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The politicization of UNESCO World Heritage decision making

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Abstract The purpose of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention is to protect the global merit good of cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value for humanity. Many observers, however, have suggested that this international organization is subject to politicization as the selection process of sites on the World Heritage List is increasingly driven by countries' political influence and national strategic interests. This article explores this possibility quantitatively by analyzing a unique dataset containing information from the summary records of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee's sessions over the 2003-2012 period. Focusing on the difference between technical experts' recommendations and Committee final decisions on new additions to the List, our empirical analysis addresses four main theoretical questions: (i) Does the World Heritage Committee follow the advisory bodies' recommendations for the evaluation of heritage sites? ii) Does Committee membership or size of national delegations influence the addition of sites to the List or an upgrade of the initial technical evaluations? iii) Is the Committee's decision regarding the selection of World Heritage sites driven by a country's political and economic power? iv) Do close political and economic relationships between countries influence Committee members' behavior? The paper contributes to Public Choice literature on international organizations by providing new evidence on the role of political and economic interests in decision making concerning global merit goods.

Keywords World heritage · UNESCO · International organizations · Political economy

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1 Introduction

The purpose of the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention is to protect cultural and natural heritage of global significance for humanity. Its implementing mechanism is the World Heritage

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List, which allows state parties to identify heritage sites of outstanding universal value (OUV) and place them under the protection of the global community. Inclusion of cultural and natural sites on the World Heritage List is the result of a selection process that occurs during the annual World Heritage Committee sessions. Here, experts from two of UNESCO's official advisory bodies (the International Council on Monuments and Sites [ICOMOS] and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature [IUCN]) present technical evaluations of nominations dossiers proposed by state parties and the 21 member states elected to the World Heritage Committee formally make the final decision. As of 2016, some 191 countries have ratified the Convention and a total of 1031 properties have been included on the World Heritage List. The World Heritage List has become increasingly popular and many regard it as the most effective international legal instrument for the protection of the cultural and natural heritage' (Titchen 1996; Strasser 2002). Yet, observers have also pointed out that the World Heritage Committee is subject to politicization as the selection process of heritage sites is driven more and more by countries' political influence and national strategic interests. While in the past the Committee followed more closely its advisory bodies' recommendations (Pressouyre 1996), several commentators have reported that Committee decisions recently have diverged systematically from the scientific opinions of the advisory bodies (Jokilehto 2011; Meskell et al. 2014). For instance, in 2010, *The Economist*, reporting on the 34th session of the World Heritage Committee held in Brasilia, signaled that the UN agency was bending its own rules under pressure from member states'. Similarly, Von Droste (2011) points out that in recent years the World Heritage Committee has been dominated by career diplomats rather than heritage specialists, with the risk that the activities of this governing body may be ruled more by political trade-offs than by professional judgement.

Why has the selection of World Heritage sites become such an important international issue? Being on the List is desired highly by many states since it may bring attention and tourism revenue. Despite the fact that World Heritage inscription does not necessarily guarantee greater protection and that access to financial resources from UNESCO is extremely limited, inclusion on the List might attract the attention of donors and for-profit firms. Countries may use World Heritage List designation to market their sites as tourist destinations (Johnson and Barry 1995; Frey et al. 2013). In some cases, inclusion has also become a political tool for nations to bolster their sovereign interests, using World Heritage as a pawn in international relations (Meskell et al. 2014).

A growing economic literature is now investigating the determinants of inclusion on the World Heritage List quantitatively (Bertacchini and Saccone 2012; Frey et al. 2013; Parenti and De Simone 2015)¹. For example, using both nominations and final inscriptions for the period 1978-2008, Bertacchini and Saccone (2012) find that income and economic power are relevant for the capacity of countries to propose nominations to the World Heritage List. Furthermore, membership on the World Heritage Committee has a positive and significant effect on both the nomination activity by states and the likelihood of having a site selected. Similarly, Frey et al. (2013) show that historical, cultural and natural determinants are positively related to the number of heritage sites a country has on the List. Significantly, political and economic factors such as a country's income level, economic power and membership on the UN Security Council have an impact on the composition of the World Heritage List.

