Public Opinion on Institutional Designs for the United Nations: An International Survey Experiment

Farsan Ghassim

University of Oxford, UK, and Lund University, Sweden

Mathias Koenig-Archibugi 🆔

London School of Economics and Political Science, UK

AND

Luis Cabrera

Griffith University, Australia

Scholars and policy makers have intensely debated institutional reforms of the United Nations (UN) since its creation. Yet, relatively little attention has been given to institutional design preferences among the public in UN member states. This study examines two questions: Which possible rules concerning UN authority and representation do citizens prefer? Which personal and country characteristics are associated with their varying institutional preferences? A population-based conjoint survey experiment conducted in Argentina, China, India, Russia, Spain, and the United States is used to identify public preferences on nine distinct institutional design dimensions figuring prominently in UN reform debates. We find widespread support for increasing or at least maintaining UN authority over member states and for handing control over its decision-making to UN organs that would represent the citizens of every member state more directly. Citizens' institutional preferences are associated with their political values and vary depending on whether their home countries would gain or lose influence from a specific reform.

Los académicos y los responsables políticos han debatido intensamente las reformas institucionales de las Naciones Unidas desde su creación. Sin embargo, se ha prestado relativamente poca atención a las preferencias de diseño institucional entre los ciudadanos de los Estados miembros de la ONU. Este estudio examina dos cuestiones: ¿Qué normas posibles relativas a la autoridad de la ONU y a la representación en ella prefieren los ciudadanos? Y ¿qué características personales y nacionales están asociadas a sus diferentes preferencias institucionales? Se usa un experimento de encuesta conjunta basado en la población y realizado en Argentina, China, India, Rusia, España y Estados Unidos para identificar las preferencias del público sobre nueve dimensiones distintas del diseño institucional que ocupan un lugar destacado en los debates sobre la reforma de la ONU. Encontramos un apoyo generalizado para aumentar o, al menos, mantener la autoridad de la ONU sobre los Estados miembros y para entregar el control de su toma de decisiones a órganos de la ONU que representarían más directamente a los ciudadanos de cada Estado miembro. Las preferencias institucionales de los ciudadanos están asociadas a sus valores políticos y varían en función de si sus países de origen ganarían o perderían influencia con una reforma específica.

Des chercheurs et décideurs politiques ont intensément débattu des réformes institutionnelles de l'Organisation des nations unies depuis sa création. Pourtant, relativement peu d'attention a été accordée aux préférences du public en matière de conception des institutions dans les États membres de l'ONU. Cette étude examine deux questions: quelles sont les règles possibles concernant l'autorité et la représentation de l'ONU que les citoyens préfèrent? Et quelles sont les caractéristiques personnelles et nationales qui sont associées à la variation de leurs préférences institutionnelles? Une expérience d'enquête conjointe a été menée auprès de la population d'Argentine, de Chine, d'Inde, de Russie, d'Espagne et des États-Unis pour identifier les préférences du public concernant neuf dimensions distinctes de conception des institutions qui occupent une place dominante dans les débats sur les réformes de l'ONU. Nous constatons un large soutien en faveur d'une augmentation ou au minimum d'un maintien de l'autorité de l'ONU sur les États membres ainsi que d'un transfert du contrôle de ses décisions à des organes de l'organisation qui représenteraient plus directement les citoyens de chaque État membre. Les préférences institutionnelles des citoyens sont associées à leurs valeurs politiques et varient selon que leur pays d'origine gagnerait ou perdrait de l'influence avec une réforme spécifique.

Introduction

Global governance has become increasingly contested. While conflicts have long arisen among political elites over the terms and depth of institutionally mediated international cooperation to address shared challenges, international organizations (IOs) have faced intensifying politicization and resistance from a range of member states (Zürn 2018). According to many observers, a novel feature of this increasing contestation has been the extent to which the public has played a role (Zürn 2004; Hooghe and Marks 2009, 2018;

De Vries, Hobolt, and Walter 2021). Copelovitch, Hobolt, and Walter (2020, 1121) note, "Whereas [IOs'] disintegration challenges in the past have typically originated among the foreign policy elites and governments of individual member states, they are now increasingly rooted in member states' mass publics."

Reflecting and responding to such trends, IOs themselves have increasingly expended significant effort and resources to determine public views on their own governance processes and priorities (Ecker-Ehrhardt 2018). For example, in 2020 the United Nations (UN) surveyed more than 50,000 people in 50 countries, and conducted more than 1,000 public dialogues in 82 countries, for its seventy-fifth anniversary report, "UN75: the Future We Want, the United Nations We Need" (United Nations 2020). By contrast, the UN's major 2005 reform initiative, "In Larger Freedom," took input from a high-level panel and scientists involved in the Millennium Project, but it did not involve similarly large-scale public consultations (United Nations General Assembly 2005).

Sharing this intensifying interest in public views on IOs, researchers have increasingly explored what makes international institutions more or less legitimate in the eyes of the public (Zürn 2004; Bernauer and Gampfer 2013; Dellmuth and Tallberg 2015; Dellmuth 2018; Anderson, Bernauer, and Kachi 2019; Dellmuth, Scholte, and Tallberg 2019; Hooghe, Lenz, and Marks 2019; Dellmuth and Tallberg 2020, 2021; Bexell, Jönsson, and Stappert 2021). In the context of these debates about legitimacy and contestation in global governance, our article addresses two questions: Which institutional design features do citizens prefer in global governance organizations? And which individual and country characteristics are associated with varying preferences? We focus on the UN as the most prominent and far-reaching IO and one that has long seen calls for structural and procedural reform from political and civic elites, including its own leaders, member state representatives, academics, and civil society organizations (Müller 1997; Grigorescu 2015).

To gauge public views on such UN reform proposals, we conducted a population-based conjoint survey experiment. Diverse, nationwide samples of respondents in Argentina, China, India, Russia, Spain, and the United States were asked to choose between and rate "different UNs"—or, more precisely, different combinations of UN design features, including decision procedures, the bindingness of decisions, enforcement capacities, and sources of revenue. Survey options included features expanding UN powers, limiting them, and maintaining the status quo. Overall, across the six countries we surveyed, we find that respondents support strengthening or maintaining the current authority level of the UN and making its structures more representative of the world population. Diverging views on such reforms are associated with home country characteristics such as membership status in the Security Council and personal political values such as cultural libertarianism versus traditionalism. Aggregate preferences for a stronger and more representative UN are broadly consistent with cosmopolitan proposals offered by reform advocates in academia and the policy world.

The article is structured as follows. In the next section, we discuss the theoretical background of this study and present our hypotheses. The third section offers details on the UN design features incorporated into our survey. We then discuss our research design, including our choice of survey countries, in the fourth section. The fifth section presents and discusses our results. The conclusion summarizes our study and outlines possible implications.

Theory and Hypotheses

Our focus on public preferences regarding institutional reform builds on two strands of research. First, an emerging literature shows that non-elites can develop coherent opinions not only in relation to the international orientation of their country and IOs in general (Furia 2005; Norris 2009; Ecker-Ehrhardt 2012; Dellmuth and Tallberg 2015, 2016; Bearce and Scott 2019), but also with regard to more specific issues such as the institutional design of international cooperation on war crimes, climate change, trade, multilateral lending, and regional integration (Bechtel and Scheve 2013; Spilker, Bernauer, and Umaña 2018, Anderson, Bernauer, and Kachi 2019; Hahm et al. 2019; Zvobgo 2019; Bernauer, Mohrenberg, and Koubi 2020; Hahm, Hilpert, and König 2020; Dellmuth and Tallberg 2020).

Second, recent research about public opinion on international politics finds it to be influenced by cues from political elites but not to mirror them passively. Indeed, under specific conditions, public opinion can exert a degree of influence on government policy about international affairs (Steenbergen, Edwards, and De Vries 2007; Gadarian 2010; Davis 2012; Hobolt and De Vries 2016; Guisinger and Saunders 2017, Tomz, Weeks, and Yarhi-Milo 2020, Spilker, Nguyen, and Bernauer 2020). De Vries, Hobolt, and Walter (2021, 324) assess the evidence on such influence, and conclude, "In times of a growing politicization of international politics, the mass public has taken on a more active role in international politics and does not always behave in ways predicted by governments." Non-elite opinion, for example, has influenced decisions on whether to leave or stay in IOs, notably the United Kingdom's "Brexit" (Hobolt 2016), where a 52-48 majority opted to leave the European Union in a national referendum in June 2016.

Observers have also identified instances in which public opinion has influenced institutional reform processes. An example is the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which has seen low and decreasing support in the United States since around 2000 (Dellmuth 2018). Opposition was particularly strong among working-class voters in the Midwest swing states targeted by Donald Trump's campaigns and, "[s]hortly before Trump's inauguration, 55 percent of Trump voters considered withdrawing from or negotiating better terms for NAFTA to be an extremely or very important priority for his first 100 days" (Blendon, Casey, and Benson 2017, 238; see also Merolla et al. 2005). The United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA) negotiated by the Trump administration retains most of NAFTA's features but includes provisions aimed at satisfying those voters, such as more stringent obligations for Mexico with regard to union rights and collective bargaining as well as more demanding rules of origin and wage requirements in the automobile sector (Csehi and Heldt 2021). Another example of the influence of public opinion is the institutional reform process of the European Economic and Monetary Union during 2010–2012. Given its financial power, Germany was crucial in selecting an institutional reform package among several under discussion, and researchers found that "the German government, despite intensive lobbying efforts by banks and industry associations, responded rather closely to the demands of the public" (Degner and Leuffen 2019, 491). It is less clear how far past UN reforms (or failures to achieve them) were directly influenced by mass opinion, but the UN's recent extensive public

outreach initiative mentioned above (United Nations 2020) highlights how public opinion has increasingly been emphasized by the organization.

