, the 2nd Palestinian intifada, and the Syrian Civil War all spurred a related theme and led to massive theme re-telling. However, an external shock and the selected theme did not always neatly align—underscoring the fact that theme selection is largely a *political* choice and not simply a feature of the crisis characteristics. The Iraq war is a case in point, as the dominant weapons of mass destruction did not correspond to the existence of *actual* weapons of mass destruction on the ground. The upshot here is that policymakers choose a particular theme for political reasons and not simply as a derivate of the crisis characteristics. Hence, to answer the first research question, I provided plausibility that themes may become dominant due to external shocks, preference alignment via agenda items, or normative impetus (for example, the R2P). However, themes may not neatly correspond to the conflict characteristics of a crisis but are essentially politically motivated and framed. As such, themes are not merely a vehicle of functionalism in international relations (Slaughter 2009; Voeten 2021, 42–46). They do not simply

repeat who is suffering in a crisis, alerting diplomats to an effective conflict resolution.

In addition, Chapter 4 also demonstrated that Security Council attention towards conflicts—measured via verbal references—is not simply a function of human suffering, i.e., conflicts where the most people die receive the most attention. If this was the case, the Syrian Conflict should feature roughly 37 times as much as the conflict between Israel and Palestine. The fact that Israel Palestine is more referenced and features twice as much on the UNSC agenda shows again the prominence of politics and interests guiding rhetoric and thus Council attention.

When further observing UNSC agenda items and dominant themes, one finding stood particularly out: The women and children theme and the theme of terrorism, in addition to WMD, were independent agenda items. Keeping in mind that women and children were most homogenously shared amongst the P5, and interest constellations appear to be homogenous in the case of WMD, these descriptive findings were early indicators that these three themes might be particularly good sells in the marketplace of themes.

Moreover, the case of women and children is an interesting one. As women and children are a much less politically loaded instrument as compared to human rights—the scores among the P5 are much more even in their distribution—women and children may represent a cause where 'everybody can get behind' while offering the benefit of doing 'something good in the world'. Since the UNSC keeps the language of women and children purposefully distinct from human rights rhetoric, this kind of rhetoric, and its corresponding agenda item, offer a way for the human rights critical, or at least R2P critical states—to talk about related issues without the political costs or baggage associated with HR rhetoric.

In Chapter 5, I turned to the question of unanimity production in the Council. I was able to show through the use of rationalist institutionalist literature and the logic of market concentration indexes, the so-called Herfindahl-Hirschman-Index (HHI), that unanimity is actively produced through the public Security Council debates. I demonstrated this by gathering novel UNSC country voting data for all UNSC debates and resolutions from 1995 to 2018 (almost 28,000 country votes). By leveraging my seeded-LDA model, I discovered that average dominant themes

are indeed hurtful to unanimity, as neither a signal of benign intention sets in nor states may individually pick and choose their preferred theme.

Against my theorizing, I found that dominance does not have a curvilinear relationship with unanimity but forms a distinctive U-curve shape. This finding suggests that unanimity is most likely in two scenarios. *Either on very low dominance*, so a debate where speakers talk about a number of themes or a debate where speakers *focus on only one theme*. This falsifies my assumption that too much dominance can threaten outlier positions.

Instead, I discover that very high dominance makes unanimity most likely. This is an important finding which qualifies my assumptions about consistency pressure in a different way. Consistency pressure was said to function on two levels between individual rhetoric and action and collective rhetoric and action. In my reading, the finding underscores the two levels of consistency pressure but in an unexpected way. That is, the UNSC debates seem to have an idiosyncratic nature, whereby speakers seem to anticipate whether this is a moment of individual or collective justification for action and positions. In debates where everyone can justify their course of action on their desired theme—in a sense, 'you justify on your normative grounds, and I justify on mine'—leads to a high likelihood for unanimity, *as every state can conform to their individual rhetorical track record* (and thus consistency pressure), pleasing domestic audiences and avoiding audience costs.

Or, speakers anticipate over the course of a debate that *one* theme is rising to dominance, and when enough speakers are on board, bring it jointly to high dominance. In such situations, the collective pressure for consistency might be higher than the individual need for consistency. This means that either states with outlier positions yield towards, the collective and repeat the highly dominant theme, or states with outlier positions remain silent but still vote affirmatively in the end to avoid the costs of going against the collective. Because there are few debates with such high scores of dominance, it could mean that there are few instances where 'everybody can get on board'. To put it in another, most of the time, individual consistency trumps collective consistency.

Crucially, I found that the highest likelihood for unanimity is achieved when the E10 repeat a theme—bringing it to high dominance. As such, Chapter 5 has

produced considerable empirical support for the logic of a signal of benign intention.

Yet, what language the E10 repeat is also meaningful. A dominant WMD theme or a dominant terrorism theme increases the likelihood of unanimity by 25 or 23 percentage points, respectively. Interestingly, the HR theme is consistently negative in its ability to influence unanimity, even when reaching dominance. As the R2P loads as the 7th highest feature of that theme (in this application), this effect can be explained by the conflicting perceptions of R2P within the UNSC but the P5 most of all.

What is more, I also was able to refute some of the most prevalent alternative explanations in the literature. Preference homogeneity cannot fully explain the unanimity production in the Council. Furthermore, because even a divided marketplace of themes, so a divided debate where several themes are widely shared, was statistically significant when producing unanimity, we can rule out the idea that the P5 simply tell the E10 behind closed doors which theme to share. If this was the case, why would they not all use the same theme to make a coherent story credible? Instead, the chapter finds, as my hypotheses predicted, that dominance, E10 participation, external shocks, and preference homogeneity all affect the likelihood of unanimity. Thus, rhetoric is indeed an additional important factor to consider in unanimity production. This finding should spur related research in other international organizations, priming scholars to include linguistic variables in the analysis of institutional decision-making.

In Chapter 6, I turned towards one of the most important aspects of UN decision-making. That is, I turned towards civil conflict management. My theory has predicted that rhetoric affects all aspects of decision-making. Civil conflict management should be a hard case for this argument because the assumed costs for such kinds of intervention are presumed to be especially high. This means that if rhetoric has a bearing on outcomes here, it is reasonable to assume it affects other types of UN decision-making as well.

To begin, I started this chapter by compiling a novel *UN conflict-resolution-debate* database. Using excellent off-the-shelf data (Benson and Tucker 2022; Schönfeld et al. 2019) and my original UN resolution debate corpus (Scherzinger 2021), I was able, by utilizing a pattern matching algorithm, to build a database that gives out

each UN civil conflict, its debate, and final resolutions, including the measures taken for each resolution from 1995-2018. This database is the third data contribution of my dissertation project (next to the language model and the voting data) and will hopefully be of great use for civil war, peace and conflict, and international security scholars more broadly.

The Chapter then unfolded in two steps. First, I survey extant civil conflict research to arrive at a comprehensive list of salient predictors of UN intervention. After I restated the hypotheses from my theory chapter, I used a series of panel regression models to assess whether thematic rhetoric affects any or all of six types of UN action: Calling for aid, authorizing sanctions, deploying a consensual peacekeeping mission, issuing a blockade, deferring the mandate to another organization, or allowing for a military intervention "with all necessary measures". To control for latent conflict characteristics, I use *conflict-fixed-effects* in all my 12 main text models. Moreover, I control for preference alignment by taking the range of ideal point preferences (Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten 2017) within the council for each resolution-debate, and the number of civilian deaths per resolution year.

With overwhelming support, I find that, indeed, rhetoric is systematically associated not only with some types of conflict actions but with *every single type* of intervention. This is a major finding for the field and underscores the current gap in the civil conflict literature. Most notably, a one-standard-deviation increase in women and children rhetoric is associated with a 4.7 percent increase in deferring the mandate to a third party and by 3 percent in the case of military intervention ("with all necessary measures). Similarly, a one-standard-deviation increase in WMD rhetoric is associated with a 5.4-% increased probability of intervening militarily. These findings are all the more remarkable, given that I control for a host of alternative explanations. While these findings underscore the importance of linguistic variables in the analysis of civil conflict interventions, none of the selected themes affected all types of intervention. After assessing all the data, I offered an inductive explanation: speculating that thematic rhetoric and conflict characteristics have to share some properties to be a *logical sell* for a specific intervention measure. However, which properties are conducive towards a rhetorical sell remains unclear and should be the target of future research and systematic analysis.

Much to my surprise, the models in Chapter 6 give rise to another interesting aspect: Language does not only promote action but also appears to be, in some cases, a

roadblock toward authorization. For example, women and children rhetoric is statistically significantly associated with a *decreased* probability of authorizing sanctions in a civil conflict. Meaning that if a debate revolves around the theme of women and children in conflict, sanctions become less likely, not more likely. This finding can be explained by referring to the idiosyncrasies of the sanction's literature—particularly to the fact that mass sanctions have been shown to be immensely detrimental to the well-being of the overall population of a target state. Accordingly, women and children talk may make the authorization of sanctions less likely, as policymakers worry that women and children are going to be the ones who suffer the most from such actions. Relatedly, the finding appears to bolster Lauren Shepherd's (Shepherd 2008) argument about women and children being victimized in UN discourse. When they appear as the subject of deliberation, then only as victims of actions and rarely as agents of action (Shepherd 2008, 389).

Owing to this result, rhetoric in the UNSC seems to resemble a double-edged sword: On the one hand, thematic talk may promote specific actions, depending on the theme for action and the rationale of the instrument of intervention. On the other hand, rhetoric can also thwart action in that a theme of women and children can prevent the authorization of sanctions.

Turning towards the second step of Chapter 6, I was able to falsify some important notions of my theory chapter. I had theorized that a dominant theme told and retold by the E10 should become a *signal of benign intention*, thereby proving the 'worthiness to support a proposed action or decision' and increasing the likelihood of Council action even in civil conflicts. To my dismay, in the issue area of civil conflict management, the collected evidence did not support this claim. Although the E10 participation was conducive to authorize actions (yet statistically insignificant), a dominant theme, told and retold by the E10, did not affect the authorization of any of my six types of conflict actions—with the only exception stemming from offering aid. Only when authorizing a call for aid from the entire UN membership, not just the UNSC, are the E10 important and their dominant theme statistically significantly associated with that type of civil conflict intervention.[128]

Unfortunately, this falsifies a central tenet of my theoretical framework. Thematic dominance cannot be regarded as desirable for the decision-making of the UNSC

[128] And only if a terrorism theme becomes dominant.

in all issue areas. While it may be helpful in creating unanimity in the Council, on either low dominance or through high E10 participation (and high thematic dominance), it does not serve as an important vehicle for information transmission in civil conflict management. Against my theorizing, this means that dominance is rather something to be avoided in civil conflict debates and fares poorly in creating a *signal of benign intention* in this domain of intergovernmental decision-making.

With a view toward my second research question, namely, *what is the effect of dominant themes*, I have to report that average dominance may threaten unanimity in the Council. However, this effect can be ameliorated by a retelling of a theme by the E10. Regarding civil conflict management, it remains insignificant towards action. Thus, dominant themes leave us with an ambivalent impression. They are rubrics through which we can understand a debate dynamic and realize unanimity in institutional decision-making, but on the level of conflict intervention, they remain inconsequential. Rhetoric, in general, affects intervention outcomes, such as the authorization of sanctions, consensual peacekeeping, blockades, mandate deferrals, or even military intervention, but a dominant theme plays no major role in such a decision-making process.

Hence, my dissertation also leaves us with an updated view regarding the E10. Burgeoning scholarship has indicated that the E10 are wrongfully underestimated players in UN research (Binder and Golub 2020; Carnegie and Mikulaschek 2020; Mikulaschek forthcoming). My study has only found mixed support for this assertion. It is certainly correct that the E10 and their rhetoric and participation are influential for unanimity production—but all their talk seems largely inconsequential towards civil conflict interventions.

Of course, civil conflict management is not the only domain of maintaining international peace and security. After all, the UN can be regarded as a multi-issue area IO, setting the agenda for many other issue areas as well. Still, after surveying all the evidence, it is hard to shake the feeling that the E10 matter precisely when the P5 are 'willing to go the extra mile' and listen to what they have to say. It is no coincidence that the E10 are conducive to unanimity production and offering aid, as these are two instances where the E10 present not simply themselves and their interests but are stand-ins for the international community as a whole.

However, when things turn immensely costly, such as in civil conflict interventions, the P5 seem less inclined to search for themes, caring what the Elected Ten and, thus, the international community may think.

There is an argument to be had that the P5 cannot push the boundaries of this behavior endlessly, as their legitimacy would start to crumble, eroding the effectiveness and, thus, the usefulness of the institution (Mahmood et al. 2022, 574). But where exactly these boundaries are to be drawn remains an open empirical question. Civil conflict interventions seem to be at least a pretty hard line to be crossed.

Nevertheless, Chapter 6 has, once again, reinforced the notion that rhetoric is an important factor in the study of world politics. Civil conflict management, in particular, is one area where the right kind of rhetoric may promote and the wrong kind of rhetoric may prevent action. Thus, the focus on rhetoric in international security politics should finally receive the scholarly attention that it deserves.

VII.2 A Word of Caution – Limitations of this Dissertation

While I have dealt with limitations to the analysis in each empirical chapter, I want to reserve some additional space for larger limitations of the chosen research design here as well. The largest limitation to my study lies in the fact that any quantitative text analysis, be it any of three classifications methods or any other method from the school of natural language processing, faces the problem that it cannot decipher whether language (and therefore a speaker) is principled or strategic in nature. Apart from many other reasons, this is also a core argument for why *quantitative* content analysis will never fully replace *qualitative* content analysis (nor should it). And even with qualitative content analysis, the character of rhetoric—whether genuine or not—has to be inferred or adduced with great care (Stephen 2015, 780)—often remaining an insurmountable challenge (Deitelhoff and Müller 2005). This means that my original language model has to avoid the pitfalls of intentionality and has refrained from making statements about the nature of rhetoric. Indeed, my theoretical framework remained equally agnostic towards the questions of arguing, bargaining, or rhetorical entrapment.

Accordingly, the fact that thematic rhetoric is consistently associated with either the production of unanimity in the Council or the type of civil conflict intervention

could be read in two different ways. Either language is consequential towards outcomes because speakers move towards actions since the public motive embedded in normative claims—most of all, the call for the protection of women and children in conflict—alerts them towards their normative convictions. Or, strategic actors—perhaps the P5 most of all—anticipate that this type of language is particularly conducive to justifying strong breaches of peace and, thus, strong interventions and uses it to get everybody else on board. Perhaps, there is even agreement towards intervention in the first place by all Council members, and hence every member state is simply looking for that type of theme which will, in their eyes, be the best legitimation strategy—thereby landing on the themes of women and children, terrorism, or WMD.

Of course, these kinds of questions are not new to empirical research relying on observational data. To put it in another way, with such data, it is hard to know in which way the causal wind is blowing. Endogeneity is the looming problem in the room. Do women and children produce a genuine debate effect prompting military intervention, or do strategic states who want to intervene military simply choose to talk about women and children, hoping to appease external audiences?

I have provided empirical evidence, particularly through the mapping of unanimity in Chapter 5 and the background interviews introduced in Chapter 1, showing that I doubt that the causal arrow runs against language. Themes, oftentimes, do build up over time. If everybody simply wanted to intervene from day one, why even bother to steer a debate over days, weeks, and sometimes months? Diplomats could simply hash things out behind closed doors, then open the floor and talk about the one theme they could all agree upon. Even when we assume that the entire debate is an orchestration—an argument against which all of my interview partners spoke out— then there remains another rebuttal: Even a divided marketplace of themes was one productive unanimity equilibrium. This means that the E10 and their rhetoric and participation matter even when *not everyone agrees* on the same theme.