These papers present evidence that factors unrelated to the values underpinning the World Heritage concept have influenced the selection of sites. However, their findings do not clearly answer questions about how political influence or national interests enter into the decision-making process, nor do their empirical strategies completely rule out potential selection and endogeneity

¹ In the sociological literature, addressing the concept of cultural and natural wealth, Reyes (2014) analyses the determinants of the World Heritage List applying a similar quantitative approach.

biases intrinsic to the nomination and selection of World Heritage sites. For example, focusing only on the number of site designations does not capture the variation in nomination activity across state parties, which may in turn reflect different capacities or attitudes of a country in having its heritage represented on the World Heritage List. In a similar vein, membership on the Committee arguably provides the political power to push sites through the decision-making process. However, countries may anticipate their participation on the governing body and thus plan in advance more applications or invest more resources in the preparation of nomination dossiers.

In this paper we provide a more systematic investigation of the UNESCO World Heritage decision-making process using new datasets based on information from the summary records and other official World Heritage Committee documents over the 2003-2012 period. For each nomination of cultural and natural sites, we tracked the advisory bodies' initial recommendation, the final decision by the World Heritage Committee, the number of delegates of the nominating country present at the Committee session and verbal statements by Committee members during the sessions. We finally link this information to other country-specific variables and dyadic data describing relations between countries proposing sites and intervening Committee members.

The data presented here focus on a shorter period of analysis than the whole period of activity of the World Heritage Convention², but they provide more detailed information on the procedural and substantive aspects of the World Heritage Committee's decision-making process, namely, how advisory bodies' recommendations and states' political and economic imperatives intersect in the World Heritage Committee to influence the final selection of sites.

If the World Heritage decision-making process is politicized, we expect to find evidence of this phenomenon in two different but related ways. Firstly, a country proposing a site may exert influence on the final decision by the World Heritage Committee. Therefore, in the first set of results we use data on individual nominations and we test how, given the initial technical evaluations of the advisory bodies, final decisions are influenced by the political and economic characteristics of the countries proposing a site. Secondly, regardless of the final decision, the voting behavior of individual Committee members may be influenced by factors unrelated to the value and quality of the nomination. We are not excluding the possibility that Committee members may disagree with the initial technical evaluation provided by the advisory bodies. However, this "difference of opinion" shall be based on considerations concerning the quality of the nomination and not systematically driven by instrumental considerations. One of the main challenges in analyzing such a pattern is that decisions concerning the selection of sites by the World Heritage Committee are taken mainly by consensus through formal discussions and multilateral negotiations among its members, rather than by more structured voting procedures. As a consequence, in a second set of results we focus on verbal interventions by Committee members at the plenary sessions. In particular, we test whether political and economic considerations affect the content of these statements aimed at building consensus toward the final decision. More specifically, the empirical analysis addresses four main questions: (i) Does the World Heritage Committee follow its advisory bodies' recommendations in its deliberations? ii) Does Committee membership or the sizes of national delegations present at Committee sessions influence the selection of sites on the List or an upgrade of the initial technical recommendations? iii) Are the Committee's decisions regarding new World Heritage sites driven by a country's political and economic power? iv) Do close political and economic relationships between countries influence the behavior of Committee members?

This paper is related to the Public Choice literature on international organizations, with particular reference to the works addressing how political-economic factors affect their decision

² Inscriptions on the World Heritage List started in 1978. Summary records of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee sessions are only available from 2002 onwards.