Against this backdrop, we pursue two primary research questions. The first is: *Which* specific designs receive the most support and thus drive the overall preferences for institutional designs? Most existing surveys capture views on the UN *as a whole* but not on specific design features, and *as it is* rather than how it would be structured or operate after proposed reforms.[1] In contrast, our study encompasses views on both existing and proposed design features. We focus on two clusters of features. The first relates to the *authority* of IOs, broadly defined as the right and capacity to make collectively binding decisions and enforce them (Zürn, Binder, and Ecker-Ehrhardt 2012, 87). Based on research about the conceptualization and measurement of international authority (Hooghe et al. 2017; Zürn, Tokhi, and Binder 2021), we focus on four design features that underpin different degrees of authority: the share of votes needed to pass decisions, the bindingness of those decisions, enforcement powers, and the acquisition of resources. The second cluster relates to *representation* in IOs, which refers to who represents populations in IO decision-making bodies and how equally (Rapkin, Strand, and Trevathan 2016). We focus on five design features capturing different facets of representation: the nature of delegates, which bodies decide on important matters, the distribution of votes among countries, veto rights for the dominant powers, and special rights for democratic countries. The next section explains the UN-specific design options that we considered in relation to each of these nine features.

The literature yields contrasting expectations on public orientation toward international institutional design. With regard to the authority dimension, some authors expect the public to reason in terms of a broad domestic analogy. That is, within states, governments have the authority to make decisions on matters of common concern and enforce them, so there should be similar institutions and capacities internationally in relation to matters of clear global concern (Furia 2005; Archibugi 2008). A contrasting view holds that most people oppose authoritative global institutions, regardless of their control rules, because they consider the nation state a crucial bulwark for the protection of their interests and values. If anything, these authors assert, people see IOs as already too powerful and would prefer greater safeguards for national sovereignty (Miller 2010; Posner 2017; Mead 2021). We test both of these opposing expectations by assessing the following hypotheses:

H1a (more authority): *The public prefers the UN to have more authority in important security, environmental, and economic matters than it currently has.*

H1b (less authority): *The public prefers the UN to have less authority than it currently has.*

Moving on to the representation dimension, some scholars suggest that the notion of certain peoples deserving more weight in global decision-making has lost legitimacy and has been replaced by more egalitarian expectations for global institutions (Archibugi 2008; Archibugi and Held 2011). Such arguments have been shown to influence elite views during past IO reform episodes (Tallberg et al. 2013; Grigorescu 2015) and we expect that non-elites may reason along similar lines. We assess the following hypothesis:

H2 (more equal representation): *The public prefers UN decision-making to be more equally representative of the global population than it currently is.*

Our second research question relates to analyzing *who prefers what*. We considered three sets of characteristics that are potentially associated with differing design preferences. First, we explored the possibility that individuals are more supportive of institutional designs that confer more influence to the state in which they reside (Dellmuth and Tallberg 2015; Ecker-Ehrhardt 2016). We posit that a preference for designs that empower their own state could have at least three types of sources. The first is individual self-interest: A state that is more influential may be in a better position to promote personal interests on the world stage. The second is national identification or belonging: Individuals may want their state to be in the best possible position to defend the "national interest," independent of any personal benefit (Schaffer and Spilker 2019). The third are global-level relational considerations: An individual may believe that her state is particularly "virtuous" and that an expansion of its power would be in the general interest of all persons (Arrighi 1993, 151). Accordingly, we assess the following hypothesis:

H3 (home country bias): *Individuals are especially supportive of institutional designs that confer more influence to the state in which they reside.*

More specifically, we consider three sub-hypotheses that capture three possible sources of state influence in UN decision-making: (H3a) *formal privileges derived from the UN Charter*; (H3b) *population size*; and (H3c) *political regime type*. Finding that residents of the five permanent, veto-wielding states in the Security Council (P5) express more support for preserving its central role and its current veto arrangements than the residents of non-P5 states would provide empirical support for H3a. The result that residents of very populous states express more support for institutional designs weighting voting power by population than the respondents of other states would be consistent with H3b. Finding that residents of electoral democracies express more support for institutional designs that give more influence to states with press freedom and competitive elections, compared to residents of nondemocratic states, would be consistent with H3c.

The second set of factors point to differences within countries as well as between countries. Scholars have found that opinions on world politics are consistently linked to broad political values, so that cleavages in those underlying values tend to be reflected in disagreements on global issues and specifically international institutions (Kertzer et al. 2014; Bayram 2015, 2017; Hooghe, Lenz, and Marks 2019; Katsanidou, Reinl, and Eder 2021). Various authors have conceptualized this cleavage in overlapping but not identical ways, including as integration versus demarcation (Kriesi et al. 2006), cosmopolitanism versus communitarianism (de Wilde et al. 2019), and authoritarianism versus social liberalism

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[1] The studies by Ecker-Ehrhardt (2012, 2016) and Bearce and Scott (2019) take important steps in that direction by identifying several factors that affect support for increased UN authority overall. The data they use, however, cannot tell us how citizens would like that authority to be controlled, since it does not focus on specific possible reforms of decision-making. Dellmuth, Scholte, and Tallberg (2019) find that exposing survey respondents to different propositions on global governance organizations' decision-making procedures affects their expressed confidence. Respondents, however, are offered ostensibly factual information on the *existing* UN, rather than on reform proposals. While completing this article, we became aware of an ongoing research effort by Lisa Dellmuth and Jonas Tallberg on the impact of institutional design features on public support for a hypothetical IO.

(Norris and Inglehart 2019), among others. Hooghe and Marks (2009) have provided umbrella terms for these frameworks, by contrasting traditionalist/authoritarian/nationalist (TAN) and green/alternative/libertarian (GAL) values.

We consider GAL–TAN values related to national or global identity, beliefs about transnational solidarity, cultural libertarianism (understood as a stance of tolerance and openness toward diversity) versus traditionalism, authoritarian values, and environmentalist values. We expect that, compared to individuals leaning toward the various TAN-type values, those oriented toward GAL-type values should be less concerned about "demarcating" the national political space and more inclined to regard the world as a legitimate site for collective governance. They may also hold that control over collective governance should be shared equally among all those subjected to it. In contrast, individuals oriented to TAN-type values can be expected to oppose institutional designs that involve more authority for the UN and to support additional safeguards against UN interference in national ways of life (Kriesi et al. 2006; Hooghe and Marks 2009; Ecker-Ehrhardt 2012, 2016; de Wilde et al. 2019). Accordingly, we assess the following hypotheses:

H4 (values and authority): *Individuals oriented toward GAL-type values are more supportive of greater UN authority than individuals oriented toward TAN-type values.*

H5 (values and representation): *Individuals oriented toward GAL-type values are more supportive of more equal representation of the global population than individuals oriented toward TAN-type values.*

Additionally, we examine whether support for institutional designs that confer more influence to their own state is especially strong among individuals who identify primarily as national rather than global citizens.

Our third set of expectations relates to transnational life experience. The transactionalist approach developed by Karl Deutsch and others in the 1950s, which has been revived and extended in recent years (Mau, Mewes, and Zimmermann 2008; Kuhn 2015), posits that better knowledge of and interaction with people from other countries cognitively and affectively prepare individuals to conceive of communities in terms that transcend national boundaries. Based on this approach, we considered the possibility that individuals with more—and more intense—transnational life experience and connections are more supportive of greater authority for the UN, and of more equal representation of global populations in UN decision-making. We assess the following hypotheses:

H6 (transnational experience and authority): *Individuals with more transnational life experience are more supportive of greater UN authority than individuals with less such experience.*

H7 (transnational experience and representation): *Individuals with more transnational life experience are more supportive of more equal representation of the global population than individuals with less such experience.*

Dimensions of UN Institutional Design

The dimensions of authority and representation provide a general framework for thinking about variation in IO design, but each dimension encompasses a range of more specific design features. In this section, we present and explain the institutional features that we selected for inclusion in our population-based survey experiment. As noted, UN reform proposals have been advanced by a vast range of UN and state leaders, researchers, and civil society groups (Newcombe 1993; Müller 1997; Fitzgerald 2000; Slaughter 2005; Lopez-Claros, Dahl, and Groff 2020). In this vast literature, we searched for reform proposals that would significantly affect the degree and character of authority and representation in the UN. In other words, we aimed to give respondents a choice between the status quo and design options that departed considerably from it on the dimensions of authority and representation. Table 1 summarizes the nine attributes and respective options presented to survey respondents.

The first authority feature (*decision rule*) concerns the voting rules for the adoption of UN decisions (Hooghe et al. 2017; Zürn, Tokhi, and Binder 2021). Under the status quo, decisions in the General Assembly ("UNGA" in the figures) are adopted when they are supported by two-thirds of votes for the most important matters and by a simple majority for other matters (UN Charter, Article 18, paragraph 2). We consider the proposal of making adoption more difficult by requiring a unanimous agreement of all members. Such a reform would reflect the "sovereigntist" position that genuinely independent countries should never be outvoted (Rabkin 2004; see also Benhabib 2016). We also consider the alternative proposal of facilitating adoption by requiring a simple majority of votes on all matters. For instance, Marchetti (2008, 64–65) advocates simple majority as the decision rule that is most consistent with cosmopolitan democratic principles, meaning ones that hold that all persons' interests should be fairly represented globally and everyone should have appropriate opportunities to participate in global decision-making.