Yet, these illustrations and my reasoning fall in the universe of correlational evidence (albeit with strong statistical support). Thus, I have to concede the point that I cannot *prove* this with causal evidence. Such evidence could only be provided through experiments undertaken in the Security Council. And, given the nature of diplomacy and the secrecy of this institution, I doubt that such evidence will be obtained in the foreseeable future.

Even without causal experiments, I have given surmounting (statistically significant) correlational evidence that rhetoric affects actions. Because all my data are observational in nature, I needed to present a causal mechanism that connects language with UNSC actions. Thus, I proposed the logic of *consistency pressure* connecting language with actions forming recognized precedents over time. Implicitly this dissertation has time and again supported the logic of consistency pressure, such that we should no longer simply assume it but should move towards testing it directly in the future in the UN and other international organizations.

Lastly, there is another, and perhaps most important limitation to acknowledge: Although at times my writing may have seemed as if rhetoric could be perfectly untangled from the things it describes, i.e., that it is the *language* of women and children that affects outcomes and not the women and children themselves, I have to acknowledge that I cannot perfectly untangle the two in a rigorous statistical fashion. This is not only a question of missing data—although we do miss data on the number of women and children suffering in a conflict or the exact number of chemical or biological weaponry in many civil conflicts—but more a question of plausibility. At the end of the day, all statistical models are merely meant to represent the empirical world as it is. As there will never be a debate where we can *only* observe the effect of language (without also observing the thing it describes), we won't be able to fully unentangle the effect of rhetoric on actions.

Therefore, the answer to the question of whether it is the language driving the empirical bus or simply the conflict characteristics it describes will be: Probably a combination of both—but this is hard to prove empirically. Mainly, however, I have written this dissertation against a fulminant version of either one. It is, most likely, neither only language nor only functionalism that connects rhetoric with interventions[129]. This would also be a misreading of my research design. The aspirations of this dissertation are actually much smaller; all my writing is meant to show is that there is strong plausibility to consider rhetoric as an important complementary variable in the study of world politics.

[129] Functionalism understood here as acting according to what is functionally the best solution to the conflict.

VII.3 Placing the Findings in Greater Context

While the previous section has given a thorough impression of the depth and scope of my findings, I want to turn now over to elucidate some of the bigger implications of my thesis—situating it in the broader IO literature, including peace and conflict studies.

The most glaring gap I addressed consists of the fact that most scholars seem to think that there is only one audience important to UN conduct and that this audience must be external. Shifting the research focus towards an *intra-institutional* audience within the UNSC is nothing particularly idiosyncratic towards the UN. In other words, future research could realize that whenever there is an institutional organ that deliberates as a function of its mandate, these deliberations can reveal important insights into the decision-making of its larger institution. Whether done in large-n studies quantitively or qualitatively, the turn toward internal decision-making practices would be well worth investigating. Such research would contribute to a more complete understanding of institutional decision-making in international organizations. Some pioneering studies exist for the UN (Gifkins 2021; Welsh and Zaum 2013) or the Fed (Fligstein, Stuart Brundage, and Schultz 2017), but this could be applied to a whole set of other institutions, like the Human Rights Council, the IMF, World Bank, ILO, African Union, and many more. Thus, the first systematic implication is that there may be a variety of audiences relevant to the decision-making and legitimation practices of international organizations, and not all of them have to be external. A theoretical as well as empirical research program dedicated to the study of a variety of audiences might well advance the literature on international institutions and political rhetoric in general.

What is more, such a research program could easily be united with literature focusing on legitimation and legitimacy (Dellmuth and Tallberg 2020; Goddard 2006; Zaum 2013; Zürn 2018, Chapter 3; 2021). To do this, however, one has to necessarily view authority and legitimacy to be partly distinct from another (Zürn, Binder, and Ecker-Ehrhardt 2012, 72).[130] Whether or not a body such as the UNSC or the Human Rights Council is perceived to be legitimate from an intra-institutional audience vs. an extra-institutional audience essentially becomes an empirical question. Following this reasoning, whether the democracy deficit of

[130] For an opposing view see: Kustermans and Horemans (2022).

some prominent IOs (Kreuder-Sonnen 2021; Zürn 2004) is equally felt 'on the inside' is another important empirical question. Relatedly, one could also wonder whether this perceived lack or surplus of legitimacy is something like a reservoir that could be replenished over time. If such is the case, then the next question becomes who does this replenishing? Essentially, the question would be, who confers legitimacy to and who withholds legitimacy from intra-institutional organs or bodies?

Another intuitive avenue for future research lies in a more minute dissection of rhetorical instruments of signaling and persuasion. While themes are apt signaling devices conveying lots of information in an efficacious way, sometimes it would be interesting to know the *exact piece of information* that changes a diplomat's mind. While capturing persuasion in action might be nearly impossible to observe, we could try to mine the specific *arguments* before and after voting. Such minute language processing has been so far technically unimaginable, but the newest advances in the domain of natural language processing give warranted hope that such techniques will be possible in the near future—the field of *argument mining* being only one possible avenue here (Schaefer and Stede 2021). With such a research program, we could find more nuanced support for the hypothesis that there is something as an argument that changes the course of policy (perhaps history).

Speaking of persuasion and behavior by policymakers more broadly, there is a startling lack of political psychologic literature in usage within IO research. Indeed, assuming that women and children do affect the likelihood of military intervention not only due to strategic purposes but due to genuine debate effects—requires a logic of unintended consequences. These unintended consequences could be grounded in a psychological effect (Conover 1988; Dickinson 2020; Stein 1988). For example, it is plausible that policymakers are *unintentionally receptive* towards a W&C theme because this is a group of individuals that they unconsciously hold to be particularly vulnerable. As such, there might be a marked distinction between their *perception* of how many women and children are suffering in a conflict vs. the actual number of women and children being affected by conflict. This misaligned threat perception might be a psychological causal mechanism lurking in the background (Stein 1988). Of course, at this point, this kind of reasoning remains speculation—alerting us to the importance of including psychological analysis and psychological experiments in the study of IOs.

Following the topic of psychology gives rise to another important insight; consistency pressure might derive some causal force from it as well. I have said earlier that consistency pressure operates on two levels—from individual rhetoric to action and from institutional (collective) rhetorical precedent to action. Surely, the pressure of precedent compels actors, time and again, to select such rhetoric that there is an artificial consistency between words and actions out of fear of audience costs. But this fear should be disproportionate concerning specific actors. Surely, the danger of audience costs should loom larger for the P5 (as these sit on the Council indefinitely) than the E10 (who only serve two years).

What is more, the P5 should also feel the pressure of past collective precedents more acutely, seeing that they were responsible for creating them back in the day. The same cannot easily be said about the E10. Certainly, there are some countries like Japan, Brazil, or India that sit disproportionally often in the UNSC, but whether they were partly contributing to the creation of a specific precedent at a particular point in time is an open question.[131] Rather, it seems that there is a psychological underbelly affecting their heightened need for consistency that can only partially be explained by the shared pressure of the mandate and the logic of audience costs. Since I believe that consistency pressure does not only affect the UN but could work in the background of any organization with a public venue, trying to assess this via a research program involving literature on the psychology of decision-making could be an important contribution to the field. It would also contribute to a new and rich vein in IR research unpacking the black box of audience costs (Kertzer and Brutger 2016).

The focus on rhetoric also brings to light some other important aspects of intervention politics. Throughout all of my writing, I have worked with a benign view toward global governance as a whole and the United Nations in particular. But the world is not only made up of multilateralist actors—seeking the blessing of a multilateral security organization when opting to intervene in another country. Accordingly, it would be fascinating to discover how non-authorized military interventions are communicated to a broader public and justified toward potential allies. Can such justifications serve as cover for coveted allies—allowing them to

[131] The top five E10 seat holder are: Japan (11 terms), Brazil (10 terms), Argentina (9 terms), India (8 terms), and Pakistan (7 terms). Data last updated Jun 18, 2020. Data taken from: https://www.statista.com/chart/14180/non-permanent-un-security-council-members-with-most-years-served/

continue to cooperate with an aggressor state? Can such actors or coalitions lower the costs of sanctions through the use of rhetoric? Which themes are dominant when such interventions are justified? These are a bundle of possible research questions that would greatly improve our understanding of the interplay between rhetoric and the politics of intervention.

Additionally, through the publication of my three original data sources (a semi-supervised language model for UN rhetoric, UNSC country voting data for 28,000 votes between 1995- 2018, and a conflict-resolution-debate database for the same years), I hope that other scholars will find many more ways to engage with political rhetoric and institutional decision-making, unearthing novel, and innovative ways in the study of the UNSC. In the next and final section, I will provide an outlook for the organization against the background of an age of renewed geo-conflict.

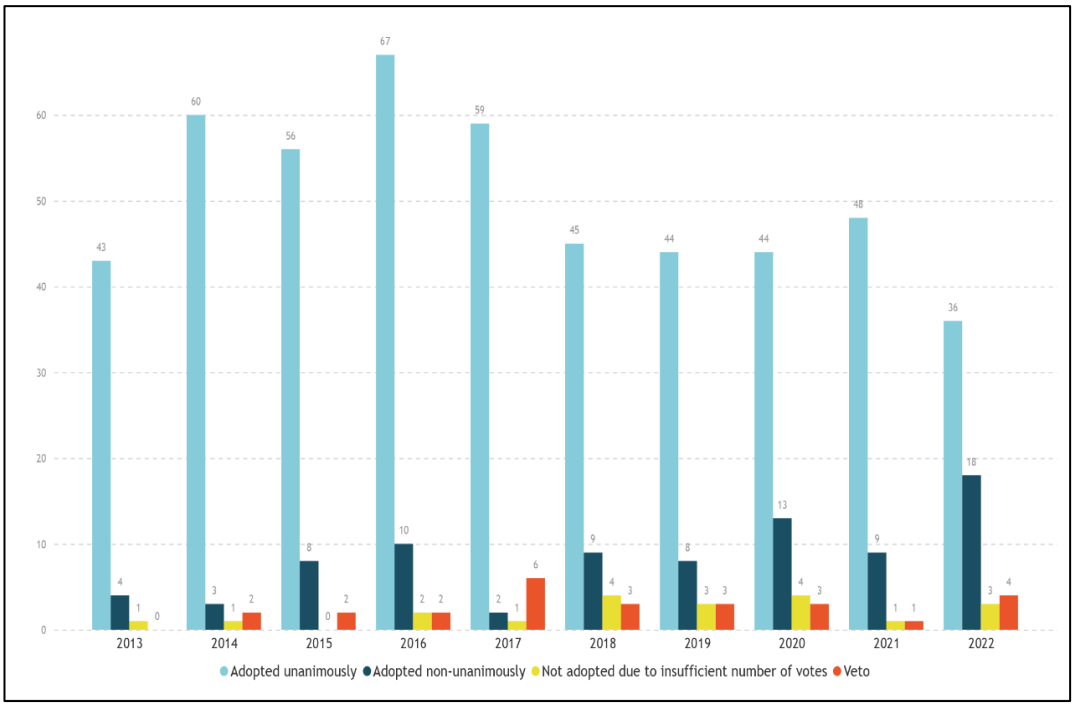
VII.4 Outlook – Quo Vadis UNSC?

Most of this dissertation has been written during the settings of two prominent crises; the global corona pandemic and the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine. Likewise, the UN, and the UNSC, most of all, had to deal with these crises. After some initial delay in setting up digital communication channels, the UNSC actually handled the two most affected years of the Corona pandemic quite well. Both in the number of meetings and resolution output (see figure below), the UNSC came close to its pre-Corona numbers.

While we still lack the transcribed debate records of these years in an accessible and systematic way, the UN itself provides some limited preliminary data on its resolution output for the years after, from which we can try to infer a glimpse into the future of maintaining international peace and security.

For example, observing Figure 7.1, we realize that the unanimity rate has fallen dramatically. Whereas the rate stood at an average of 92-% from 1995 to 2018, in 2022, the rate plummeted to 67-%. Granted, this substantial drop is the biggest in size since the end of the Cold War, but the silver lining here is, seen from an institutionalist perspective, that the rate is not zero. That this is indeed the case was not clear in the immediate outbreak of the war. Another plausible scenario could have been that the P5 are so split in their positions over the war that Russia or the United States simply veto everything that comes from the other aisle.

Figure 7.1 UNSC Resolution Output 2013-2022



Source: UN Security Council in Review: https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/highlights-2022

First empirical evidence, however, tells a remarkably different story. While the unanimity rate is down, the UNSC productivity has not ground to a halt. Importantly, the Council did provide crucial humanitarian aid in a corridor to the Syrian city of Idlib, renewed a UN observer mission in Haiti (in what could be viewed as the American backyard), and authorized renewals of Chapter 7 military interventions in South Sudan, DRC, Somalia, CAR, and Mali (United Nations Security Council 2022a). Given that P5 tensions might be at a long-time high, this is a surprisingly stable trend of Council output.

Against prophecies of doom and calls of a new Cold War stands another figure: In 2022 alone, the UNSC authorized 28 Chapter 7 resolutions. If we compare this number against the meager 22 Chapter 7 resolutions, which were authorized during the *entire* Cold War period (Voeten 2005, 530),[132] we get a solid impression of how different this current era of geopolitics seems to be compared to the last. The Council is very much active on mandate renewals, even if this includes the strongest breaches of peace missions, with the full authority to use "all necessary measures". This preliminary evidence, of course, is only a snapshot of ongoing developments.

[132] And most of these measures were sanctions. In fact, the only two interventions with military measures were in Congo and Korea Voeten (2005, 530).

Still, even with its limited explanatory power, we can see that there are sharp institutional distinctions between the Cold War and the current emanating phase of geopolitics.

I have underscored earlier that this dissertation has been written with at least one major scope condition in mind: namely, P5 agreement. Without it, no action is possible in the chambers of the Council. But still, even with a war of aggression started by one of its permanent members, the Council seems to have come to an agreement on some of the major issues of its mandate.

Rhetoric can, once again, be a window into the decision-making rationale of some Council members. For example, both the United States and, to some important degree also, China have placed a lot of rhetorical weight on the notion that either one (and neither the other) are the *true* guarantor of international order. Especially towards countries of the relational umbrella term, the so-called Global South (Berger 2021), both states have maintained that they will continue and assist them in their strive towards a future marked by economic growth and societal well-being. Abandoning such promises and failing to renew missions in CAR, DRC, and South Sudan, to name just a few, could be politically costly—as consistency pressure would affect them negatively.

This suggests that the UNSC and the P5, most of all, will continue to cooperate and support UN missions, particularly in countries of the Global South, forming one issue area where agreement is likely, and preferences seem—almost paradoxically—homogenous enough to allow for action.

The way how these actions are then justified may be written on another card. If the war in Ukraine is going to continue, the rhetorical track record and the attempts of justification for actions and positions should diverge over time. The fact that Russia, at the time of writing this dissertation, keeps referring to the war as a "special military operation" (PBS 2022) is a case in point for the *unsayable in world politics*. Relatedly, it seems plausible that the UNSC may continue to achieve actions and decisions in areas that enjoyed unanimity before (such as the case of terrorism), but in areas where there was no common ground, future problem-solving seems less likely. Thus, conflicts between the permanent powers will be excluded from any viable Council action. This, however, is not a new practice but has been the way since the founding of the institution. For some scholars, this does not necessarily

harm the legitimacy of the Council as long as the remaining great power agreement does prevent another great power war (Voeten 2005, 529). The justifications for interventions, if and when they happen, will probably be more diverse in the future than in the past—leading to different routes for future rhetoric and, because of consistency pressure, different types of action.