making and members' voting behavior. Since the seminal works by Frey (1984) and Vaubel (1986), this literature has emphasized how final decision outcomes may be subject to rent seeking and political pressure by countries or their representatives pursuing their self or national interests. More recent studies have shown that countries represented on governing boards of international organizations can obtain more favorable outcomes than other state parties. In the context of international environmental decision making, Flues et al. (2010) find that decisions about methodologies and projects taken by the Executive Board of the Clean Development Mechanisms, along with formal quality criteria, tend to favor projects that are relevant for board members. Similarly, several authors find that the membership of a developing country on the UN Security Council not only significantly increases the aid flows from the United States, but also the credits extended by the IMF and World Bank (Kuziemko and Werker 2006; Dreher et al. 2009a; Dreher et al. 2009b). Looking specifically at how special interests guide voting behavior in international organizations, Eldar (2008) documents that countries trade support in an instrumental way. This has been tested particularly in the case of UNGA roll call voting, where studies have highlighted how nations linked to the United States or G7 countries through trade or aid relationships are likely to align in their voting patterns with the dominant states' preference (Dreher et al. 2008; Dreher and Sturm 2012).

The organization of the paper is as follows. Section 2 describes the UNESCO World Heritage Committee decision making process. Section 3 introduces our main hypotheses. Section 4 illustrates the data and methodology. Section 5 presents the empirical results, while section 6 offers some conclusions.

2 Trends in UNESCO World Heritage decision making

The World Heritage List consists of cultural and natural properties of outstanding universal value (OUV), which is defined in the operational guidelines of the World Heritage Convention according to ten criteria detailing the specific requirements properties must meet for inclusion on the List. The composition of the World Heritage List is the outcome of two different phases, nomination and selection, and of the input of three different actors: state parties, advisory bodies and the World Heritage Committee (Strasser 2002). The nomination process relies on the initiative of the state parties, which submit nomination proposals for their sites to be included on the List. Experts from two advisory bodies, ICOMOS for cultural properties and IUCN for natural properties, evaluate the nomination dossiers to ensure they comply with the requirements outlined on the operational guidelines. Field missions are also mobilized to assess a site's authenticity, integrity and protection. Once the technical evaluation is concluded, the advisory body communicates its recommendation to the World Heritage Committee, which is the final decision making body that is comprised of 21 member states serving a 4-year term.

The selection of new sites occurs at the annual sessions of the World Heritage Committee. According to the operational guidelines, the nominations are presented by the advisory bodies, which make recommendations from only four possible outcomes in the following descending order of evaluation: Inscription, Referral, Deferral and Not to Inscribe. The same evaluation system is then followed by the World Heritage Committee to take the final decision after a plenary discussion of the nomination dossiers. In order to be included on the World Heritage List a site must meet at least one of the ten criteria for inscription on the World Heritage List. Sites must also fulfill the conditions of authenticity and/or integrity and ensure that proper management structures are put in place. Decisions Not to Inscribe imply that a site does not fulfill any of the criteria and therefore a state party may not present the proposed property again. Conversely, intermediate evaluations, such as Referral and Deferral, allow state parties to

resubmit the nomination at future sessions of the Committee, as long as they provide respectively additional information or substantially revise the nomination dossier.³ Thus, a Referral is a more positive evaluation than Deferral, as the former implies a less substantive revision than the latter.

It is important to note that while in the past there was no restriction to the number of sites state parties could propose for inscription to the List, new measures to achieve a balanced representation have limited both the nomination capacity of states and the number of proposals examined at yearly Committee sessions. From 2002 onwards, the World Heritage Committee agreed to examine only one nomination dossier per state per year, exclusive of those referred or deferred at previous sessions, and up to a limit of thirty per year. This provision has been slightly modified allowing states to submit from 2005 up to two complete nominations, provided that at least one is a natural heritage site, and extending to 45 the number of nominations that can be reviewed yearly by the Committee.

As a first indication of the politicization drift occurring in World Heritage decision making, Table 1 presents descriptive evidence of the final decisions taken by the World Heritage Committee depending on the initial advisory bodies' recommendations in the period analyzed (2003-2012).