The second authority attribute (*bindingness*) concerns the range of issues on which the UN should be able to make decisions that are legally binding. The status quo is that decisions of the UN, acting through its Security Council ("UNSC" in the figures), are binding on every country, but only when international peace and security are threatened (UN Charter, Articles 10 and 25). We considered two proposals for reform alongside the status quo. One would increase the authority of the UN overall by extending it to a range of important security, environmental, and economic matters. This would be consistent with systematic proposals for the UN or other IOs to be empowered to establish binding rules in such areas (Held 1995; Kokaz 2005; Brock 2009; Gould 2014). The second proposal would decrease UN authority by making its decisions binding only on those countries that voluntarily accept them, consistent with a firm sovereigntist position (Rabkin 2004).

The third authority feature (*enforcement*) concerns the enforcement of UN law. The status quo is that, in order to stop serious violations of the UN Charter and related international law by a member country, force can be used collectively by other member countries if authorized by the Security Council (UN Charter, Chapter VII). One proposal for reform would increase the authority of the UN by having its law enforced directly by a strengthened UN organization. This reform relates to long-standing proposals for permanent UN armed forces, from a "UN Legion" of several hundred thousand troops proposed by numerous commentators as the organization was being conceived and debated in the early to mid-1940s, to more recent proposals for a standing UN rapid-response force (Koops and Novosseloff 2017). We also consider a second reform proposal that would decrease UN authority compared to the status quo by prohibiting any use of force by the UN or state actors to

Table 1. Institutional attributes and options presented in the survey.

Authority features

Decision rule: Decisions in the highest UN body would be adopted when they are supported…
(a) by two thirds of votes for the most important matters, and by a simple majority for other matters.
(b) by a simple majority of votes on all matters.
(c) only by unanimous agreement of all members.

Bindingness: UN decisions would be binding…
(a) on every country, but only in matters of international peace and security.
(b) on those countries that voluntarily accept them.
(c) on every country on important security, environmental, and economic matters.

Enforcement: To stop serious violations of UN law by a member country, force could be used…
(a) collectively by other member countries.
(b) by no one.
(c) directly by a strengthened UN organization.

Budget: The UN would get resources from…
(a) mandatory contributions by member countries, plus voluntary contributions.
(b) voluntary contributions by governments.
(c) taxes levied on transnational companies directly by the UN.

Representation features

Delegates: The highest decision-making body of the UN would include…
(a) only representatives of national executives.
(b) representatives of national executives meeting in one chamber, and representatives elected directly by citizens of member countries specifically to serve in a second chamber.
(c) representatives of national executives meeting in one chamber and members of national parliaments or congress meeting in a second chamber.

Important decisions: Important UN decisions would be taken…
(a) by a larger body composed of all member countries, or by a smaller UN body composed of some permanent and some elected member countries, depending on the subject matter.
(b) always by a body that includes all member countries.

Vote shares: The share of votes held by each country would be…
(a) equal, regardless of country population sizes.
(b) directly proportional to country population sizes.
(c) larger for more populous countries, but less than proportional to country population sizes.
(d) based on a combination of country population sizes and their contributions to the UN budget.

Veto rights: Special rights to block UN decisions would be held by…
(a) the current permanent members of the Security Council.
(b) the current permanent members of the Security Council, plus a few other major countries.
(c) no country.

Status of democracies: Countries with full press freedom and where political parties compete in free elections would…
(a) not have more power in the highest UN decision-making body.
(b) have more power in the highest UN decision-making body.

stop serious violations of UN law. This proposal is associated with the sovereigntist position rejecting international enforcement as a violation of state sovereignty (Rabkin 2004).

The fourth authority feature (*budget*) concerns the ways in which the UN can obtain financial resources. The status quo is that UN activities are financed through mandatory contributions by member states, plus voluntary contributions (UN Charter, Article 17). One reform proposal would increase the authority of the UN by allowing it to levy taxes directly on transnational companies. The wording in the survey reflects a far-reaching version of this reform, as envisaged by authors such as Jenks and Sumberg during the founding stages of the UN: "[D]istinctive in the approach of Jenks and Sumberg are their recommendations calling for taxes to be levied by a global authority, rather than depending upon payments being made by national governments" (Frankman 1996, 809). Similarly, in its wide-ranging report on UN reforms, the South Centre discussed the prospect of a UN "financed largely by some form of international taxation or other means of raising finances on an automatic basis," not only to boost available resources but also as a means of "lowering direct demands on national budgets" (South Centre 1997, 91–92). However, like most proponents of international taxation, the South Centre ultimately regarded international taxation as complementary rather than alternative to government contributions. A second reform proposal we consider would weaken UN authority by making all member state contributions to the UN budget strictly voluntary. Policymakers such as John Bolton, US Ambassador to the UN in 2005–2006 and National Security Adviser in 2018–2019, have offered such proposals (Bolton 2017).

In addition to these four authority features, we consider five design attributes—*delegates, important decisions, vote shares, veto rights, and status of democracies*—which relate to how decisions are or could be made in the UN, and specifically how representation is or may be distributed among various actors. The first representation feature (*delegates*) concerns the identity of the delegates in the main UN bodies. The status quo is that the highest decision-making body of the UN includes only representatives of national executives (UN General Assembly Resolution 257 (III) A, 1948). We

consider two proposals for reform. In one, the highest body would include representatives of national executives meeting in one chamber, and representatives elected directly by citizens of member countries specifically to serve in a second chamber. The second proposal would include representatives of national executives meeting in one chamber and members of national parliaments or congress meeting in a second chamber. Both proposals reflect the far-ranging dialogue on the rationale, possible shape, and scope of a UN parliamentary body as a means to increase the democratic legitimacy of the organization (Newcombe 1991; Archibugi 2008; Leinen and Bummel 2018).

The second representation feature (*important decisions*) concerns the UN bodies in which the most important decisions are made. The status quo is that important UN decisions are taken by a larger body composed of all member states (the General Assembly) and by a smaller UN body composed of some permanent and some elected member states (the Security Council), or by the smaller body exclusively—depending on the subject matter (UN Charter, Chapters IV and V). We consider a proposal that important decisions should always be made by a body that includes all member states. This proposal is advanced by commentators who regard the current role of the Security Council as undemocratic and illegitimate, and who would address the problem by redistributing power to the General Assembly (South Centre 1997) or by abolishing the Security Country altogether (Faizi 2004; Murithi 2017).

The third representation feature (*vote shares*) concerns the distribution of votes among countries. The status quo is that every member state has the same vote (UN Charter, Article 18, paragraph 1). We consider three reform proposals. Under the first, the share of votes held by each country would be directly proportional to its population size. Under the second, vote shares would be larger for more populous countries but less than proportional to population sizes, to ensure relatively greater weight for smaller countries—an approach that has been called degressive proportionality. Under the third proposal, vote shares would be based on a combination of countries' population sizes and their contributions to the UN budget. All of the potential reforms surveyed, or related voting and representational issues, have long featured in UN reform debates (Barrett and Newcombe 1968; Schwartzberg 2013; Leinen and Bummel 2018).

The fourth representation feature (*veto rights*) concerns special rights for certain member states to block UN decisions, that is, the veto. The status quo is that such rights are held by the five permanent members of the Security Council (UN Charter, Article 27, paragraph 3). One reform proposal is to retain the privileged status of the current permanent members and extend the same privileges to a few other major countries. Another proposal is to abolish any veto rights. These proposals reflect a broad and enduring dialogue on the reform of Security Council decision-making (Hosli et al. 2011; Hassler 2013; Winther and Lindegaard 2021).

Finally, the fifth representation feature (*status of democracies*) concerns the role of democratic countries in UN decision-making. The status quo is that democratic countries, understood broadly here as countries with free and open multiparty elections and full press freedom, do not enjoy a special status compared to other member states. A reform could grant such countries more power in the highest UN decision-making body. This has been advocated as a means to make UN policies more consistent with the international protection and promotion of human and political rights (Karatnycky and Mecacci 2005; Slaughter 2006).

Research Design and Methods

We assessed our hypotheses by conducting a population-based survey experiment. It was completed between March and June 2019 by respondents in six countries: Argentina, China, India, Russia, Spain, and the United States. This group of countries provides variation along the dimensions that are relevant to some of our hypotheses, specifically our sub-hypotheses relating to home country bias (H3). First, it includes three permanent members of the Security Council (China, Russia, and United States) and three countries that are not, which is relevant to H3a (*formal privileges derived from the UN Charter*). Second, it includes two very populous countries (China and India), which is relevant to H3b (*population size*). Third, it includes four countries that scored above the threshold for electoral democracy (0.5) in the V-Dem database for the year of the survey (2019), that is, Argentina, India, Spain, and the United States; this is relevant to H3c (*political regime type*). Besides their usefulness in assessing specific hypotheses, the inclusion of China, India, Russia, and the United States is helpful also because, as a consequence of their formal privileges in the UN and/or additional sources of influence or power (population, nuclear arsenals, etc.), they have played a central role in efforts to pass or stymie reforms (Grigorescu 2015; Friedner Parrat 2019; Hosli and Dörfler 2019). While we do not claim that our sample is representative of the whole world, together these six countries display a substantial degree of diversity in terms of world region, formal status in the UN organization, economic and military power, per capita incomes, population size, and regime type. Below we note the potential gains from surveying other countries in future iterations of this or similar studies.