Concerning the E10, their future role seems even more uncertain than before. My analysis has found mixed evidence for their importance in institutional decision-making. Their clearest impact comes in the form of unanimity production and the calling for aid in civil conflict interventions. If unanimity is a signal of benign intention, alleged to boost compliance by third parties (Krisch 2008, 7; Voeten 2005, 533–34), the E10 should remain important, maybe now more than ever, as the permanent members may want that the few actions on which they can actually agree to be carried out effectively. Thus, giving the E10 some leeway in the marketplace of themes.

In civil conflict interventions, however, their rhetoric was inconsequential towards conflict resolution. Since the background quarrels between the P5 should increase substantially, it seems even less likely that they are willing to renegotiate their win-set in public. This suggests that on issue areas where the E10 were marginalized before, the foreseeable future looks pretty dire for them. Yet, these statements should not be taken to downplay the procedural importance of the E10. After all, it is to their testament that the Ukrainian war is even discussed in the chamber of the Security Council. Since procedural matters can never be vetoed, the E10 continuously voted to bring the war to the Council agenda time and again. Without the E10, no word would be spoken on the topic of the war in the Security Council.

As long as the UNSC continues to function, holding debates and authorizing action, we, as the scholarly community, can use its rhetoric as a window into their decision-making. Against opaque rules of procedure, changing interest constellations, and a myriad of external shocks, rhetoric can be our one constant—giving us access to an arcane institution. And as long as states have to justify their conduct on something other than their parochial interest, they will have to search for a suitable theme to legitimate their behavior. This will leave them vulnerable to pressure from internal and external audiences, giving scholars significant insight into the politics of intervention.

REPLICATION DATA

All data, on which the previous analyses are based, are available in two forms: Either on a flash drive, accessible through the university library. Or, via a password-protected nextcloud server. To gain access to the server, please email: johannes.scherzinger@wzb.eu

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Appendix

Appendix Chapter 3

A.C.3.1 Varieties of Topic Models

In Chapter 3 of the dissertation, I presented evidence that unsupervised machine-learning, in the form of unsupervised topic modelling—in this case STM—can be used to model meta subjects. However, classifying something as latent as a "theme" is quite challenging without any human supervisions, or steering of the algorithm. This is so for two reasons. First, inductively arriving at categories of interest can be quite hard, as semantic coherence increases (exclusivity decreases). While human coders, may want to optimize semantic coherence—because to a human coder this is typically what makes something 'coherent'—an algorithm may prefer more exclusive categories. This leads to a conundrum. From a theoretical standpoint, fewer categories (lower k) should produce semantically more coherent subjects, but exclusivity may be severely muddled. Observe for example the inverse relationship of coherence and exclusivity in the Figure AC3.1.1 to AC3.1.5

Figure A.C3.1.1 STM with k = 30

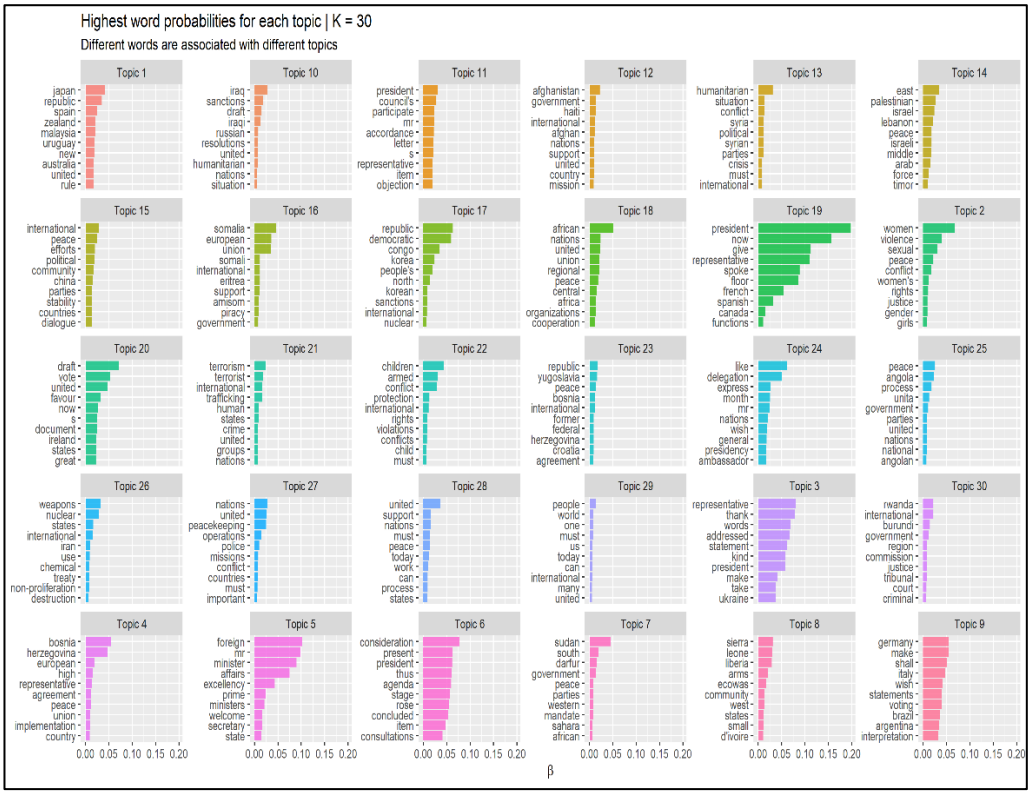


Figure A.C3.1.2 STM with k = 35

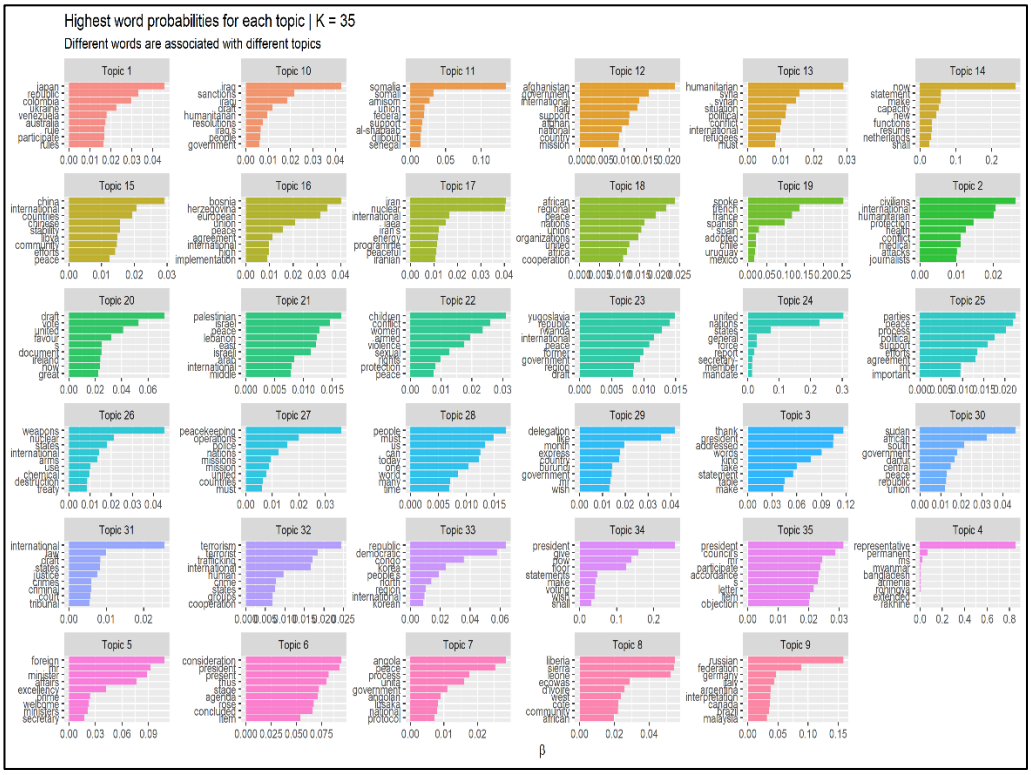


Figure A.C3.1.3 with k = 40

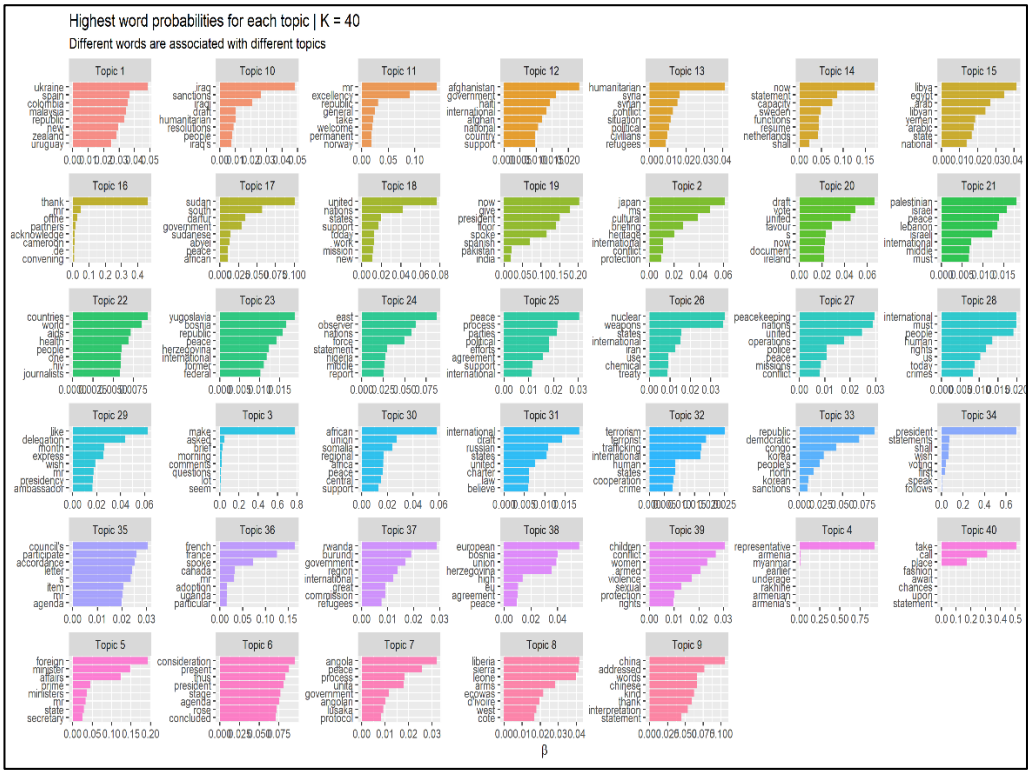


Figure A.C3.1.4 STM with k = 45

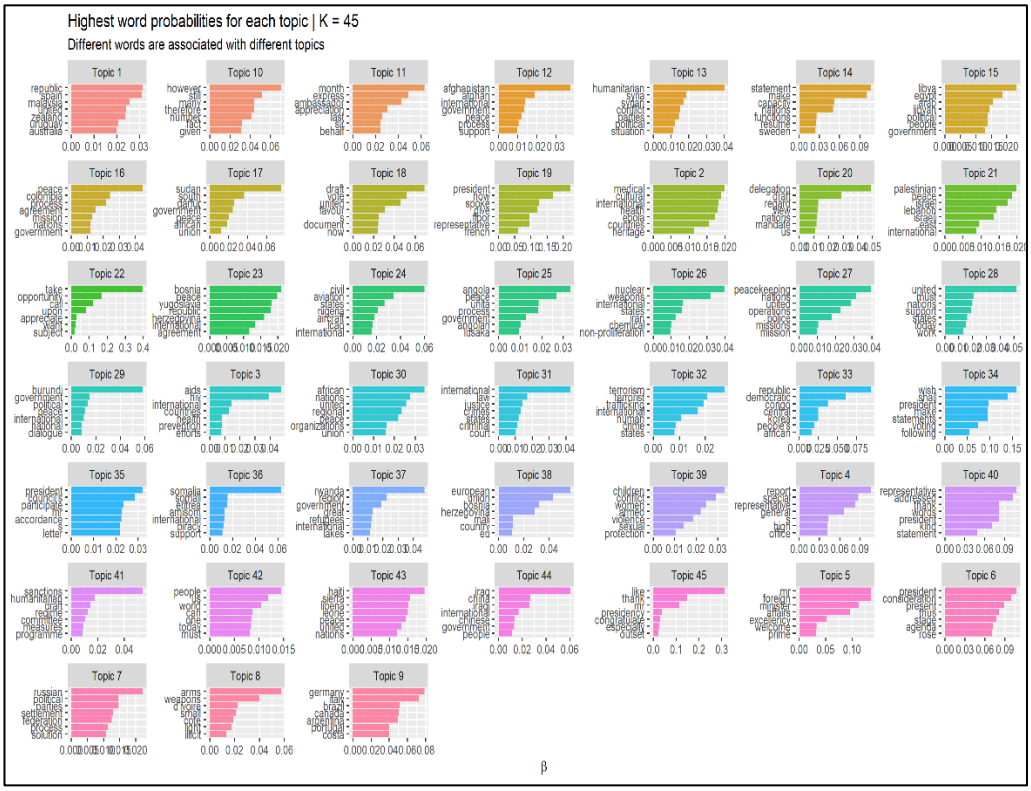
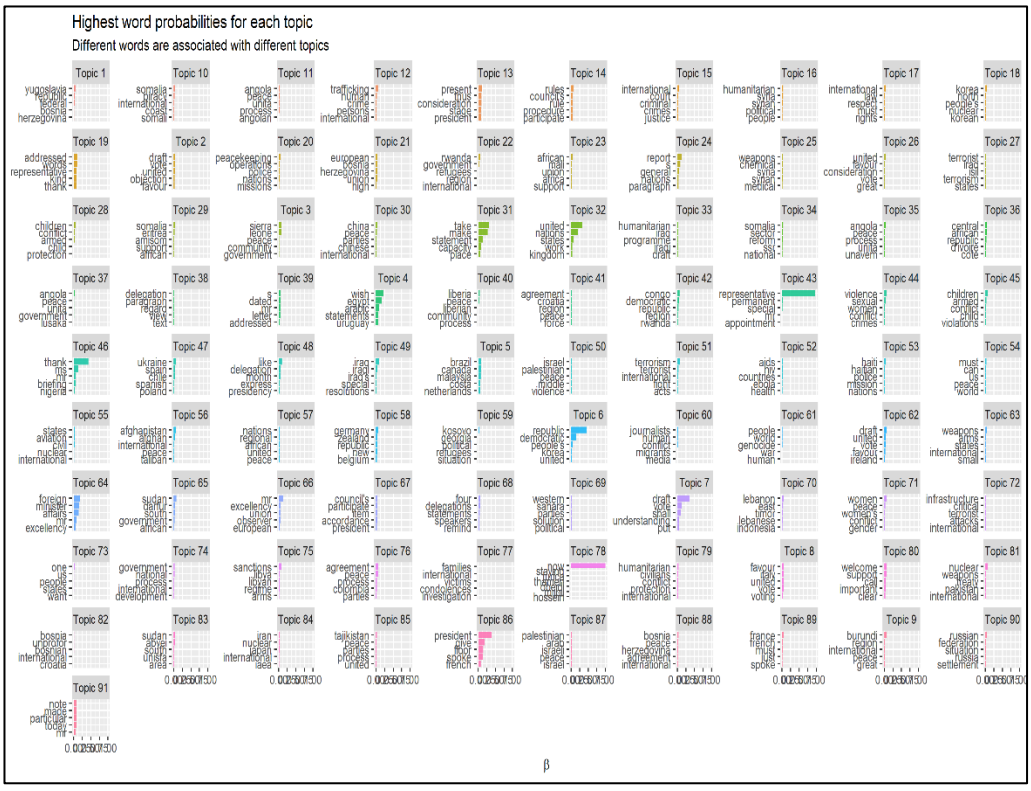


Figure A.C3.1.5 (with k = 91, auto-suggest)



The main takeaway from this exercise is that it is extremely hard to model themes this way consistently. Smaller k's may detect some themes (compare Figure A.3.1.1 and A.3.1.2) but they are either muddled down to some malleable meta-topic, only WMD seems to crystallize, or they tend to cluster along conflicts (like Rwanda, Syria etc.). The larger k becomes, the more crystallized are the six themes but they are either not distinct (A.C.3.1.4), or the are spread along several topics (A.C.3.1.5), when they should be featured in only one category.