Table 1 Nominations according to advisory bodies' recommendation and Committee decision, 2003-2012

		Committee decision				Total
		Inscribe	Refer	Defer	Not inscribe	
AB Recommendation	Inscribe	154 (96.8%)	3 (1.9%)	2 (1.3%)	0 (0%)	159
	Refer	25 (80.7%)	5 (16.1%)	1 (3.2%)	0 (0%)	31
	Defer	33 (41.2%)	19 (23.8%)	27 (33.7%)	1 (1.3%)	80
	Not inscribe	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	9 (45%)	8 (40%)	20
	Total	213	29	39	214	290

Note: The displayed percentage values use the total number of advisory bodies' recommendations per category as the baseline. The four categories are in descending order of evaluation. Referral is a more positive evaluation than Deferral as the former allows state parties to resubmit the nomination at following sessions of the Committee as long as they provide additional information, whereas Deferral requires to substantially revise the nomination dossier.

Except for only seven cases where the final decision is lower than initial technical evaluations⁴, the overall trend has been to push all decisions toward the category of Inscription, so from Referral to Inscription, from Deferral to Referral or even Inscription, and so on. The main contention concerns nominations that the advisory bodies recommend Not to Inscribe, Deferral and Referral. Because the preparation of nomination dossiers is a costly process requiring significant financial resources and time, a recommendation to not inscribe the site prevents the resubmission of

³ Site Referral occurs when some minor additional information is needed to supplement the original nomination. Deferral entails a major revision of the nomination dossier and a new expert assessment of the property.

⁴ Interestingly, three of these cases involved nominations presented by only one country, that is Israel. While the small number of cases for this type of decision does not allow to infer a statistically significant bias against this specific country, Becker et al. (2015) have empirically tested the existence of a similar bias in UNGA resolutions and provided a theoretical explanation of this phenomenon based on expressive voting behavior.

the nomination while Referral and Deferral make future inscription uncertain. Many countries describe any decision that is different from Inscription as a “poisoned gift”, a term that delegates have used repeatedly throughout recent Committee meetings (Meskell 2012). At the same time, in almost every case, there is complete agreement between the advisory bodies and the Committee when the recommendation is to Inscribe a property.

A further peculiar characteristic of decision making within the World Heritage Committee is that deliberations are taken by consensus. Although the World Heritage Convention clearly states that decisions must be taken by the majority of two-thirds of its members present and voting (Art. 13.8), like in many other intergovernmental organizations, deliberations are mainly characterized by multilateral negotiations and consensus building, following both informal meetings and formal discussions at plenary sessions (Blake and Payton 2014). Decisions are prepared and pre-structured, for instance by means of drafts produced by the World Heritage Center, which acts as the Secretariat of the World Heritage Convention. However, members of the World Heritage Committee can present amendments to draft decisions as a result of informal consultation and negotiation taking place outside the plenary sessions or formal discussion during plenary sessions.

All draft decisions as well as any proposed amendment need to be formally adopted by the World Heritage Committee. During formal discussion at plenary sessions, Committee members may intervene more than once for each individual nomination and may even change their position in the course of the discussion. Some nominations receive no formal discussion during the plenary sessions and the final decisions swiftly follow the initial advisory bodies’ recommendation. In other contested cases, decisions are made during plenary sessions following negotiations that have occurred in specifically established working groups, or during smaller informal meetings between representatives from national delegations, advisory bodies and UNESCO representatives. Explicit voting is a rare event and can take place by show of hands or by secret ballot.

To better understand this consensus-based decision making process, Table 2 provides evidence of verbal interventions at plenary sessions according to the initial advisory bodies’ recommendation and the final decision.⁵ The average number of verbal interventions that occurred in the discussion of each nomination is considerably lower than the number of states parties in the Committee (21), with no verbal interventions in some cases. Significantly, the number of statements in formal discussions greatly varies according to the advisory bodies’ recommendation and the final decision taken by the Committee. The more negative the initial technical evaluation, the higher the average number of verbal interventions, suggesting that the discussion intensifies when negative recommendations are proposed by advisory bodies. At the same time, on average, the number of verbal interventions is always higher when the final decision results in an upgrading of the initial recommendation.