In order to draw causal inferences concerning public preferences on UN designs, we constructed our study as an experimental survey. Survey experiments have proven to be valuable tools for the investigation of public attitudes on international cooperation, ranging from climate change to potential reforms of the European Union (Bechtel and Scheve 2013; Bernauer and Gampfer 2013, Anderson, Bernauer, and Kachi 2019; Dellmuth, Scholte, and Tallberg 2019; Hahm et al. 2019; Hahm, Hilpert, and König 2020; Kuhn, Nicoli, and Vandenbroucke 2020; Dellmuth and Tallberg 2021). Specifically, we used a full-profile conjoint analysis approach (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014; Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley 2020). We showed respondents four pairs of UN profiles consisting of randomized combinations of reform or status quo options, and asked them to choose between and rate the two options they saw on each screen. The method enables us to assess our hypotheses by identifying the effect that each institutional design option has on preferences regarding the UN. The experimental nature of our survey ensures that potentially confounding variables are distributed uniformly across subgroups, so that any differences in posttreatment responses can be attributed solely to our treatments. By asking respondents to choose among the two hypothetical designs (or "profiles"), varying along different attributes (or "features") and randomizing the options (or "levels") of attributes across respondents, conjoint analysis enables estimations of the relative importance of each characteristic for the overall choice (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014).

In order to assess H4 and H5, the survey also asked questions relating to political values, and specifically on holding a primarily national or primarily global identity, beliefs about transnational solidarity, cultural libertarianism, authoritarian values, and environmentalism. In line with

other studies that used surveys to assess hypotheses inspired by transactionalist theory (Mau, Mewes, and Zimmermann 2008; Kuhn 2015), we measure the intensity of transnational life experience relevant to H6 and H7 by asking respondents separately about migration experiences and international friendships during childhood and at the time of the survey, as well as their frequency of communication with others internationally.

We included an instructional manipulation check to be able to separate attentive from inattentive respondents, and we excluded from our analysis those who did not pass this test (Oppenheimer, Meyvis, and Davidenko 2009). Further, given potential links between people's knowledge and/or comprehension of world politics with their attitudes toward IOs (Dellmuth 2016), our survey contained both a knowledge question on the UN and a comprehension question on the implications of voting rules. Finally, the questionnaire included standard demographic questions such as gender, age, region, nationality, education, and income. Our full questionnaire is available in Section A of the online supplementary material.

Respondents were invited to complete the survey in their country's main language or English (or English and Spanish in the United States). The online samples were provided by Dynata (formerly called Research Now/Survey Sampling International), a leading provider of online-based survey research that has been widely used in academic research (e.g., Banks and Hicks 2019; Chilton, Milner, and Tingley 2020; Hahm, Hilpert, and König 2020, Tomz, Weeks, and Yarhi-Milo 2020). Dynata uses various online marketing methods and a graded incentive scheme to recruit participants of diverse backgrounds, including population niches that are otherwise hard to reach in online-based survey research, for their respondent pools (Research Now 2014). Section B of the online supplementary material offers further information on our research design and methods.

Dynata used census-based quotas to provide us with respondent samples that are nationally representative with regard to age, gender, and region. Our final pooled sample includes 7,610 respondents in total who completed our survey: 983 from Argentina; 1,223 from China; 981 from India; 2,468 from Russia; 961 from Spain; and 994 from the United States. Following standard practice in multicountry survey research (e.g., World Values Survey Association 2020), respondents in each country were weighted up or down to our target sample size of one thousand so that each country has an equal weight in our pooled analyses across countries. In order to correct any remaining sample imbalances on our target quotas, we used entropy balancing (Hainmueller 2012; Hainmueller and Xu 2013), computing weights in each country based on census figures provided by Dynata for our three sampling variables. Section B of the online supplementary material presents our quotas and weights in each survey country in detail. Descriptive analyses of our sample are provided in Section C of the online supplementary material.

Since each respondent completed four conjoint tasks on successive screens, choosing between and rating two (potential) UN designs, the total number of respondents is multiplied by 8 to give us 60,880 observations in total. Following standard practice in conjoint analyses that include several tasks per respondent, we clustered standard errors by respondent (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014). To compute our results, we used the *cregg* package (version 0.4.0) for the statistical analysis software R (Leeper 2020).

Our analyses focus on four quantities of interest: marginal means (MMs), average marginal component effects (AMCEs), differences in MMs (MM diffs), and omnibus F-tests (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014; Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley 2020). Each of them contributes information relevant to different aspects of our research questions. First, MMs describe the degree of preferences for "profiles that have a particular feature level," averaging over all other features (Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley 2020, 210). If an MM estimate is statistically different from 0.5, which signifies the point of complete indifference between two choices, we know that the particular institutional design feature to which the MM refers has a significant effect on people's evaluations of UN designs. This effect is negative if the MM is below 0.5 and positive if it is above that threshold. MM analysis thus allows us to test whether a particular attribute level, for example, veto abolition, has any effect on respondents' overall evaluation of a UN profile, and what the magnitude of that effect is. It thus forms the basis for answering all our research questions.

Second, in fully randomized conjoint designs such as ours, AMCEs are the marginal effects of changing one attribute level to another, holding everything else equal (Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley 2020, 210). In contrast to MMs, the AMCE of any institutional design feature is calculated in relation to another. AMCE analysis thus allows us to test whether one attribute level's MM is statistically different from another's, for example, whether direct enforcement by the UN is preferred to collective enforcement by UN member states (in a specific subsample of people or in the aggregate sample). Similar to Hahm, Hilpert, and König (2020) with respect to the European Union, we are particularly interested in the UN's status quo design features as baselines, testing whether and to what extent the reform proposals have positive or negative effects.[2] In the Tables folder of our online supplementary material, we present all our AMCE results using different reference categories, bearing in mind the advice of Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley (2020).

Third, MM diffs describe the differences between the MMs of various subgroups, in particular what the magnitude of these differences is and to what extent these differences are statistically significant (Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley 2020). This quantity of interest relates to our second research question, that is, whether observed differences between the MMs of two subgroups are statistically significant. For instance, in relation to our expectations about individuals holding traditionalist or culturally libertarian values outlined above, we use MM diffs to check whether these two groups' preferences for a specific UN design feature are indeed statistically different or not.

Last but not least, F-tests indicate whether there are statistically significant differences at the aggregate level between the MMs of various subgroups that we analyze (Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley 2020). This also contributes to answering our second research question on *who prefers what*. Whereas the MM diffs' *p*-values serve to establish if there are statistically significant differences between the MMs of two subgroups with respect to a *single* attribute level, the F-test's *p*-value tells us whether the MM estimates of two subgroups are statistically different on aggregate across *all* attribute levels in the respective analysis. For example, when comparing

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[2] In order to establish equality between MMs and AMCEs, we calculate *empirical* MMs and compute AMCEs *separately* for each attribute, rather than calculating AMCEs for fully specified conjoint models including all attributes, which produces divergences between *estimated* and *empirical* MMs. We are grateful to Thomas Leeper for useful advice on this issue.

the UN design preferences of cultural libertarians and traditionalists, *F*-test analysis allows us to establish whether UN design preferences *across all levels* differ systematically based on this value divide or not. Our subgroup analyses in the next section focus on those value divides that pass this test.[3]

Results

Research Question 1: Which (Potential) Institutional Designs of the UN Do People Prefer?

Our conjoint analysis reveals that reform proposals that would make the UN more authoritative and reduce global inequalities in representation are most preferred by citizens across the six survey countries on average. The second most popular category is status quo design characteristics. Finally, there are no instances where a proposal that would make the UN *less* authoritative is most preferred by citizens across our survey countries. Figure 1 and the corresponding AMCE tables demonstrate these findings. Overall, the results support H1a (more authority) and H2 (more equal representation) and fail to support H1b (less authority). We now discuss the findings individually, starting with our four authority attributes before moving on to the five representation attributes.[4]

Among the four authority attributes, let us first consider the *decision rule* feature. The status quo is that important decisions require a two-thirds majority, while other decisions are taken by simple majority. Both reform proposals—requiring a simple majority or unanimity for *all* decisions—have negative effects on public preferences for UN designs compared to the status quo. Moreover, preferences for the two reform proposals are statistically indistinguishable at the aggregate level. Next, we consider the *bindingness* feature. The status quo is that UN decisions are binding on every country, but only in matters of international peace and security. Compared to this status quo, we find that the proposal to make UN decisions binding on every UN member state on important security, environmental, and economic matters has a positive effect on public preferences for UN models. In contrast, the option of making UN decisions binding only on those states that voluntarily accept them has a negative effect. Indeed, the idea of exclusively voluntary commitment is the most unpopular proposal among all the UN design options that we provided (as indicated by the MMs across countries). Third, on the *enforcement* feature, increasing the power of the UN by having its law enforced directly by a strengthened UN organization is statistically indistinguishable from the status quo, where force can be used collectively by other member states. However, the proposal that there should be no enforcement negatively affects public preferences for UN models across countries, compared to the status quo. Fourth, on the *budget* feature,

both reform proposals (exclusively voluntary contributions or direct corporate taxation) have negative effects compared to the status quo, in which UN activities are financed through mandatory and voluntary contributions by member states. As the direct taxation option did not mention the concurrent existence of member state contributions, our finding should not be interpreted as a public rejection of a combined taxation/contributions funding package, which most proponents of direct taxation envisage.