Moreover, the larger k becomes, the more the individual topics begin to look like UNSC agenda items and less like our categories of interest. Relatedly, scholars may then have to chose one category over another, when choosing themes, which might be hard to justify inductively.

All these data further underscore the notion that, if there are strong theoretical considerations involved, one should model the data with supervised or semi-supervised approaches, and therefore work deductively.

A.C.3.2 – FREX Words for the Final Model

There are different metrics to optimize the distinctiveness of text categories. In the main text, I have presented an automated measure to gauge distinctiveness, called the Jensen-Shannon-Divergence (JSD). During the data modelling process, however, I also relied on iterative improving of FREX words. FREX words are an amalgam of frequency and exclusivity. Meaning that this metric is composed of words, that are salient and distinct to this respective category. Over time, and repeated attempts, I augmented my model in such a way that there was no overlap between the top 45 FREX words per category—to make each type of language distinct.

Table A.C.3.2.1 45 Top FREX Words

Feature	human	wmd	development	women_children	terrorism	security	greeting	procedure
1	"humanitarian"	"nuclear"	"implementation"	"children"	"terrorism"	"conflict"	"mr"	"vote"
2	"protection"	"disarmament"	"development"	"women"	"terrorist"	"conflicts"	"welcome"	"agenda"
3	"human rights"	"chemical"	"assistance"	"sexual"	"crime"	"solution"	"wish"	"adoption"
4	"respect"	"non-proliferation"	"reconciliation"	"child"	"terrorists"	"threat"	"statement"	"shall"
5	"violations"	"weapons of mass destruction"	"capacity"	"girls"	"counter-terrorism"	"attacks"	"express"	"rose"
6	"refugees"	"energy"	"peacebuilding"	"vulnerable"	"taliban"	"fight"	"permanent"	"concluded"
7	"protect"	"iaea"	"reconstruction"	"atrocities"	"extremism"	"threats"	"minister"	"consider"
8	"responsible"	"capabilities"	"developments"	"abuse"	"terror"	"secure"	"ms"	"abstention"
9	"suffering"	"atomic"	"reintegration"	"abuses"	"terrorist attacks"	"fighting"	"affairs"	"draft"
10	"displaced"	"biological"	"post-conflict"	"children's"	"isil"	"army"	"kind"	"adopted"
11	"responsibilities"	"capability"	"developing"	"victim"	"extremist"	"destruction"	"excellency"	"favour"
12	"health"	"safeguard"	"develop"	"abduction"	"al-qaida"	"attack"	"speak"	"consideration"
13	"citizens"	"wmd"	"demobilization"	"school"	"countering"	"solutions"	"resume"	"item"
14	"protecting"	"stockpile"	"developed"	"kidnapping"	"extremists"	"fighters"	"prime"	"document"
15	"violation"	"test-ban"	"capacity-building"	"abused"	"isis"	"threaten"	"secretary"	"objection"
16	"food"	"iraqi"	"donor"	"child-protection"	"propaganda"	"dispute"	"thank"	"ireland"
17	"refugee"	"iraq's"	"confidence-building"	"childhood"	"ideology"	"threatened"	"floor"	"northern"

18	"suffered"	"sudanese"	"transitional justice"	"slave"	"terrorist attack"	"securing"	"sahara"	"britain"
19	"respected"	"npt"	"corruption"	"child-"	"foreign fighters"	"conflict-related"	"speaker"	"procee d"
20	"respective"	"iran's"	"good governance"	"abusing"	"radicalization"	"threatening"	"unprede p"	"votes"
21	"protected"	"peninsula"	"peace-building"	"abusive"	"terrorize"	"attacked"	"monuc"	"provisional"
22	"suffer"	"iranian"	"institution-building"	"abusers"	"suicide attacks"	"threatens"	"give"	"procedure"
23	"violate"	"unscom"	"demobilized"	"women's"	"terrorizing"	"armenia"	"monusco"	"prior"
24	"violated"	"nuclear-weapon"	"disarm"	"gender"	"terrorized"	"regional security"	"macedonia"	"contains"
25	"respectively"	"korea's"	"demobilize"	"schools"	"al-qaeda"	"conflict-affected"	"finland"	"invitation"
26	"respecting"	"unisfa"	"develops"	"aids"	"counter-terrorist"	"conflict-"	"latvia"	"usual"
27	"injured"	"sudan's"	"demobilizing"	"hiv"	"trafficking"	"armadas"	"now"	"propose"
28	"respects"	"korean"	"repatriating"	"journalists"	"somali"	"secured"	"minurso"	"p.m"
29	"flee"	"non-nuclear-weapon"	"unita"	"rape"	"illicit"	"attacking"	"fdlr"	"ofhands"
30	"violating"	"iraqis"	"elections"	"gender-based"	"piracy"	"armies"	"revolucionarias"	"transmitting"
31	"respectful"	"oil-for-food"	"angolan"	"zerrougui"	"ebola"	"conflict-prevention"	"western"	"reserved"
32	"sufferings"	"denuclearization"	"ecowas"	"abductions"	"drugs"	"conflicting"	"fardc"	"letters"
33	"injuries"	"opcw"	"lusaka"	"statute"	"heritage"	"arming"	"colombia's"	"dated"
34	"responsibly"	"ctbt"	"afghan"	"unicef"	"migrants"	"armees"	"ross"	"unanimously"
35	"citizen"	"dinka"	"haitian"	"female"	"aviation"	"militarily"	"paul"	"a.m"
36	"violates"	"ngok"	"liberian"	"optional"	"transnational"	"armaments"	"mayr-harting"	"pm"
37	"violators"	"pyongyang"	"electoral"	"bangura"	"icao"	"security-sector"	"colombians"	"abstaining"
38	"livelihood"	"launches"	"ecomog"	"empowerment"	"smuggling"	"armoured"	"m-23"	"d'affaires"
39	"protective"	"enrichment"	"unama"	"survivors"	"traffickers"	"fighter"	"kohler"	"guinea-"
40	"protections"	"nuclear-test-ban"	"afghanistan's"	"gamba"	"somalia's"	"militarization"	"christopher"	"bissau"
41	"citizenship"	"nuclear-"	"monua"	"icc"	"al-nusra"	"arm"	"del"	"invited"
42	"injury"	"unami"	"unomil"	"boys"	"directorate"	"conflict-resolution"	"zaida"	"l998"
43	"protects"	"kuwaiti"	"timetable"	"gender-"	"mediterranean"	"security-related"	"concurrence"	"benin"

44	"injuring"	"ballistic"	"unmih"	"tribunals"	"interpol"	"security-"	"monusco's"	"seized"
45	"maim"	"six-party"	"quartering"	"mainstreaming"	"unodc"	"conflict-ridden"	"cuellar"	"letter"

The table adds even more validity to the model as there is virtually no overlap between the categories. Markedly, there is also no overlap between human rights rhetoric and women and children rhetoric—adding further evidence that policymakers in the UN keep these two types of themes purposefully distinct from another for political reasons.

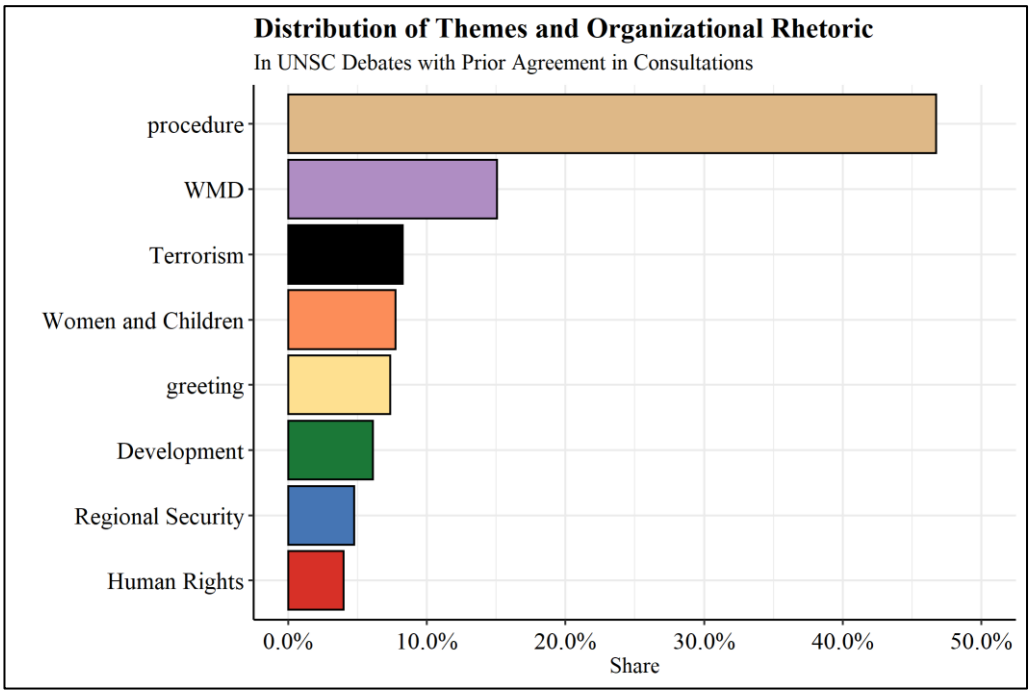
The table also underscores Laura Shepherd's argument (2008) about women and children being essentially victimized in UN discourse. For example, while "victim" and "vulnerable" loads as the 6th and the 11th highest features, respectively, "empowerment" and "survivor" only load as the 38th, 39th top feature. This indicates how UN policymakers conceive of women and children in UN debates (as vulnerable groups).

Appendix Chapter 4

A.C.4.1 – Distribution of Organizational Rhetoric and Themes with prior Agreement

In Chapter 4, presented the distribution of language types over UNSC debates. Because *UNSC Resolution debates* are of essential interest to my argument, I focused on these in the main text. In this appendix item, I downsize my sample once more and focus on such debates at the at end of which, the speaker announces that the resolution is submitted with an "understanding reached in prior consultations". Thus, these debates are not really "open", in a sense that states search for themes to make sense of a given conflict. Instead, such searching has been taken place behind closed doors, and the remaining rhetoric is merely meant to post hoc justify a given action. This logic is also reflected by the distribution of language types in "closed" debates. While, in ordinary, or open, debates procedural rhetoric reaches only 22-%, in closed debates, procedural rhetoric is more than twice as frequent—reaching a share of 45-%. This high share reflects the fact, that states do not really search for themes, therefore use normative language, but they mainly announce technical measures, such as sanctioning steps, or authorize committee-panels, etc. As a result, the debate becomes much more technical and thus procedural in nature. This practice is also reflected in the agenda items, that are most often closed. All of the top ten agenda items for closed debates are mandate renewals for existing UN missions and interventions.

Figure A.C.4.1.1 Distribution of Language Types in 'Closed Debates'

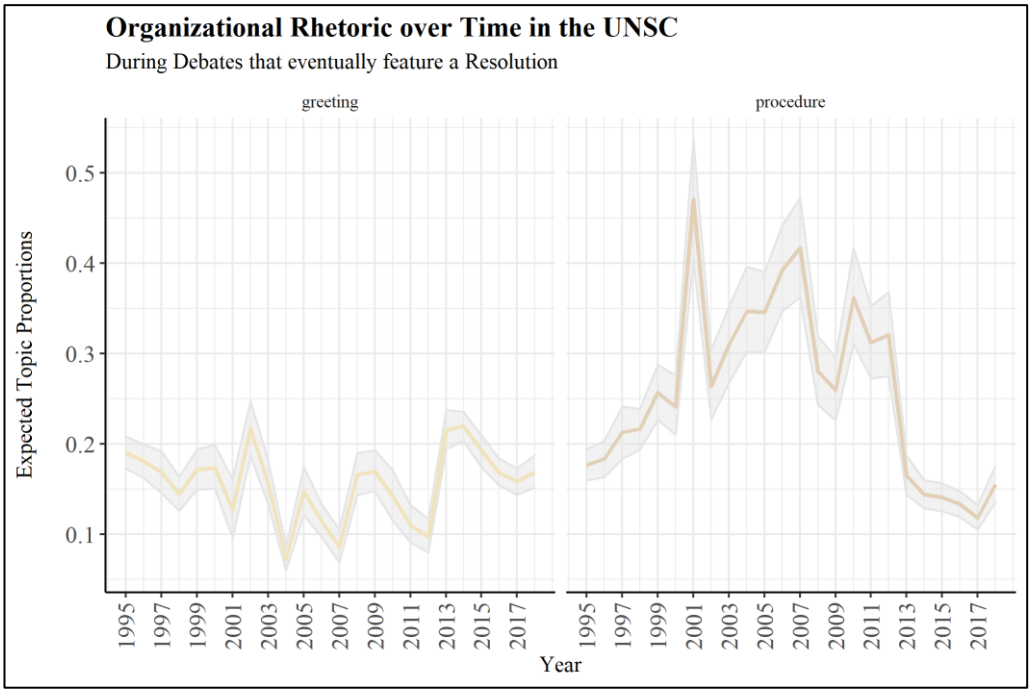


Note: Modeled with seeded-LDA machine-learning model with original seed word dictionary on all UNSC debates that were held after "agreement in prior consultations" was secured.

A.C.4.2 – Organizational Rhetoric over Time in UNSC Debates

In Chapter 4, I visualized time trends for my six types of thematic rhetoric. In this appendix item I want to demonstrate the same for organizational rhetoric. In recent years, there has been an interesting trend observable. While procedural rhetoric is rapidly shrinking, greeting—and thus cheap talk—is slightly rising. This can be read as further evidence signaling a decreasing productivity of the Council in times of renewed geopolitical conflict.