These patterns clearly highlight that verbal interventions, although they express Committee members’ position regarding a specific nomination, may only partly be treated like the formal votes and members’ voting behavior within other International Organizations (Boockmann 2003; Voeten 2012; Hug and Lukács 2014). While it is possible to identify the last position of a Committee member in the case where its position has changed during the discussion, it is difficult to interpret the position of those countries that do not intervene. Not intervening during plenary sessions might be considered as an implicit agreement with either the advisory bodies’ recommendation or with the perceived direction that the discussion is leading.

⁵ In our analysis we focus only on verbal interventions whose content expresses a judgment by a Committee member over a nomination dossier according to the four evaluation categories used in the selection process. Thus, we rule out those verbal statements referring to requests of clarification by Committee members to either advisory bodies or the secretariat.

Table 2 Summary statistics on verbal interventions at plenary sessions per recommendation and decision category, 2003-2012

AB Recomm.	Final Decision	N	Verbal Interventions				
			Mean	S.D.	Median	Min	Max
Inscription	Inscription	154	4.67	4.90	3	0	22
	Upgraded	-	-	-	-	-	-
Referral	Referral	5	4.60	8.14	1	0	19
	Upgraded	25	6.80	4.45	5	1	21
	<i>Total</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>6.45</i>	<i>5.03</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>21</i>
Deferral	Deferral	27	3.70	3.71	2	0	12
	Upgraded	52	10.90	6.25	11	0	32
	<i>Total</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>8.37</i>	<i>6.46</i>	<i>7.5</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>32</i>
Not Inscription	Not Inscription	8	2.50	1.69	2	0	5
	Upgraded	12	12.83	10.27	8.5	3	34
	<i>Total</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>8.70</i>	<i>9.44</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>All</i>	<i>Downgraded</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>5.14</i>	<i>3.62</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>10</i>

It could also be argued that the impact of verbal interventions by Committee members on final decisions is negligible if multilateral negotiations during informal meetings by delegates play a role. If this is the case, verbal statements can be considered as signals of a predetermined consensus around the final outcome or as a form of expressive voting, a phenomenon commonly reported for voting behavior in international organizations (Boockmann 2003; Hillman 2010). For example, Bertacchini et al. (2015) report that for the last decade there has been a clear divergence among Committee members in the use of verbal interventions. On the one hand, some non-Western countries have been systematically vocal at formal sessions challenging advisory bodies' recommendations, arguing for a less restrictive application of the requirements for World Heritage designation. On the other hand, nations such as Norway, Switzerland and Estonia, have been particularly vocal in supporting the advisory bodies' technical evaluations and emphasizing strict adherence to the requirements.

Overall, there is reason to believe that both informal consultation by delegates and verbal interventions at plenary sessions impact final decisions, albeit with effects that are difficult to disentangle. Moreover, participation in the Committee sessions is not restricted only to delegates from the Committee members, but it is also open to delegations of other states parties to the Convention as observers. Thus, pressure in informal meetings from external parties appears to play a role, especially in recent years when the number of observers from countries not on the Committee has constantly outpaced the number of Committee members' delegates (Schmitt 2009).

3 Hypotheses

Given the initial advisory bodies' recommendations, do political and economic factors affect the selection of World Heritage sites and the behavior of Committee members? To answer this question we develop a set of testable hypotheses drawn from the broad literature in international

relations and political economy, as well as qualitative accounts of World Heritage Committee sessions.

The inclusion of a site on the List represents the most favorable outcome for a country, as it provides several types of benefits, ranging from international prestige to additional financial resources from tourism or international aid for conservation. Nominating countries thus have a strong interest in having a final evaluation higher than the initial advisory bodies' recommendation. If the decision is to Not Inscribe the site, all the costs incurred for the nomination are effectively sunk. Furthermore, attaining a more positive final decision (such as a Referral instead of a Deferral) increases the probability of having the site enlisted in a future Committee session and reduces the additional cost a country incurs in complying with the new requirements for re-submission. As a result, economic and political considerations may induce countries to influence the decisions of the World Heritage Committee members through several channels