We now move to the five representation attributes. First, on the *delegates* feature, we considered two reform proposals: a second chamber composed of directly elected representatives and one composed of national parliamentarians. Both reform proposals have positive effects on public preferences for UN models compared to the status quo in which the highest decision-making bodies of the UN include only representatives of national executives. Moreover, people clearly prefer a second chamber with directly elected representatives to one with national parliamentarians. Second, the proposal that *important decisions* should always be taken by a body that includes all member states increases support for UN models compared to the status quo, in which decision-making is divided between the General Assembly and the Security Council. Third, on the *vote shares* feature, direct and degressive proportionality are less preferred than the status quo of equal voting rights for all countries, while preferences for voting weighted by population and budget contribution and for the status quo are statistically indistinguishable. Moreover, degressive proportionality, where vote share increases with population but less than proportionally, is the least preferred option overall. Fourth, preferences for the proposal of extending veto rights to a few other major countries are statistically indistinguishable from attitudes on the status quo of veto privileges for the five permanent members of the Security Council (P5). However, the proposal of abolishing veto rights entirely has a negative effect on aggregate public preferences for UN designs compared to the status quo. Fifth and finally, the proposal to grant more power in the highest UN decision-making body to countries with competitive elections and press freedoms positively affects aggregate public preferences for UN models compared to the status quo, where democratic countries do not have such special status. Overall, we conclude that citizens across our six survey countries tend to support a UN that is at least as strong and more directly representative than the current UN.

Research Question 2: Which Individual and Country Characteristics Are Associated with Differences in UN Design Preferences?

We consider in turn the three potential correlates of design preference: home country characteristics, political values, and transnational life experience. Figures 2 through 9 illustrate most of the results discussed here. The remaining analyses are presented in Section D of the online supplementary material and associated tables.

HOME COUNTRY CHARACTERISTICS

F-tests show that subgroups defined by each of the three country-level factors we consider—membership status in the Security Council, population size, and regime type—are systematically associated with preferences for UN designs. In the following, we discuss the patterns that emerge from statistically significant subgroup MM diffs. They are consistent with H3 (home country bias).

Security Council status of home country: As expected in subhypothesis H3a, the proposal to strengthen the UN body

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[3] Our summary here is based on the results presented in Figures 1 through 9, as well as the online supplementary material—specifically Section D and the tables including AMCE, MM, MM diff, and *F*-test statistics. Additional results (i.e., MM plots for other variables of interest, as well as AMCE, MM, MM diff, and *F*-test statistics for all our analyses) are provided in the online supplementary material and the accompanying Tables folder. All reported findings—including AMCE estimates, MMs compared to the 0.5 line, MM diffs, and *F*-tests—are statistically significant at the 5 percent level ($p < 0.05$) or less, unless otherwise stated. In Section E of the online supplementary material, we present various checks demonstrating the overall robustness of our results.

[4] A caveat: Whenever we note that respondents prefer a reform proposal to the status quo, this does not depend on individual respondents knowing what the status quo is and realizing the alternative would involve a change. In line with conjoint methodology, we infer preferences for or against the status quo from the aggregate patterns of responses in relation to the options that are presented in Table 1.
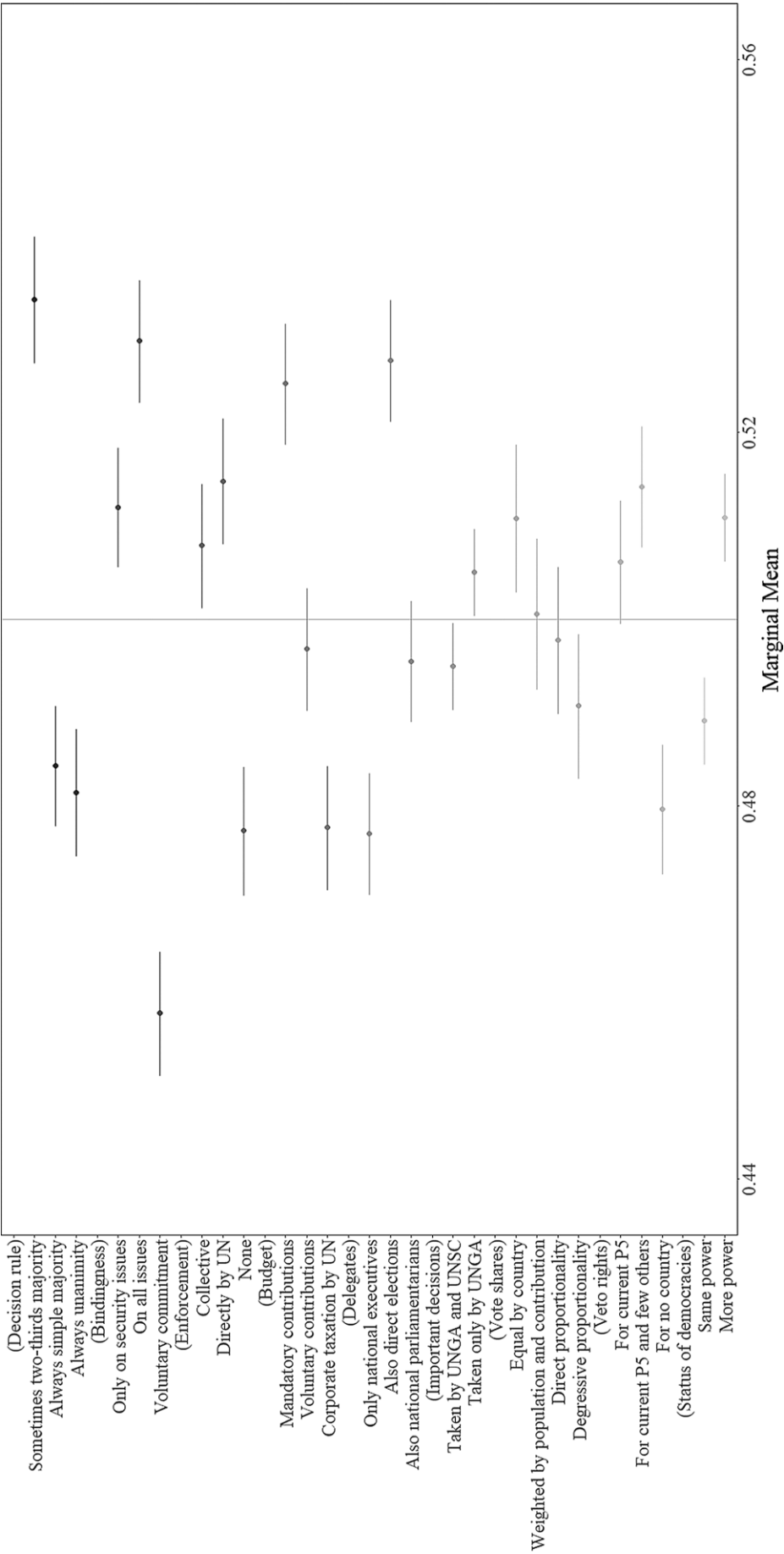
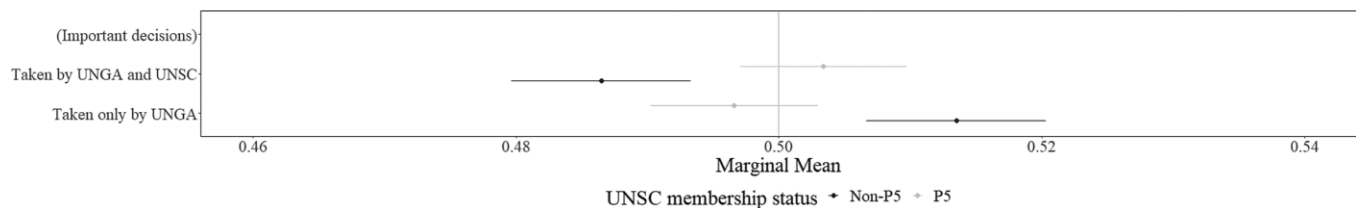**Figure 1.** Pooled sample across countries.

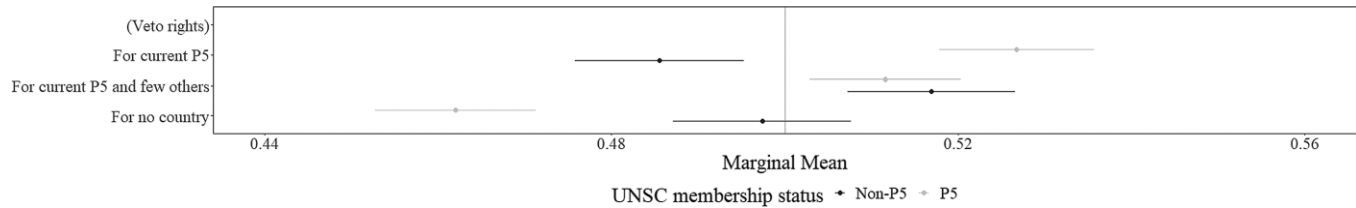**Figure 2.** Subgroup analysis on important decisions by UN Security Council membership status.