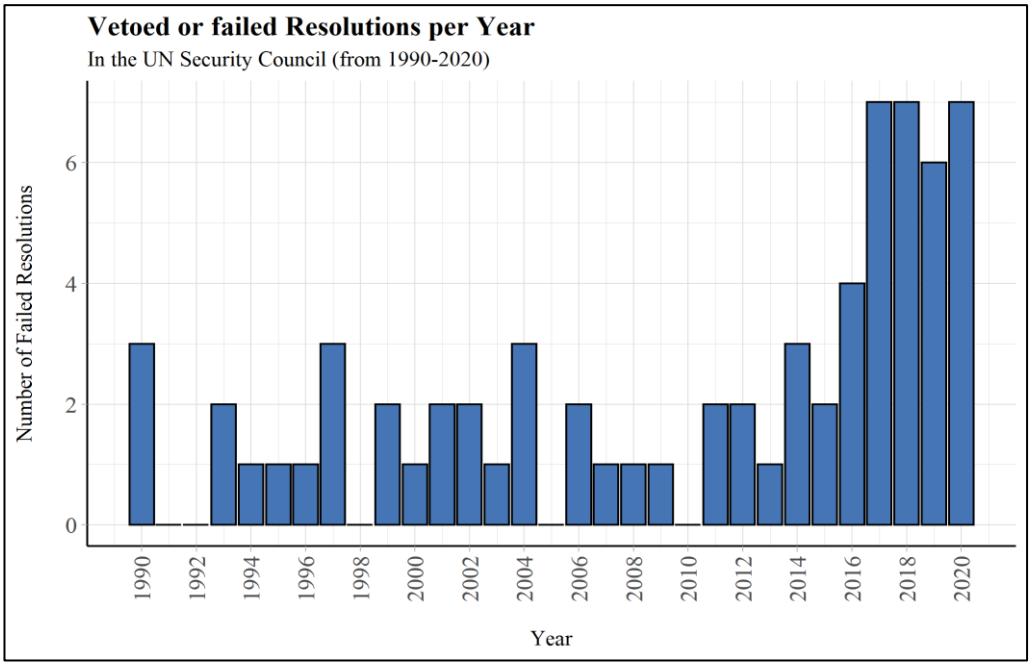
Figure A.C.4.2.1 Organizational Rhetoric over Time



A.C.4.3 Failed Resolutions over Time

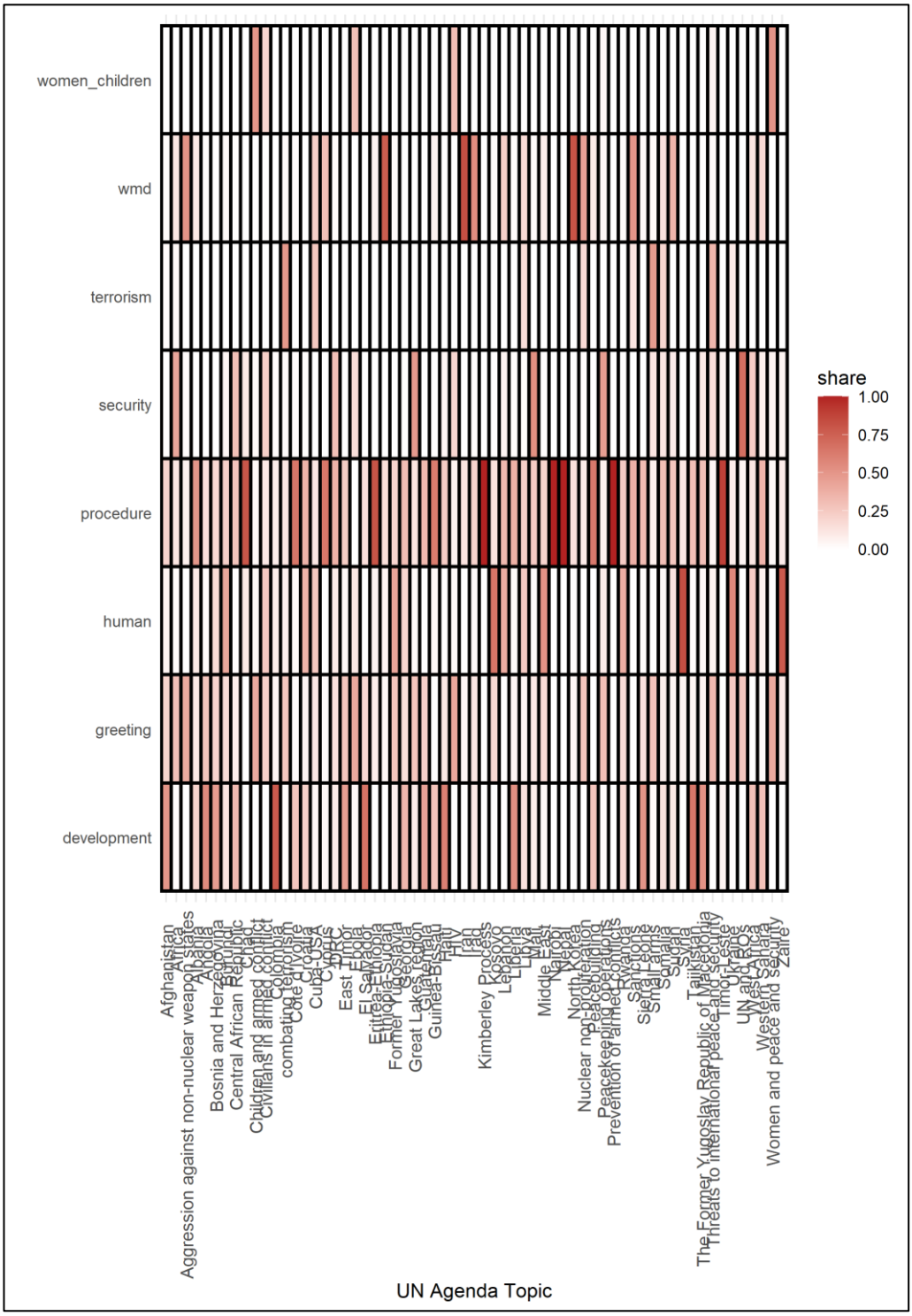
UNSC resolutions can either fail because one of the P5 Members draws a veto or because they receive insufficient affirmative votes. The figure below plots the number of failed resolutions over time. In recent years the trend has risen considerably (the absolute number is still very low).

Figure A.C.4.3.1 Failed UNSC Resolutions

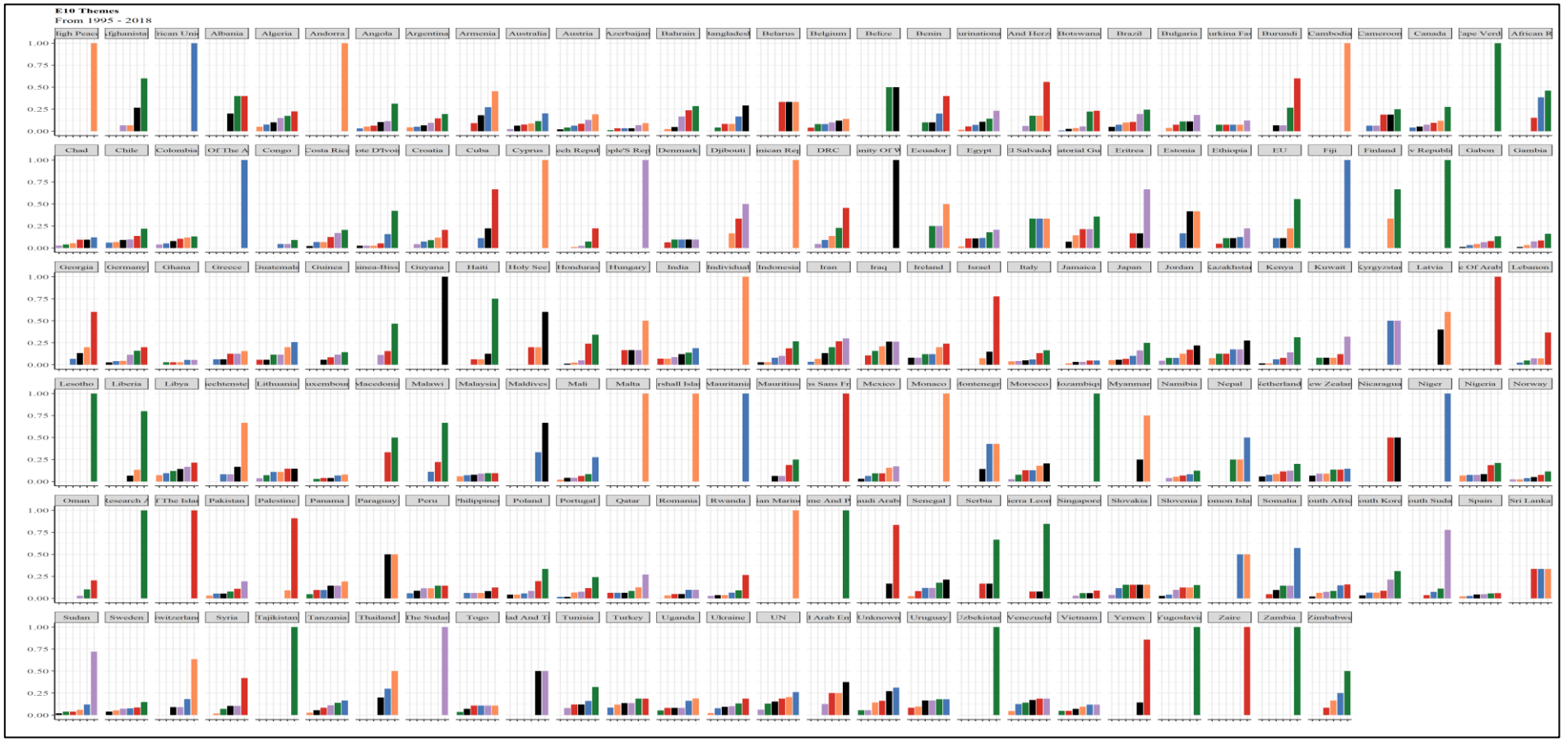


Source: Authors own data collection.

A.C.4.4 UNSC Agenda Items and Types of Dominant Rhetoric



A.C.4.5 Distribution of Themes by the E10



Appendix Chapter 5

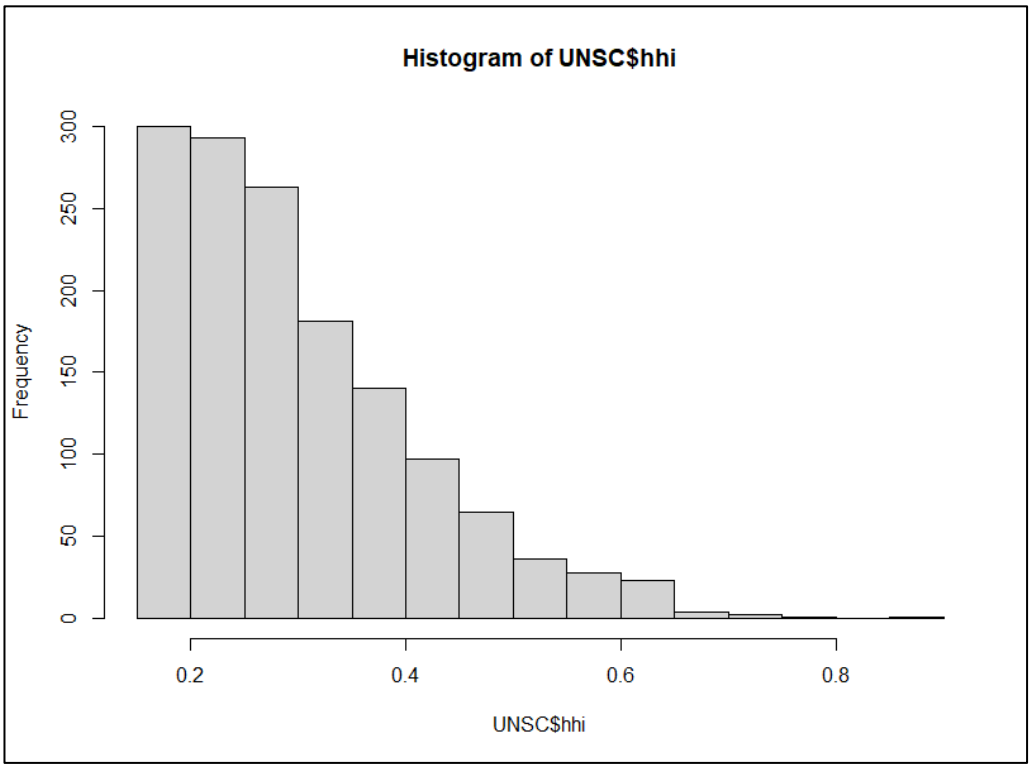
A.C.5.1 – Logistic Regression: Baseline Model Council Unanimity

	Unanimity
Preference Homogenity	0.060***
	(0.017)
External Shock	-0.045***
	(0.015)
as.factor(year.x)1996	-0.036
	(0.050)
as.factor(year.x)1997	0.024
	(0.050)
as.factor(year.x)1998	0.025
	(0.047)
as.factor(year.x)1999	-0.014
	(0.049)
as.factor(year.x)2000	-0.037
	(0.052)
as.factor(year.x)2001	0.085*
	(0.051)
as.factor(year.x)2002	0.043
	(0.048)
as.factor(year.x)2003	0.035
	(0.048)
as.factor(year.x)2004	0.023
	(0.049)
as.factor(year.x)2005	0.070
	(0.047)
as.factor(year.x)2006	0.059
	(0.045)
as.factor(year.x)2007	0.042
	(0.050)
as.factor(year.x)2008	0.075
	(0.048)
as.factor(year.x)2009	0.029
	(0.052)
as.factor(year.x)2010	0.019
	(0.050)
as.factor(year.x)2011	0.080*
	(0.049)
as.factor(year.x)2012	0.050
	(0.051)
as.factor(year.x)2013	0.027
	(0.052)

as.factor(year.x)2014	0.086*
	(0.049)
as.factor(year.x)2015	-0.010
	(0.048)
as.factor(year.x)2016	-0.010
	(0.047)
as.factor(year.x)2017	0.088*
	(0.049)
as.factor(year.x)2018	-0.052
	(0.050)
Constant	0.897***
	(0.035)
N	1,434
Log Likelihood	-135.770
AIC	323.541

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

A.C.5.2 Histogram of Degree of Thematic Dominance measured of HHI on UNSC Debates



A.C.5.3 – Model Fit for a Baseline Model and an Improved Model of Council Unanimity

In Chapter 5, I develop two models for Council unanimity: A Baseline Model featuring factors from relevant secondary literature and an improved model using additional explanatory rhetorical variables. Figure A.C.5.1.1 Plots the area under coverage (AUC) for both models—showing graphically how much of the data is explained by the model. AUC is built as the overall thresholds (integral) over all thresholds in the data classification process of my logit models. Crucially, the improved model has much wider coverage than the baseline model—explaining 12 percentage points more data. On average, the baseline model explains 60-% of the data, the improved model 72-%.