First, the selection of sites depends on the power and influence specific countries have within the World Heritage decision making process. The Public Choice literature recognizes that membership on governing boards can yield more favorable outcomes for the countries represented, as this position provides more decision making power in respect to other countries (Flues et al. 2010). As a result, serving on the World Heritage Committee may be considered as a measure of the influence a country is able to exert in the decision making process. This is because membership provides a country the political power to push sites through the nomination process, or even to bring pressure on other Committee members to support the nominations. Bertacchini and Saccone (2012) have shown that for the period 1978-2008 having a seat on the World Heritage Committee had a strong and significant impact on both the nomination activity and on the likelihood of having a site included on the World Heritage List.

Yet, as discussed previously, membership on the World Heritage Committee does not fully account for the real influence nations may wield in the selection process. This is because decisions are taken by consensus through multilateral negotiations and participation in the Committee sessions is not restricted only to delegations of State Parties on the World Heritage Committee. Delegation size might thus be considered as a proxy for a country's informal influence. As noted by (Pouliot 2011) in the context of the UN, the size of diplomatic missions, together with the presence of experienced diplomats, provide the necessary conditions to attain status within UN diplomatic negotiations. Moreover, having a larger delegation plays a substantial role in "corridor diplomacy" or in managing negotiations of multiple items in the agenda (McKeown 2009). Hence we expect that nominations by countries that are on the World Heritage Committee and that have a larger delegation (even as observers) are more likely to receive greater support from Committee members and result in a more favorable final decision.

A further set of hypotheses deals with political economy considerations. Although the selection of World Heritage sites should be based on scientific quality and technical factors, Bertacchini and Saccone (2012) and Frey et al. (2013) have found that measures of economic and political power, such as GDP, GDP per capita and population size, are positively associated with a country's nomination capacity and the number of enlisted sites. Similarly, the economic relevance of the tourist sector in a country is another potential rent-seeking factor to secure inclusion of sites in the List (Ryan and Silvanto 2010; Ryan and Silvanto 2014). While not addressed in previous studies, we also consider the possibility that the degree at which a country is politically integrated internationally may positively influence the decisions made by the World Heritage Committee members in respect to initial Advisory Bodies' recommendations. Another widely adopted measure to detect political power at the international level is temporary membership to the UN Security Council. Several authors find that temporary membership on the UN Security Council is linked to larger aid packages from the United States or credits from the IMF and World Bank (Kuziemko and Werker 2006; Dreher et al. 2009a; Dreher et al. 2009b). Such indirect

benefits seem to be driven by some form of vote trading. If one consider designation of World Heritage sites as a form of international assistance, temporary membership on the UN Security Council may play a role. For instance, Frey et al. (2013) find that being a rotating member of the UN Security Council has a positive effect on the number of sites inscribed on the World Heritage List per year.

Looking more specifically at the content of verbal interventions at formal sessions, we expect that different types of cultural, political and economic connections between countries may influence Committee members' verbal statements. As the UNESCO World Heritage primarily deals with cultural issues and the recognition of heritage of outstanding universal value at the global level, Committee members may be more likely to support the nominations by nations that share similar cultural values to bolster their cultural identity. Hence, we assume that nominations are more likely to receive greater support by Committee members with stronger cultural proximity with the nominating country.

Moreover, political connections between countries in international relations may also affect Committee members' behavior. Several scholars show how voting blocs and persistent lines of conflict have emerged in UN bodies' decision making, such as at the UNGA, the UNSC and UNHRC (O'Neill 1996; Voeten 2000; Hug and Lukács 2014). While the identification of these groups or patterns of political alignment mainly depends on historical phases and particular issues covered in international decision making, voting behavior by states in international assemblies has been generally explained along the Western/non Western divide, tension between developed and developing countries or the differences between political regimes. Such voting coalitions often express a peer group of similar countries and peer group variables have been used in a number of studies on international organizations, such as the IMF (Simmons 2000) or the ILO (Chau et al. 2001).