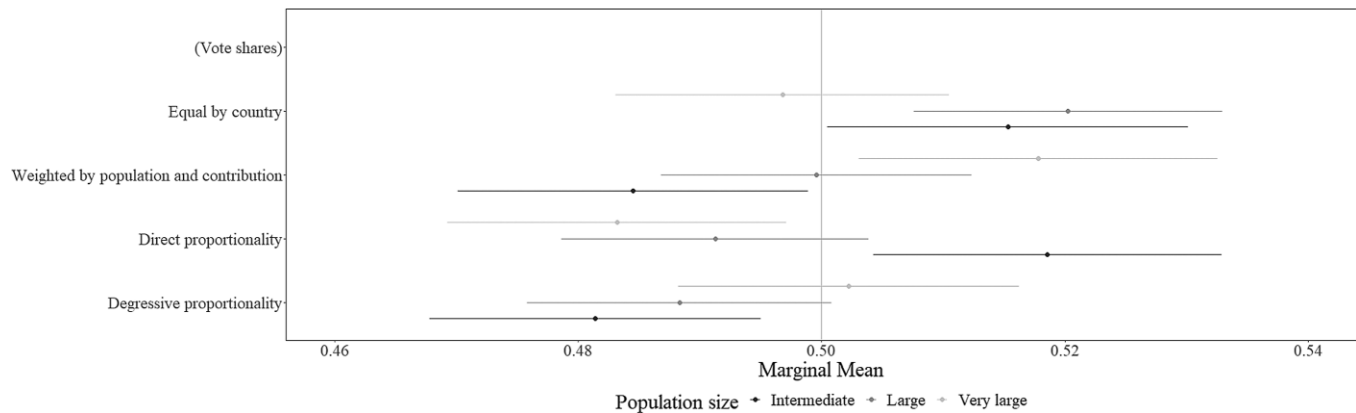**Figure 3.** Subgroup analysis on veto rights by UN Security Council membership status.

Figure 4. Subgroup analysis on vote shares by population size.

that includes all member states is supported only by respondents in non-P5 countries (Figure 2). Maintaining the status quo of veto rights for current P5 members increases favorability of UN models among respondents in P5 countries and decreases it among respondents in non-P5 countries (Figure 3). The option of eliminating all veto rights decreases support for UN models among P5 respondents, while it does not significantly affect the choices of non-P5 respondents. One noteworthy alignment between the two subgroups is their mutual (and statistically indistinguishable) support for extending the veto to "a few other major countries." As expected, support for maintaining the current veto rights is especially strong among the citizens of the P5 countries who view themselves more as national than global citizens (Figure D.12 in the Online Appendix).

Population size of home country: Respondents in large countries (Russia and the United States) are more likely to support the UN status quo of equal vote shares regardless of country population size, while respondents in the two very large countries (China and India) are indifferent (Figure 4). Respondents in very large countries are more likely than those in intermediate countries (Argentina and Spain) to support allocating votes based on degressive proportionality or a combination of country population sizes and financial contributions. Contrary to our sub-hypothesis H3b, however, they are less likely to support making votes directly proportional to country population sizes.

Political regime of home country: In line with sub-hypothesis H3c, the proposal to grant more power to democratic coun-

tries increases support for UN models among respondents in electoral democracies, while the status quo (no special power for democracies) decreases it (Figure 5). These options do not significantly affect the choices of respondents in nondemocracies.

POLITICAL VALUES

Next, we consider political values. Responses to questions capturing the broader GAL–TAN value distinction are too weakly correlated in our sample to justify treating them as a composite value; hence, we consider them separately.[5] *F*-tests demonstrate that subgroups identified by three political value features are systematically associated with different preferences for UN designs across countries: self-perceived global versus national citizenship (Figure 6), cultural libertarianism versus traditionalism expressed in attitudes on homosexuality (Figure 7), and prioritization of the environment or the economy (Figure 8). In contrast, subgroups defined by two other questions related to the broader GAL–TAN distinction (obeying authority versus independent thinking; rich-country help for poorer countries) are not systematically associated with different UN preferences according to our *F*-tests. In the following, we discuss only those instances where *F*-tests and subgroup MM diffs are statistically significant at conventional levels. Overall, these findings provide some support for H4 (values and authority) and H5 (values and representation).

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[5] Section C.6 in the online supplementary material provides further details.
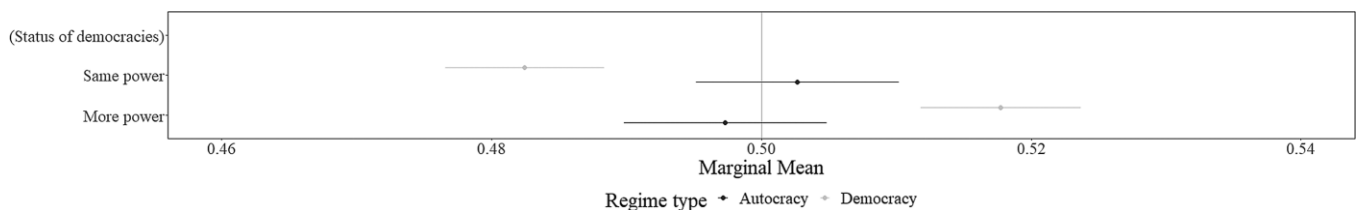
Figure 5. Subgroup analysis on status of democracies by regime type.

Global and national citizenship orientation: Both self-perceived global citizens and self-perceived national citizens are less likely to choose UN models featuring the status quo of exclusive governmental representation, but the former even less so than the latter (*delegates*). Maintaining the status quo of veto rights for the current permanent members of the Security Council is supported by national citizens, while global citizens are indifferent on average (*veto rights*). Conversely, the option of eliminating all veto rights does not affect how global citizens assess UN models, but it makes national citizens less likely to choose them.

Cultural libertarianism and traditionalism: Cultural libertarians are significantly more supportive of the proposal of UN decisions being binding on a range of important security, environmental, and economic matters than traditionalists, who are indifferent to it on average (*bindingness*). Both cultural libertarians and traditionalists oppose the option of making UN decisions binding only on those countries that voluntarily accept them, but the former are significantly more opposed than the latter. Maintaining the status quo, where UN decisions are binding on every country only in matters of international peace and security, is supported by traditionalists, while cultural libertarians are indifferent to it on average. Maintaining the status quo of veto rights for the current permanent members of the Security Council is supported by traditionalists, whereas cultural libertarians are indifferent (*veto rights*). While the option of eliminating all veto rights does not affect how cultural libertarians judge UN models, it makes traditionalists less likely to choose them.

Environmentalism: Among those who prioritize environmental protection, but not among those who prioritize economic growth and jobs, the proposal to make UN decisions binding on a range of important security, environmental, and economic matters increases the favorability of UN models (*bindingness*). The proposal for exclusively voluntary contributions to the UN budget increases support for UN models among those who prioritize the economy and decreases it among those who prioritize environmental protection (*budget*). The proposal for direct corporate taxation by the UN reduces favorability for both subgroups but less strongly among environmentalists ($p < 0.1$).

TRANSNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Last, we consider transnational life experience (Figure 9). Our *F*-tests show that only one of the experiences we measured—the current number of international friends—is systematically associated with preferences for UN designs. While respondents favor the proposal to make UN decisions binding on a range of important matters and reject the proposal of entirely voluntary commitments regardless of the number of international friends they currently have, subgroup MM diffs show that those with three or more international friends do so significantly more strongly than those with no such friends (*bindingness*). Moreover, respondents with no international friends support maintaining the status

quo of veto rights for the current permanent members of the Security Council, while those with three or more friends are indifferent on average (*veto rights*).

In contrast, subgroups identified by the other transnational life experiences—personal migration background, international friendships in childhood, and transnational communication frequency—are not associated with different design preferences at conventional levels of statistical significance. Overall, the evidence thus does not support H6 (transnational experience and authority) or H7 (transnational experience and control). Given the apparent discrepancy between the number of current international friends and the other indicators of life experiences, we conjecture that the former is likely to be a reflection of value orientations and specifically openness to and interest in foreign cultures, a characteristic that is close to the global citizen orientation that we measured separately.

OTHER FINDINGS

The survey experiment also yielded some findings that did not stem from our theoretical framework and hypotheses, but that can provide a fuller picture of the distribution of views on UN institutional designs. The decades-long dominant position of the United States in global politics raises the question of whether the views of the US public are different from those of the other countries in the sample. We found evidence for this, as the *F*-test is significant (see Section D.20 in the appendix in the online supplementary material): Both US and non-US respondents are opposed to ruling out the use of force to stop serious violations of UN law but US respondents to a greater extent. Furthermore, US respondents are supportive of collective enforcement, while respondents from other countries are indifferent on average. There is a weakly significant ($p < 0.1$) difference also in relation to a representation dimension: Both US and non-US respondents support having representatives elected directly by citizens in a second chamber, but US respondents more so.