Figure A.C.5.3.1 AUC/ROC Curve Baseline Model

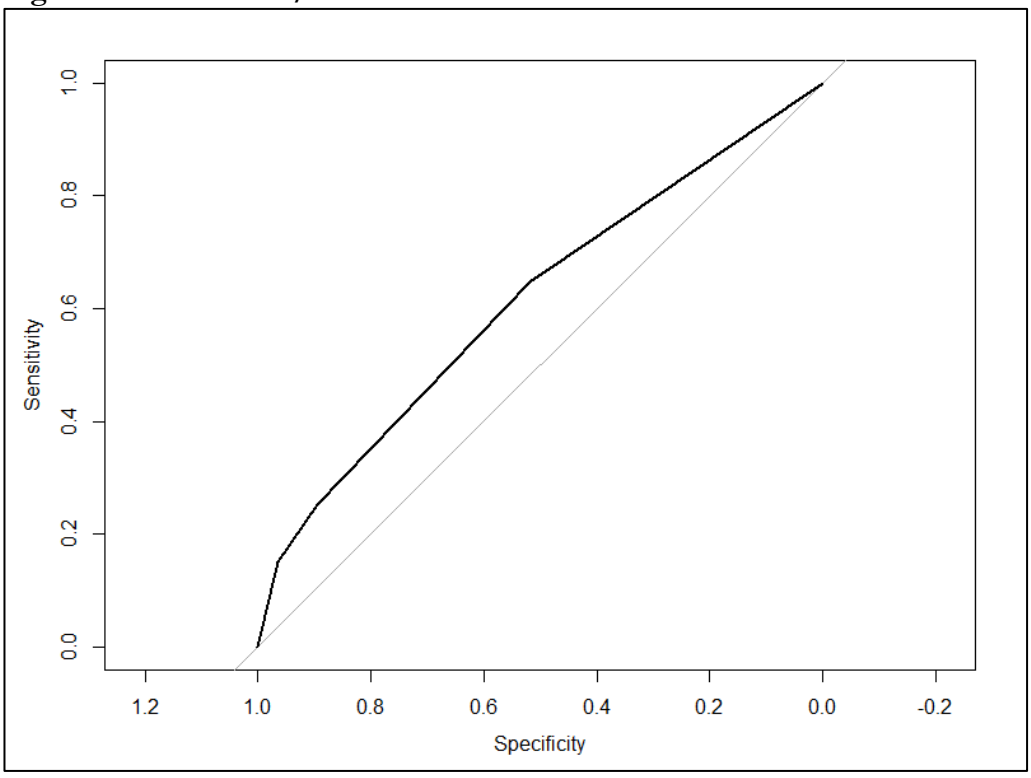
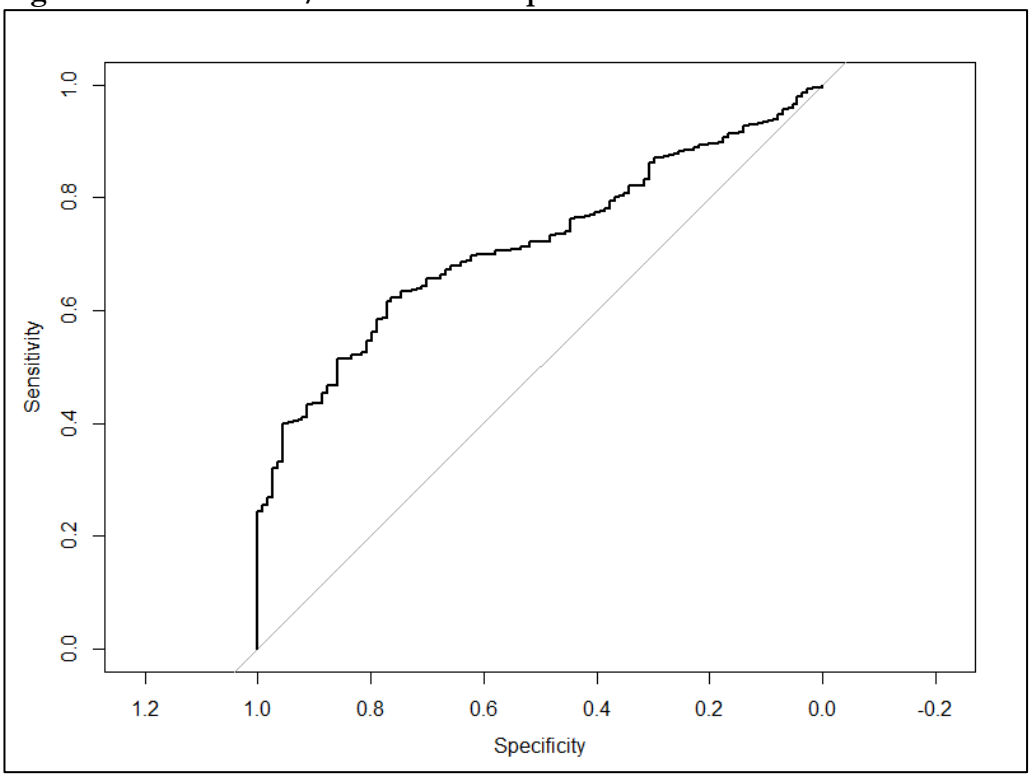


Figure. A.C.5.3.2 AUC/ROC Curve Improved Model



Therefore, the improved model explains unanimity significantly better—as is easily visible in its much wider explanatory area. Still, the coverage does not close in on 100%. While there is always noise in any data and explanatory power will never approximate a hundred percent, there is another reason why the AUC does not come closer to 1. That is, that preference alignment is not a perfect stand-in for homogenous interest constellations. Furthermore, since we know that any action is predicated on P5 agreement, we know that some of the interests of the permanent powers weigh probably more than a crude average measure of preference alignment. Nevertheless, as long as we lack any reliable vested interests in conflict data, these two models serve as great alternatives. The improved model, in particular, should be an important contribution to the landscape of UN voting and actions.

The substantial improvement of explanatory power can also be expressed in a variety of metrics pertaining to model fit. These are relational measures—so there are no external benchmarks—comparisons only work against other models. For the AIC and BIC and Deviance, lower values indicate better model fit. For each parameter the improved model fits the data better than the baseline model. Again

providing evidence for the argument that rhetorical variables are important in explaining unanimity in the Council.

Table A.C.5.1.1 Summary Statistics of Model Fit

Model Type	AIC	BIC	Deviance
Baseline	308.8835	329.9564	103.5616
Improved	279.589	311.1984	101.1849

A.C.5.4 – Formula and Regression Output for Interaction of Quadradic Degree of Dominance and E10 participation on Unanimity

In this logit model (Chapter 5 Section 2), the specification is such that:

$$Unanimity = HHI + E10.Part + HHI * E10.part + E10.part * HHI^2 + Pref.Hom + External\ Shock$$

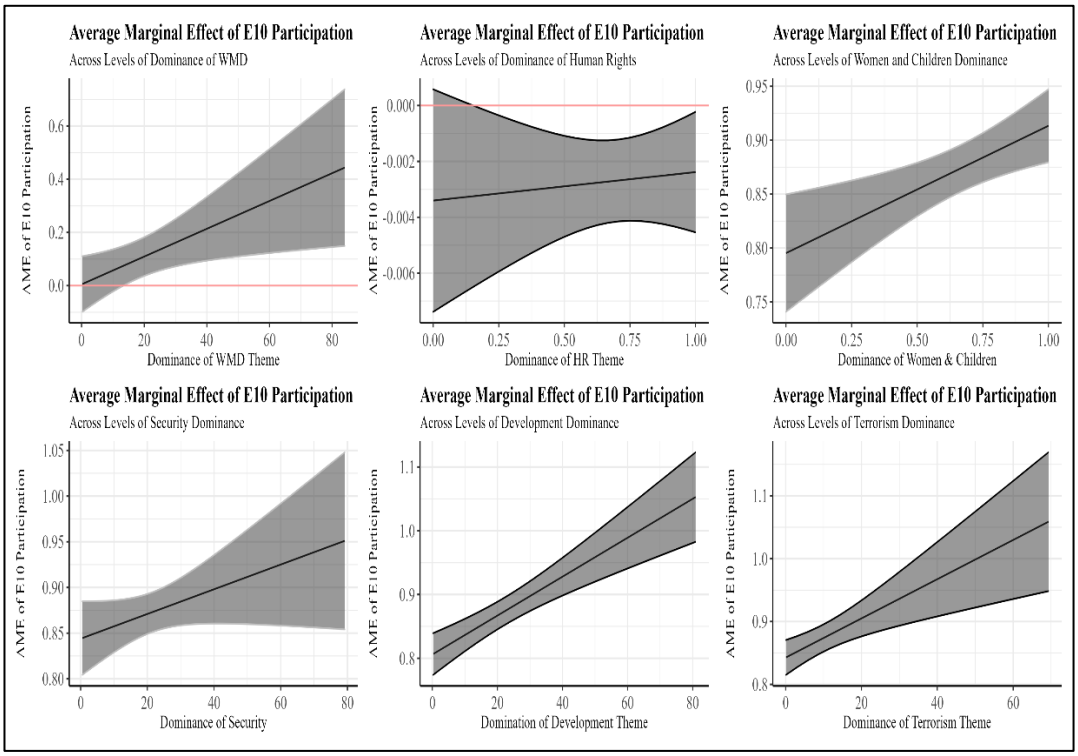
Table A.C.5.4.1 Regression Output of Logit Model with Quadradic HHI and E10.participation interaction

	Unanimity
Degree of Dominance (Hirschman)	-0.375***
	(0.122)
E10 Participation	0.158**
	(0.071)
Preference Homogeneity	0.060***
	(0.018)
External Shock	-0.038***
	(0.014)
HHI*E10 Participation	-0.790*
	(0.403)
E10 Participation * (HHI)²	1.279**
	(0.545)
Constant	1.000***
	(0.039)
N	1,434
Log Likelihood	-131.928
AIC	277.856

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

A.C.5.5 AME OF E10 Participation across types of rising themes on Unanimity (on Open Debates).

Figure A.C.5.5.1



Appendix Chapter 6

A.C.6.1 Civil Conflicts that the UNSC is seized with (1995-2018)

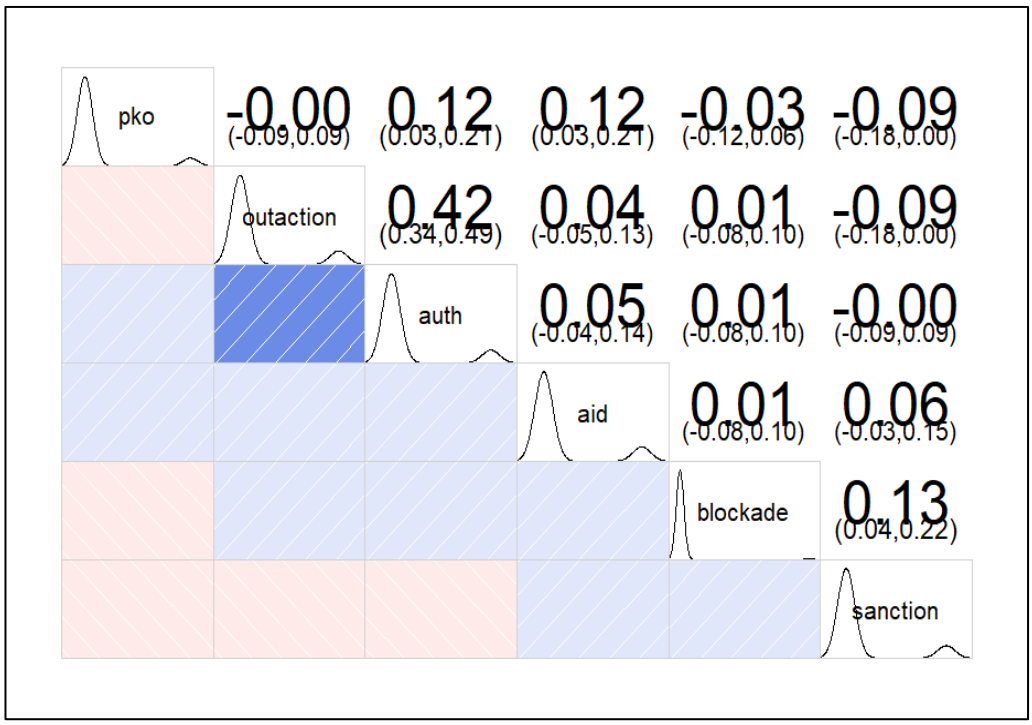
Table. A.C.6.1.1 List of Civil Conflicts (sorted after chronological occurrence in UNSC Debates)

UCDP Conflict ID	Country hosting the Conflict
426	Israel 1
327	Angola
389	Bosnia-Herzegovina
390	Croatia
395	Tajikistan
287	Mali 1
374	Rwanda
234	Israel 2
333	Afghanistan
283	DRC 1
382	Sierra Leone
412	Serbia (Former Yugoslavia)
410	Guinea-Bissau
330	Indonesia
341	Liberia
417	Macedonia (Former Yugoslavia)
337	Somalia
429	DRC 2
419	Ivory Coast
259	Iraq
381	Haiti
309	Sudan 1
288	Afghanistan 2
11346	Libya
11344	Sudan 2
265	DRC 3 (Zaire)
230	Yemen (North Yemen)
416	CAR
299	Syria
372	Mali 2
11345	South Sudan

A.C.6.1.2 Correlation Among Civil Conflict Intervention Types

In Chapter 6, I assess the effect of rhetoric on six types of intervention in civil conflicts. Because two measures—third party intervention and the outright use of force— appear somewhat frequently together (correlation at 42%), I run each of these as separate DVs in distinct models.

Figure A.C.6.1.2.1 Correlation Among Intervention Types



A.C.6.1.3 Intervention Types within Civil Conflicts

Conflict Host	Conflict ID	Aid	Sanctions	Blockade	PKO	Third Party Int.	Outright Use of Force
Croatia	390	X					
Tajikistan	395	X			X		
Bosnia-Herzegovina	389	X			X	X	X
Israel	426	X	X		X		
Mali 1	287	X			X	X	X
Afghanistan	333	X	X			X	X
DRC 1	283	X	X		X	X	X
Angola	327	X	X		X		
Sierra Leone	382	X	X	X	X		
Serbia	412	X	X			X	X
Guinea-Bissau	410	X				X	
Ivory Coast	419	X	X		X	X	X
Liberia	341	X	X			X	X
Haiti	381	X				X	X
Sudan 1	309	X	X		X		X
Afghanistan 2	288	X			X	X	
Somalia	337	X	X	X	X	X	X
Israel 2	234	X					
Libya	11346	X	X	X	X		X
Mali 2	372	X	X		X	X	X
CAR	416	X	X		X	X	X
Syria	299	X			X		
DRC 3 (Zaire)	265	X	X				X
Yemen (North Yemen)	230	X	X				
Iraq	259		X			X	X
South Sudan	11345		X		X		X
Indonesia	330				X	X	X
Sudan 2	11344				X		
Macedonia (Former Yugoslavia)	417					X	

A.C.6.2 Robustness Checks for Chapter 6

A.C.6.2.1 Additional Regression Analyses for Civil Conflict Interventions

In Chapter 6, I argue that rhetoric should be taken seriously as an explanatory variable of Council intervention. In particular, I offer 12 main text models which show that a specific type of normative rhetoric—a theme—is significantly associated with specific types of Council action. In this appendix item, I offer 18 more model estimates to demonstrate—beyond any reasonable doubt—that rhetoric matters in the way the Security Council resolves civil conflicts. To do this, I first estimate 12 additional logit models of Council actions. These serve as an additional robustness measure. With overwhelming similarity, the additional models support the main text findings. They only notable significance level difference comes from the relationship between women and children in model 24. Controlling for conflict-fixed-effects here reduces the significance level below acceptable standards of social scientific research. However, since the combination is virtually significant *in any other specification* (included rare events, linear probability, and ordinary LPM with fixed effects), this small discrepancy is rather due to the fact that logit models do not operate as smoothly as linear probability models than to any reasonable model dependency. Literally any other main text finding stays significant—some of the coefficient sizes do even rise. For example, terrorism rhetoric tremendously increases the likelihood of sanctions in civil conflicts. To even further underscore the independency of model choice, I also provide a visual robustness measure (A.C.6.4.5 below) showing that the log odds (outcome of the logit models) and the predicted probabilities of the LPM are nearly identical (correlation stands at 98-%). These models are more or less interchangeable.

Second, because some of the action types are quite rare (e.g. the authorization of blockades), I estimate six additional rare events logistic regressions using firth logits. Again, all six measures confirm the findings of the main text. Rhetoric is both associated to promote action as well as prohibit authorization in the case of women and children and the authorization of sanctions. The effect sizes change slightly, in the case of terrorism, however, they increase dramatically. Thus, the main text results perform as conservative measures that rather underappreciate than overappreciated the magnitude of effects.