We also conducted subgroup analyses on more and less knowledgeable respondents, and respondents with higher and lower comprehension of voting rules, as both *F*-tests are significant (see appendix, Sections D.16 and D.17 in the online supplementary material). UN knowledge is measured as the ability to identify permanent members of the UN Security Council, with the ability to identify all five members indicating high knowledge, four correct members indicating medium knowledge, and three or less indicating low knowledge. Compared to the other respondents, high-knowledge respondents are more favorable to the status quo in relation to several dimensions: They are much more supportive of the current two-thirds majority rule, more opposed to alternative voting rules, and less supportive of direct elections of delegates. They also prefer the Security Council to keep a role in major UN decisions (whereas those with low or medium knowledge prefer them to be taken only by the General Assembly), and keeping veto rights for the
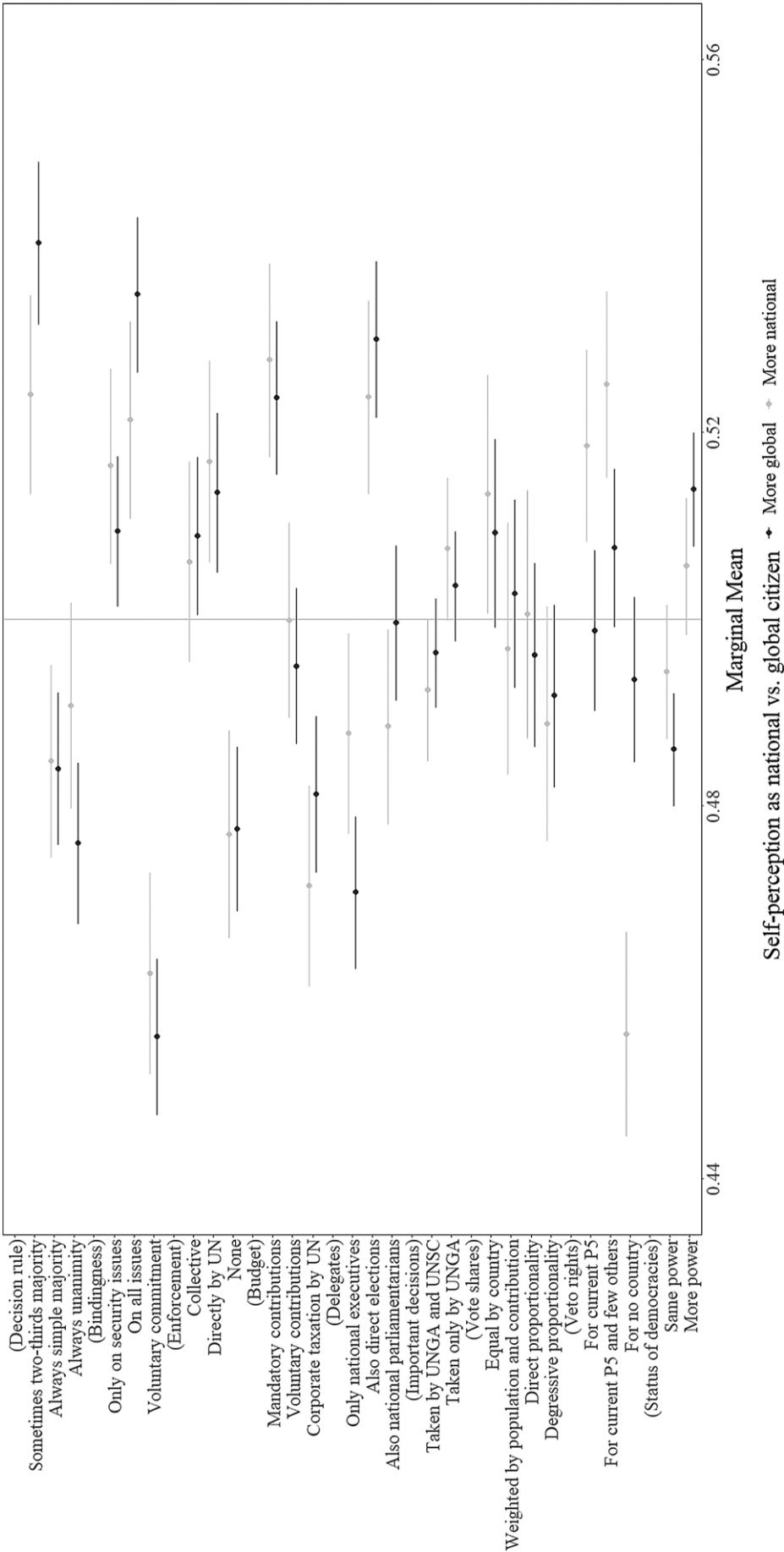
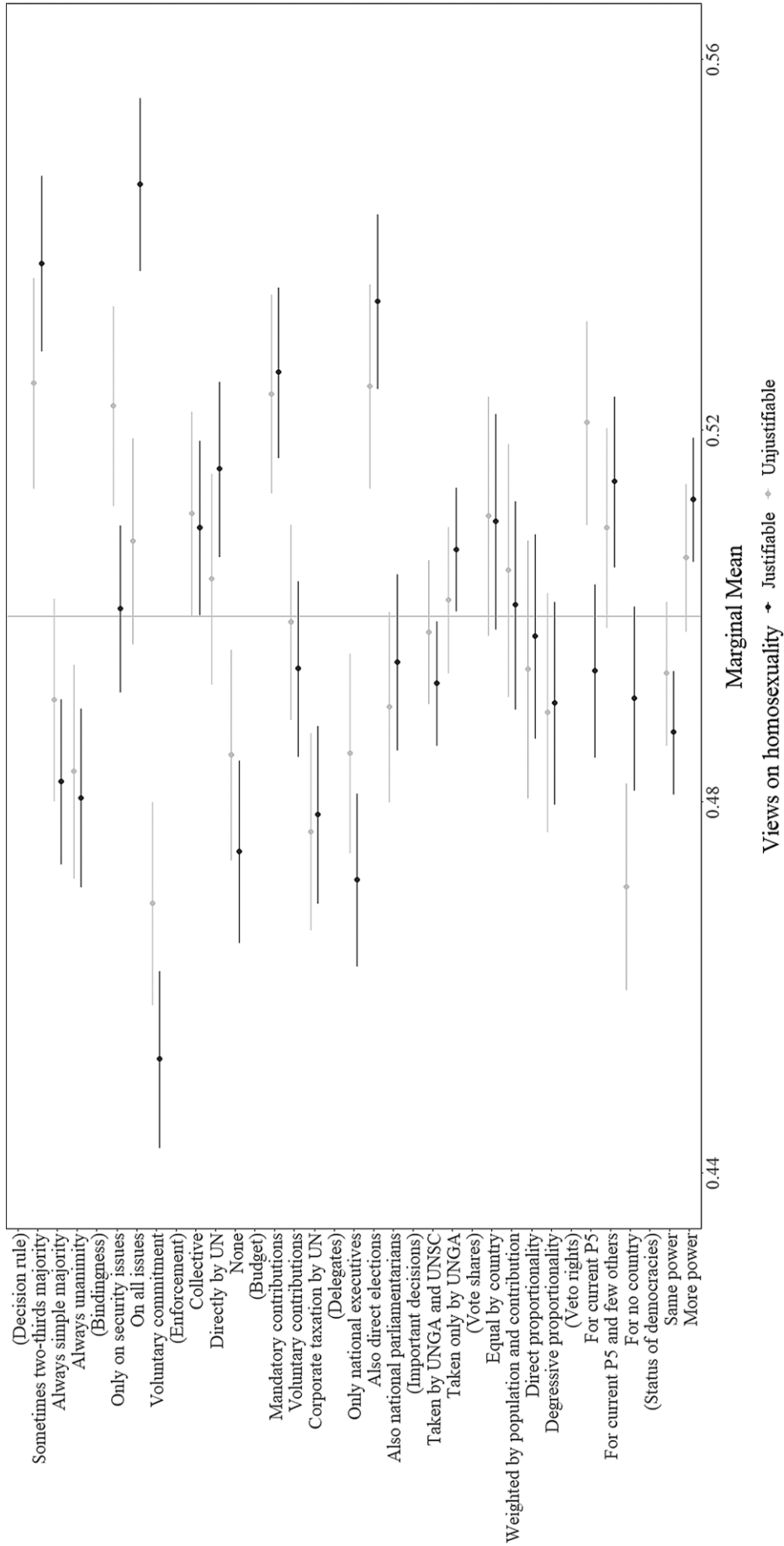**Figure 6.** Subgroup analysis by self-perception as a national or global citizen.

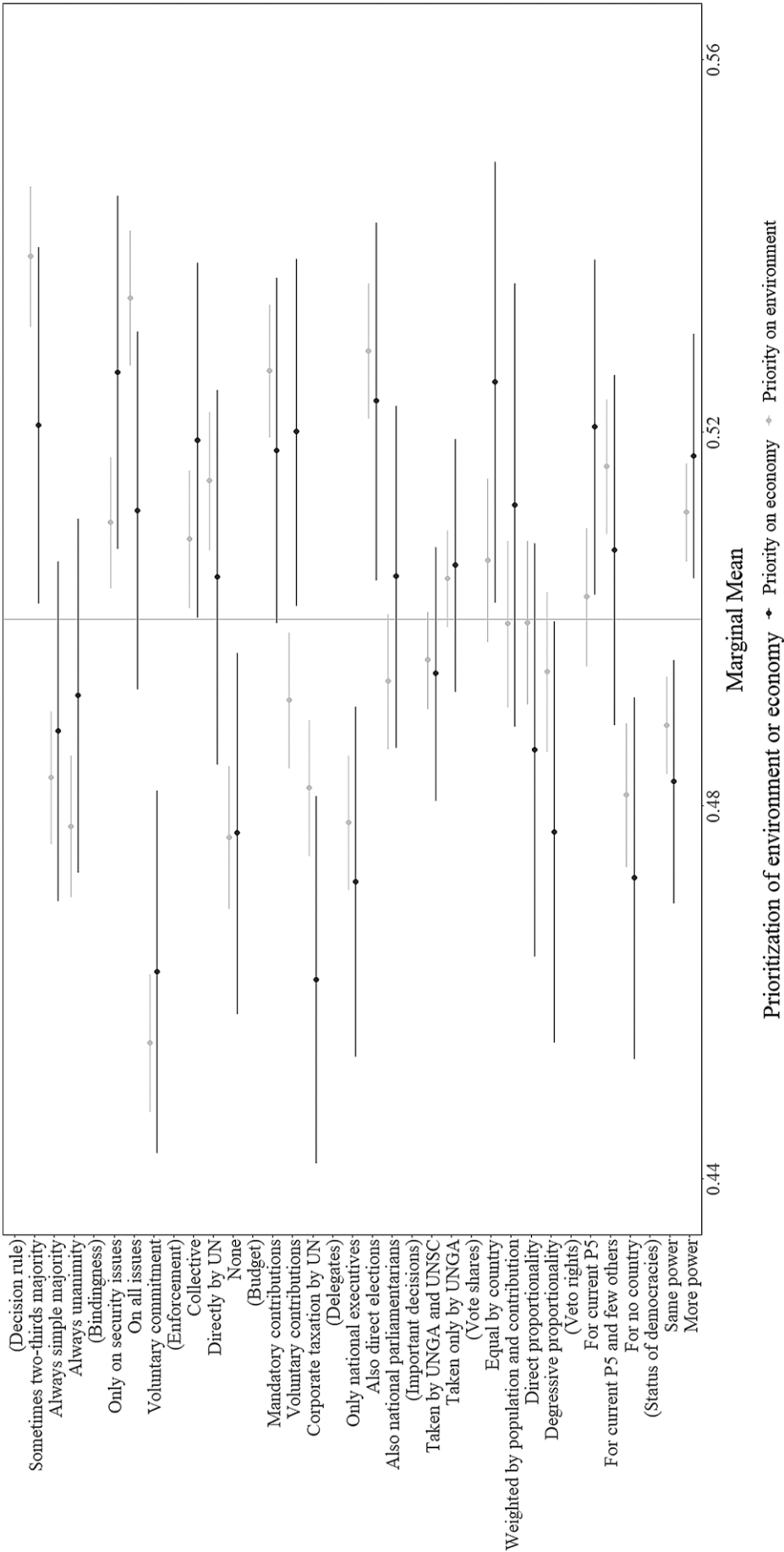**Figure 7.** Subgroup analysis by cultural libertarianism versus traditionalism (proxied by views on homosexuality).