Table A.C.6.2.1 Twelve Additional Logistic Models on Council Intervention

	Aid		Sanction		PKO		Blockade		Outside Int.		Auth. Force	
	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)	(20)	(21)	(22)	(23)	(24)
WMD	0.013	-0.214	0.166	-0.307	0.459**	0.190	-0.013	-0.797	0.235	0.749*	0.683***	0.291
	(0.156)	(0.253)	(0.164)	(0.258)	(0.178)	(0.308)	(0.583)	(1.792)	(0.168)	(0.390)	(0.147)	(0.262)
Human Rights	0.245	0.105	-0.035	0.556	0.206	0.157	0.020	-3.927	0.664***	0.360	0.267	-0.029
	(0.184)	(0.382)	(0.251)	(0.550)	(0.277)	(0.448)	(0.734)	(2.813)	(0.231)	(0.428)	(0.239)	(0.425)
Women & Children	-0.307	-0.375	-0.992**	-1.867***	0.052	0.488	-0.070	-1.407	0.853***	0.358*	0.531***	0.065
	(0.201)	(0.281)	(0.408)	(0.545)	(0.192)	(0.363)	(0.601)	(1.780)	(0.157)	(0.215)	(0.141)	(0.212)
Development	0.305**	0.219	-0.137	-0.134	0.389**	0.453*	-0.054	-0.382	-0.341	0.743	-0.302	0.469
	(0.137)	(0.203)	(0.200)	(0.284)	(0.179)	(0.267)	(0.603)	(1.273)	(0.350)	(0.626)	(0.275)	(0.520)
Terror	-0.161	-4.076	15.157***	16.907***	1.686	4.508	16.057***	-4.000	-2.635	-14.607*	1.142	-4.864
	(2.587)	(4.123)	(3.338)	(5.726)	(3.338)	(6.118)	(5.143)	(12.715)	(4.364)	(7.829)	(3.541)	(6.110)
Security	0.835	5.558	-0.342	5.411	-6.267	-7.114	1.704	69.008	0.347	1.824	-1.642	-3.187
	(1.841)	(3.833)	(2.254)	(4.851)	(3.854)	(4.887)	(6.207)	(44.465)	(2.843)	(5.219)	(2.816)	(4.931)
Council Preference Range	0.079	0.424	0.087	0.462	-0.045	0.274	0.345	-0.487	-1.166***	-0.814	-0.308	0.681
	(0.291)	(0.400)	(0.332)	(0.472)	(0.378)	(0.477)	(1.015)	(2.636)	(0.372)	(0.528)	(0.315)	(0.459)
Civilian Deaths	0.064	-0.586	-1.396***	-2.348	0.090	1.493	-13.540*	-5.717	-0.077	1.456	-3.350*	-3.815*
	(0.146)	(0.477)	(0.479)	(1.716)	(0.177)	(2.004)	(7.742)	(23.164)	(0.331)	(1.503)	(1.818)	(2.269)
E10	-0.037	-0.022	-0.027	-0.126	0.012	0.074	-0.407	-0.774	-0.119	-0.226	-0.064	-0.076
	(0.146)	(0.165)	(0.149)	(0.169)	(0.186)	(0.204)	(0.610)	(0.960)	(0.136)	(0.165)	(0.155)	(0.187)
Confl. Fixed-Effects	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Constant	-1.976***	-1.707	-2.775***	-2.316	-2.122***	-19.885	-8.036***	-36.952	-2.177***	-19.441	-2.541***	-18.569
	(0.223)	(1.397)	(0.301)	(1.462)	(0.305)	(4,263.200)	(1.756)	(26,135.120)	(0.306)	(6,222.357)	(0.406)	(3,869.857)
N	467	467	467	467	467	467	467	467	467	467	467	467
Log Likelihood	-178.237	-144.559	-152.344	-114.854	-127.632	-101.429	-21.180	-10.897	-162.087	-109.923	-154.820	-112.894
AIC	376.474	369.118	324.689	309.708	275.263	282.858	62.361	101.793	344.174	299.846	329.640	305.788

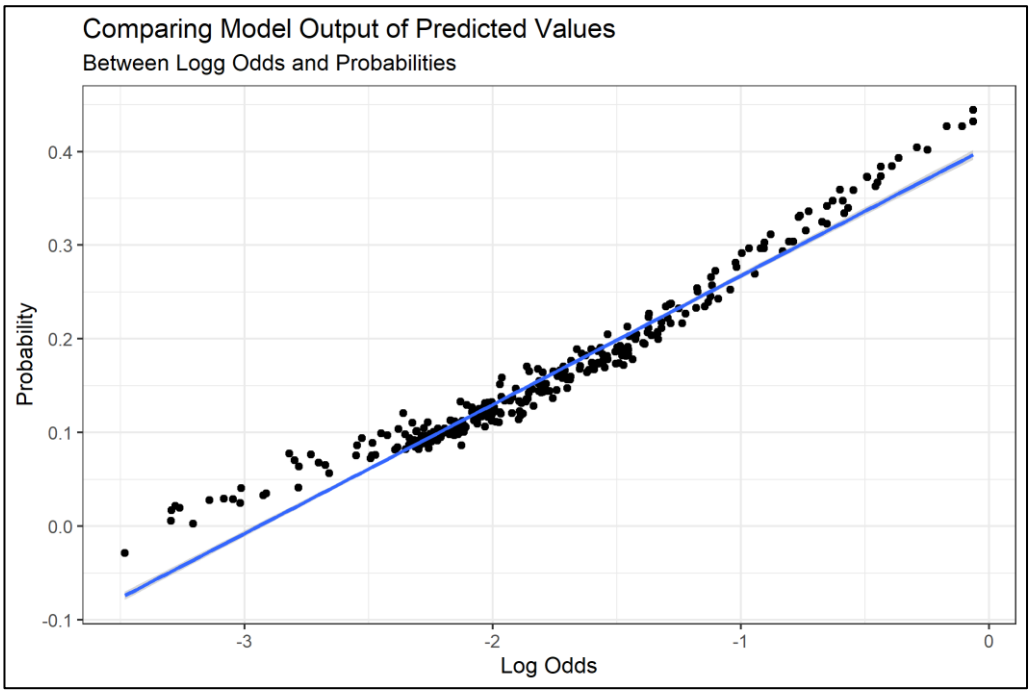
*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Table A.C.6.2.2 Six Additional Rare Events Regressions (Firth Logit) on Intervention Types

	Rare Evt. Aid (25)	Rare Evt. Sanction (26)	Rare Evt. Blockade (27)	Rare Evt. PKO (28)	Rare Evt. Out. Int. (29)	Rare Evt. Auth. Force (30)
WMD	0.014	0.155	0.096	0.432*	0.221	0.678***
	(0.150)	(0.155)	(0.382)	(0.168)	(0.159)	(0.140)
Human Rights	0.243	0.003	0.297	0.244	0.634**	0.267
	(0.176)	(0.226)	(0.400)	(0.244)	(0.213)	(0.216)
Women & Children	-0.264	-0.860**	0.098	0.073	0.792***	0.447***
	(0.185)	(0.357)	(0.333)	(0.177)	(0.144)	(0.129)
Developm ent	0.299*	-0.106	0.242	0.380*	-0.238	-0.193
	(0.133)	(0.185)	(0.343)	(0.169)	(0.301)	(0.240)
Terror	-0.154	13.860***	10.002*	1.615	-1.703	1.088
	(2.394)	(3.043)	(3.483)	(2.929)	(3.421)	(2.957)
Security	0.998	-0.059	2.968	-5.443	0.417	-1.585
	(1.754)	(2.088)	(3.844)	(3.450)	(2.564)	(2.607)
Council Preference Range	0.071	0.066	-0.009	-0.064	-1.088**	-0.297
	(0.280)	(0.313)	(0.659)	(0.355)	(0.345)	(0.299)
Civilian Deaths	0.085	-1.127***	-0.489+	0.125	0.088	-0.166
	(0.128)	(0.351)	(0.342)	(0.144)	(0.160)	(0.284)
E10	-0.042	-0.033	-0.446	0.000	-0.120	-0.067
	(0.142)	(0.145)	(0.422)	(0.178)	(0.133)	(0.151)
Num.Obs.	467	467	467	467	467	467
R2	0.049	0.115	0.046	0.029	0.083	0.094
RMSE	0.34	0.31	0.11	0.27	0.32	0.32

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001. Std. Errors in Parentheses.

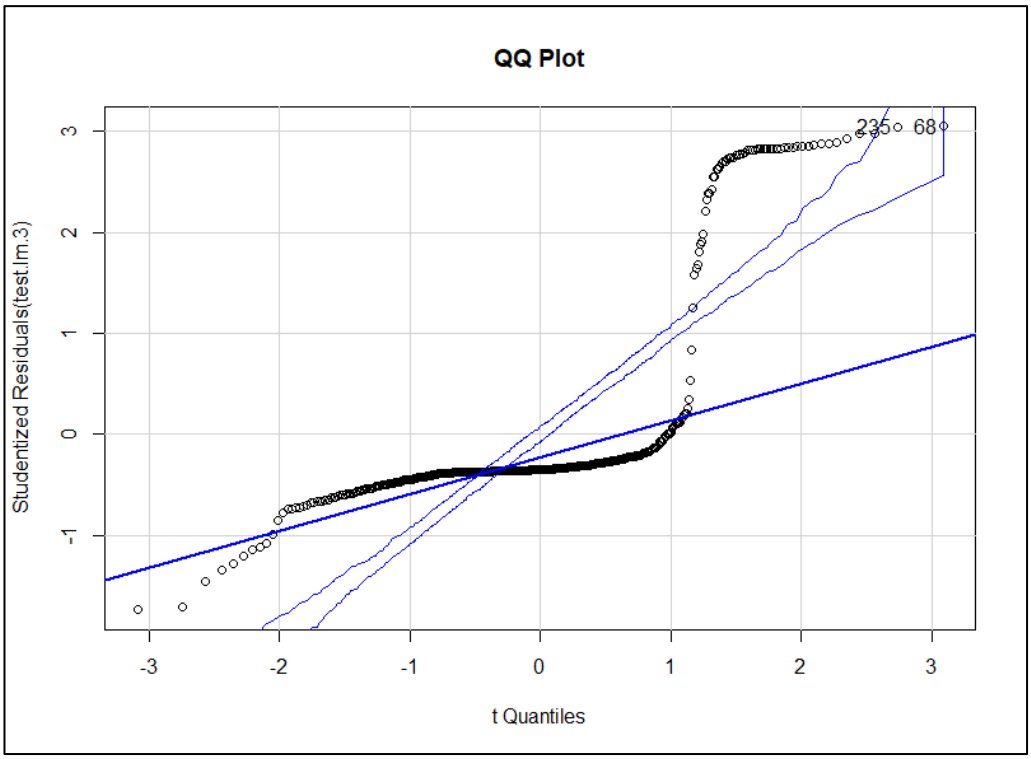
Figure A.C.6.2.1 Correlation between Log-Odds and Predicted Probability of Main Text Findings and Appendix Measures



A.C.6.2.2 Controlling for Outlier Resolutions in Sanctions Resolution Data

The magnitude of the effect of terrorism rhetoric on authorizing sanctions was quite dramatic in the main text of Chapter 6. Although this effect was replicated in several other regression settings (see above), it could be the case that this effect is really driven by the enormous likelihood of a few debates (and resolutions). To shield myself against this argument, I estimate a Bonferroni p-value for the most extreme outlier observations and visualize these with a QQ-plot below.

Figure A.C.6.2.2.2 QQ Plot of Outlier Resolutions in UNSC Debates



Note: QQ Plot of Outlier-Observations on a Linear Probability Model on Authorizing Sanctions using the same model as the main text.

Indeed, the QQ Plot identifies two cases with outlier status row 235 and row 68 in my dataset. These correspond to UNSC resolution 1649 (sanctioning rebels in DRC) and resolution 1173 (sanctioning blood diamond trade in Angola). However, if I rerun the model, excluding these two resolutions, the findings remain nearly identical. Terrorism is still highly significant; women and children still reduce the likelihood for sanctions and civilian suffering also reduces the associated probability of authorizing sanctions. Hence, we can conclude that the strong significance of the terrorism theme on sanction is not caused by some severe outlier resolution-debates. Instead, this further underscores the validity of the main text finding. Terrorism rhetoric is a very strong predictor of authorizing UN sanctions in civil conflicts.

Table A.C.6.2.2.3 Rerun of LPM without Outlier Resolution Debates

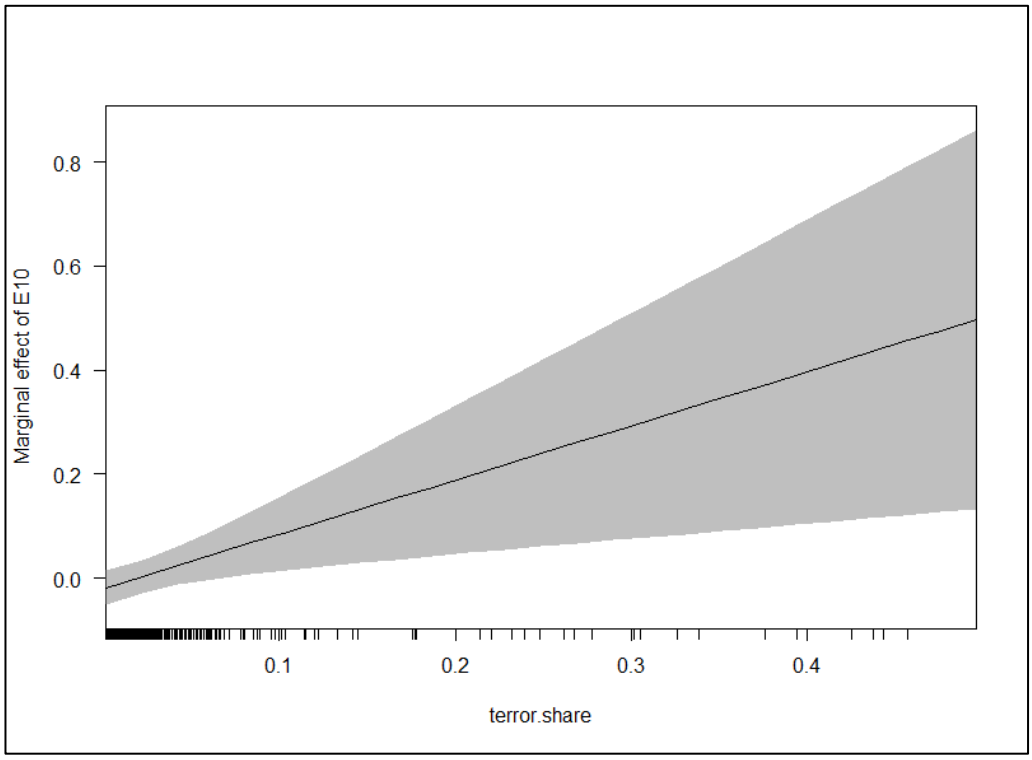
	Sanction
WMD	0.008
	(0.017)
Human Rights	-0.014
	(0.024)
Women and Children	-0.043***
	(0.016)
Development	-0.018
	(0.017)
Terrorism	1.555***
	(0.287)
Security	0.025
	(0.219)
Range of Council Preferences	0.016
	(0.033)
Civilian Deaths	-0.077***
	(0.017)
E10	0.004
	(0.015)
Constant	0.070***
	(0.024)
N	466
R^2	0.090
Adjusted R^2	0.072
Residual Std. Error	0.314 (df = 456)
F Statistic	4.994*** (df = 9; 456)

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

A.C.6.2.3 Marginal Effects of E10 Participation on Intervention Types on different Levels of rising Themes

In the second half of Chapter 6, I test whether the marginal effect of E10 participation (on intervention types) increases with a rising degree of themes—as this would support the assumption that dominant themes, told and retold by the E10, become signals of benign intention towards specific intervention types. The only notable effect sets in with a dominant terror theme on calling for aid, then E10 participation in the debate has the biggest marginal effect—visualized in Figure A.C.6.4.3.1 below. A four standard-deviation increase is associated, on average, with more than 40-% increased likelihood for calling for aid, all else being equal.

Figure A.C.6.4.3.1 Marginal Effect of E10 Participation on the Calling for Aid in Civil Conflicts, on a rising degree of Terrorism

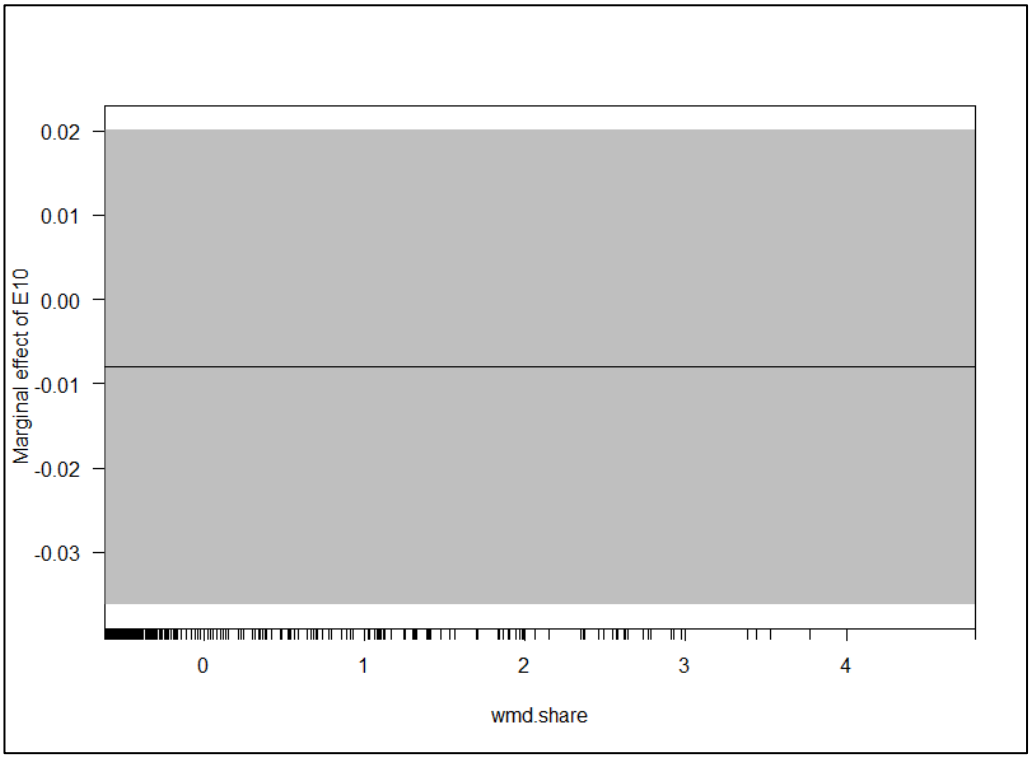


Note: Model controls for External Shocks and Preference Range in the Council, as well as the presence of all other themes. The model employs conflict-fixed-effects.

On all other rising themes, E10 participation does not increase in its marginal effect on calling for aid in a statistically significant way.

Sanctions fair pretty much similar to the null-findings of the combination of E10 participation and rising themes for aid. On none of my six themes, the marginal effect of E10 participation on Sanctions increases—in a statistically significant way—with rising themes. Since all of the plots are essentially null findings, I opt to show the closest candidate below, this example, the WMD theme.

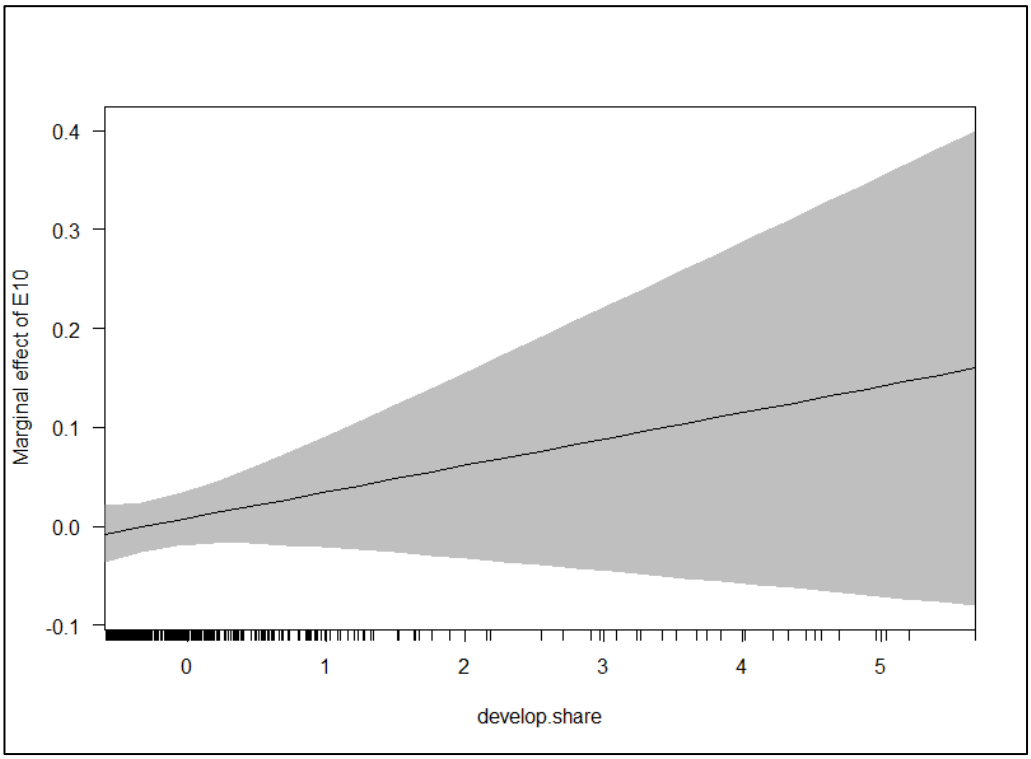
Figure A.C.6.4.3.2 Marginal Effect of E10 Participation on Sanctions in Civil Conflicts, on a rising degree of WMD



Note: Model controls for External Shocks and Preference Range in the Council, as well as the presence of all other themes. The model employs conflict-fixed-effects.

Concerning consensual peacekeeping missions, the development theme is the only candidate that comes close to increase the marginal effect of E10 debate participation. Yet, the finding is still below conventional levels of statistical significance. All other themes fail even to come close. The figure below plots the relationship between the marginal effect of E10 on the authorization of a PKO on a rising development theme—again as a visual example—since all plots are essentially null findings.

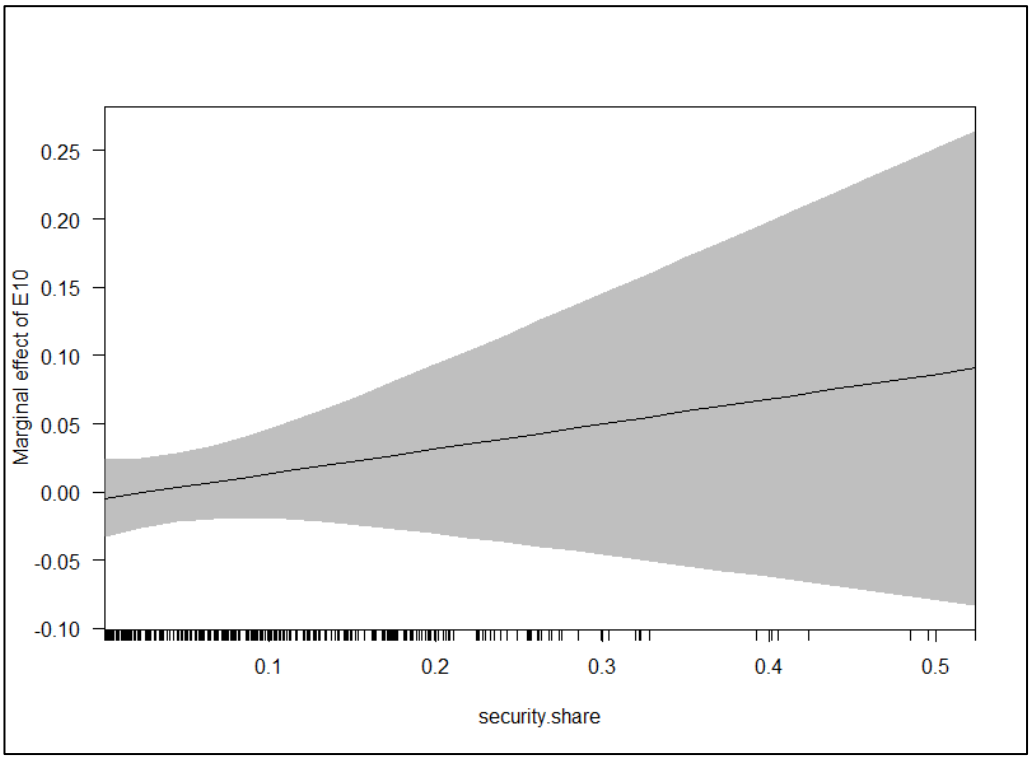
Figure A.C.6.4.3.3 Marginal Effect of E10 Participation on Authorizing a PKO in Civil Conflicts, on a rising degree of Development



Note: Model controls for External Shocks and Preference Range in the Council, as well as the presence of all other themes. The model employs conflict-fixed-effects.

Concerning blockade, the only close candidate comes from the security theme. Still the results remain statistically insignificant. All other rising themes do not have any notable effect on E10 participation.

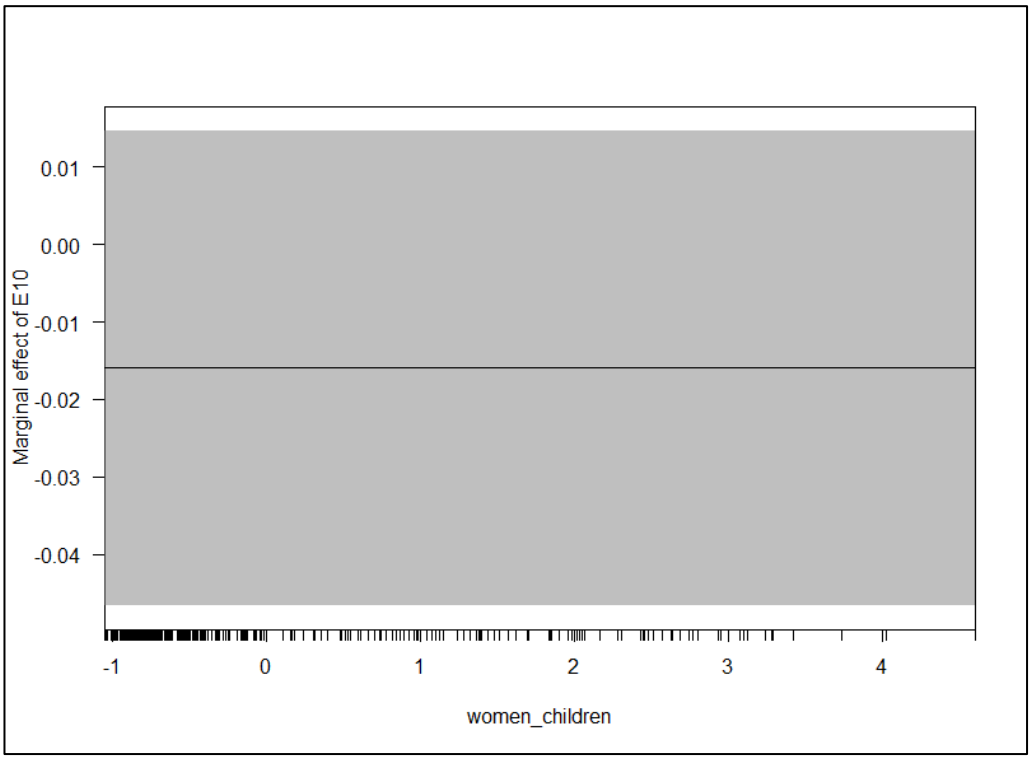
Figure A.C.6.4.3.3 Marginal Effect of E10 Participation on Authorizing a Blockade in Civil Conflicts, on a rising degree of Security



Note: Model controls for External Shocks and Preference Range in the Council, as well as the presence of all other themes. The model employs conflict-fixed-effects.

Concerning outside military intervention, the second to last intervention type, no theme increases E10 debate in a statistically significant fashion. As an example, observe the plot of a rising women and children theme below.

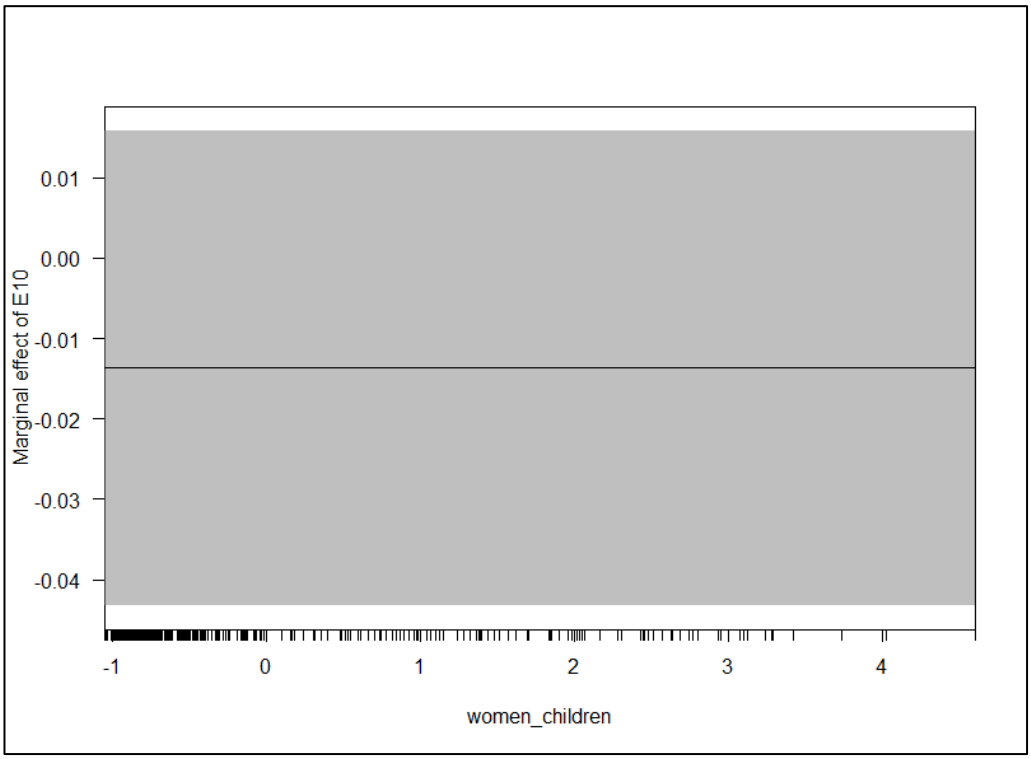
Figure A.C.6.4.3.3 Marginal Effect of E10 Participation on Authorizing Outside Military Intervention, on a rising theme of Women and Children



Note: Model controls for External Shocks and Preference Range in the Council, as well as the presence of all other themes. The model employs conflict-fixed-effects.

Last, rising themes also do not increase the effect of the E10 participation on the outright use of force. Below, I show the marginal effect of E10 on a rising theme of women and children, as an example—since all interactive plots are, again, null findings.

Figure A.C.6.4.3.3 Marginal Effect of E10 Participation on Authorizing Outright Use of Force, on a rising theme of Women and Children



Note: Model controls for External Shocks and Preference Range in the Council, as well as the presence of all other themes. The model employs conflict-fixed-effects.

These additional marginal effects show that the E10, and their thematic retelling, is not of great importance for the authorization of different intervention types. Only with a rising theme of terrorism, does the marginal effect of E10 participation increase the effect of calling for aid. This is the only intervention type affected by interplay between dominance and the E10. This decreases the role of the E10's rhetoric (and participation) in the resolution of civil conflicts. Yet, it does not tarnish the role of rhetoric. Thematic rhetoric was still a statistically significant predictor of intervention, in each model in the main text, as well as the supplementary appendix.