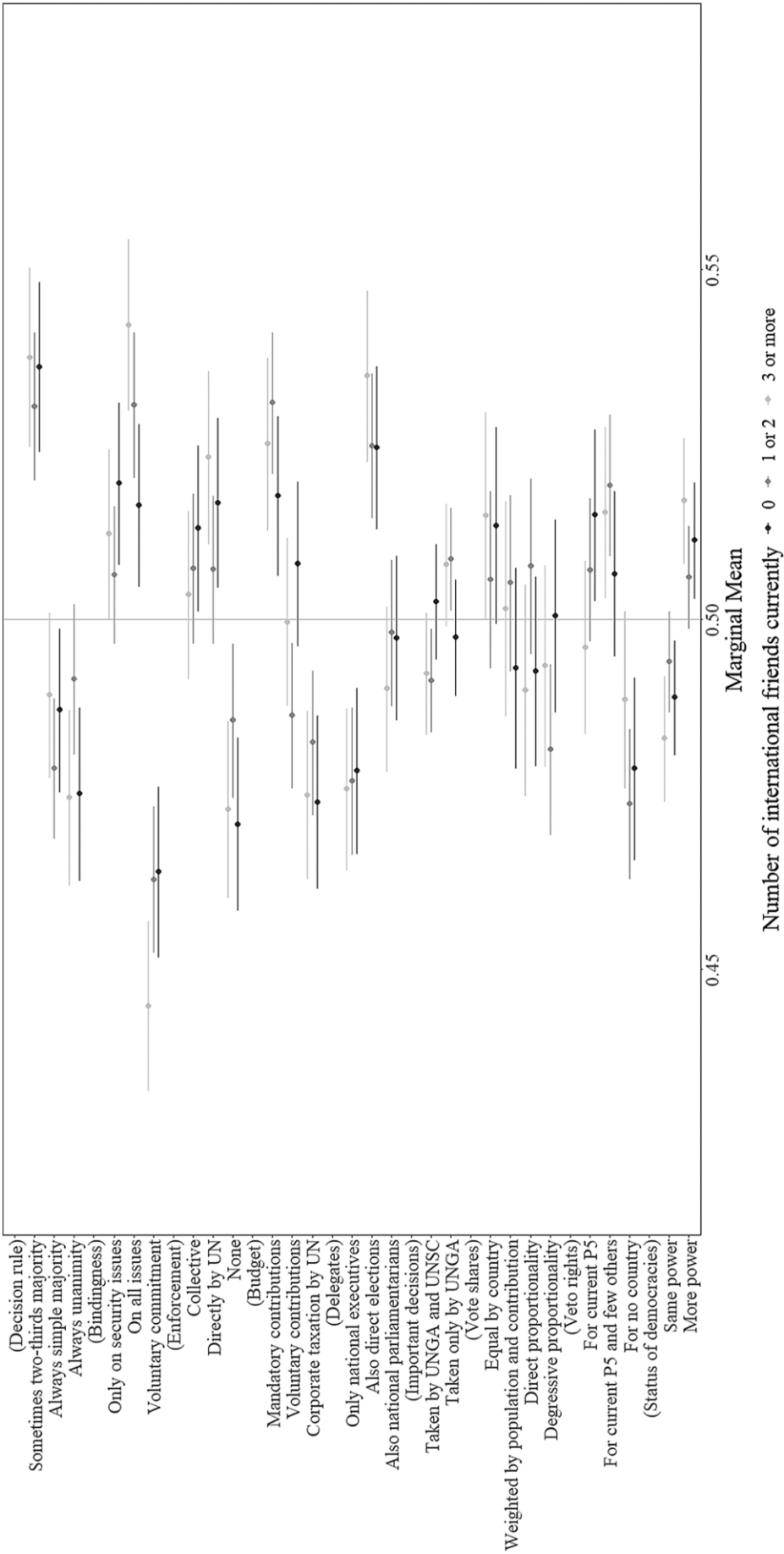**Figure 8.** Subgroup analysis by prioritization of environment or economy.

Figure 9. Subgroup analysis by the number of international friends currently.

current permanent members. Comprehension of voting rules is demonstrated by recognizing that simple majority rule increases the likelihood that an IO adopts a proposal compared to unanimity and two-thirds majority rules. Relative to those who display such comprehension, those with lower comprehension expressed higher levels of support for some aspects of the status quo: they are more in favor of the two-thirds majority rule, less in favor of direct enforcement ($p < 0.1$), and opposed to abolishing veto rights ($p < 0.1$), whereas those with good comprehension are indifferent to veto rights on average.

We also considered the possible role of income and education, as both *F*-tests indicate systematic subgroup differences (see appendix, Sections D.18 and D.19 in the online supplementary material). Respondents with higher incomes (relative to their country) are more supportive of the UN's status quo in relation to some features: They are much more supportive of the two-thirds majority rule than other respondents, and they prefer the Security Council to keep a role in major UN decisions, while low- and middle-income respondents prefer them to be made only in the General Assembly. They also are more supportive of keeping veto rights for the current permanent members, while low- and middle-income respondents are indifferent to that. High-income respondents prefer national parliamentarians to serve in a second UN chamber, whereas low- and middle-income ones prefer direct election of delegates by citizens. High-income respondents favor weighting votes based on a combination of country population sizes and their financial contributions to the UN budget, whereas low-income respondents prefer country equality in decision-making. There are fewer statistically significant differences between subgroups defined by education: Both respondents with and without university degrees are opposed to making UN decisions unenforceable, but those without are more opposed ($p < 0.1$). They are also more supportive of country voting equality, while those with a university degree are indifferent. Respondents with a university degree are opposed to abolishing veto rights and supportive of extending them to some other major countries, while those without university degrees are indifferent to both reforms.

Conclusion

Scholars and policymakers have devoted much attention to alternative institutional designs for IOs in general and the UN in particular. Our study contributes to these debates by showing that the general public in several countries prefers certain designs to others, and often the most popular option is not the one represented by the current UN. On the whole, we find public opinion to lean toward the positions of those reformers who have sought to see the UN and related global institutions moving closer to supranationalist and cosmopolitan ideals. In contrast, the positions of policymakers and commentators who advocate weaker international authority and fewer constraints on state sovereignty resonate less with aggregate public preferences. This is perhaps especially notable given that our six-country sample includes four of the most powerful countries in the world. Our findings are consistent with recent research that highlights the importance of institutional design features to public perceptions of the legitimacy of international institutions (Anderson, Bernauer, and Kachi 2019; Dellmuth, Scholte, and Tallberg 2019).

While this article provides the first attempt to systematically assess public preferences on a wide range of UN de-

signs discussed by scholars and policymakers, we also note two limitations of the study. As explained above, our selection of countries was guided by a two-fold aim. The first was to provide variation along the dimensions that are relevant to our hypotheses on home country bias: Permanent membership of the Security Council, population size, and political regime type. The second was to include the publics of countries that are likely to play a disproportionately large role in the success of any reform proposal. While the six countries we surveyed fulfil these criteria, we note the absence of small and low-income countries, as well as nations from other parts of the world—for example, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia—from our analysis. It would be useful to include such countries in future iterations of this study. Additionally, while our respondents were sampled and reweighted to be nationally representative in terms of gender, age, and region, it would be valuable for future research to apply our framework to samples that are representative also with respect to other demographic dimensions such as education.

Finally, we note the potential obstacles to UN institutional reform highlighted by our findings. First, when reforms involve a redistribution of power among countries, individuals in our sample tend to favor the options that increase or at least preserve the influence of their own state. While the views of respondents in Argentina and Spain may be more typical of people in most countries of the world, the four powerful states whose citizens we surveyed would be able to obstruct UN reforms even if they were endorsed by most other governments. The second qualification derives from our finding that individuals react to some reform proposals differently depending on their political values, although we also find significant instances of agreement across value divides. It is thus likely that the prospects for UN reform are determined not only by the dynamics of *international* politics but also by the ideological contests that are unfolding in the *domestic* politics of key countries. Those contests may do much to shape the institutional configuration and capacities of the UN in the coming decades.

Supplementary Information

Funder Information

Data Statement

The data underlying this article are available on the ISQ Dataverse, at https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/isq.

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