Although the decision making within the World Heritage Committee does not allow a systematic study of voting behavior by states parties, qualitative evidence suggest that similar diplomatic and peer group considerations may matter in shaping Committee members behavior. For instance, Schmitt (2009) and Meskell et al. (2015) point out that delegates on the World Heritage Committee may be motivated by foreign relations and geopolitical considerations and may feel integrated at least to some extent in a network of mutual loyalties with other countries in their region. At the same time, support by Committee members for nominating countries may reflect more complex political alliances or alignments arising in international arenas. In this case, decision made during the World Heritage Committee would be the result of a broader swathe of international relations. As a result, the hypothesis we propose is that nominations are more likely to receive a greater support through verbal interventions by Committee members with stronger political connections with the nominating country.

Finally, economic ties between nations may be relevant to detect patterns where Committee members trade their support to nominating countries in exchange for economic benefits. Vote trading has been analyzed quite extensively focusing on how donors such as the United States and other G7 countries have used foreign aid and international cooperation to buy votes of recipient countries in specific international institutions since WWII (Dreher et al. 2008; Eldar 2008). In the context of the World Heritage Committee, such types of financial flows would arguably capture only a portion of potential economic ties and interests. This is mainly because focusing only on development aid would account for economic relationships with dominant powers, overlooking more general economic interests arising from bilateral trade between other less influential countries. As noted by Dreher and Sturm (2012), economic ties might increase the probability of voting with a partner country, as a greater interdependence might create similar preferences on certain issues or be a signal of potential economic opportunities used to trade political support. For example, Meskell (2014) reports that vocal support of Panama was offered during the 2013

World Heritage Committee session by Qatar and South Africa; both countries have no obvious regional or cultural connections but have economic ties and trade agreements with Panama. As a result, we expect that nominations are more likely to receive a supportive verbal statement by Committee members with stronger economic ties to the nominating country.

4 Data and empirical strategy

We collected and analyzed information from the summary records and other World Heritage Committee official documents over the period 2003-2012. For each nomination of cultural and natural properties,⁶ we tracked the advisory bodies' initial recommendation, the final decision by the World Heritage Committee, the number of delegates of the proposing country present at the Committee session, and the Committee members' interventions during plenary sessions concerning the selection of new sites on the World Heritage List. Due to the restrictions approved since 2002 by the World Heritage Committee, there is low variability in the number of nominations proposed by individual countries per year. In general, proposing countries have one or a maximum of two nominations of cultural or natural properties examined at every Committee session.

In a first set of results we use data on 290 individual nominations of cultural and natural properties, and we test the probability of either having a site included on the List or a final decision resulting in an upgrade from the initial advisory bodies' recommendation. In the former case, we use the full dataset, while on the latter we restrict our sample to 131 nominations that received a Referral, Deferral or a Not to Inscribe as an initial recommendation.

We start with a set of explanatory variables that refer to characteristics of the individual nominations. To control for the scientific quality of the proposed heritage properties we consider the initial technical recommendation provided by the Advisory Bodies and we code binary variables for each of the four evaluation criteria (Inscription, Referral, Deferral, Not to Inscribe). An alternative approach, as adopted by Flues et al. (2010) for initial Meth Panel Recommendations, would have been to create an ordinal variable according to the scale of the evaluation categories. However, the use of dummies for World Heritage sites evaluations seems better suited to capture the individual effect of each evaluation category.⁷ Next, as the nominations which are Deferred and Referred can be resubmitted at subsequent Committee sessions, we code a binary variable (Revision) which indicates whether or not the nomination is a revision of a nomination dossier presented at a previous Committee session. Finally, we include a dummy variable to consider whether the proposal is a cultural or natural heritage site to control whether such difference influence the decision making process. For instance, because of the acknowledged ambiguities in the definition of cultural heritage of outstanding universal value, as opposed to a more objective definition of the criteria defining natural heritage (Jokilehto 2006), we expect that more political pressures will be exerted on the selection process of cultural sites.

An additional group of controls considers the main political and economic factors we have highlighted in the hypotheses. To address both informal and formal influence within the decision making process we use the size of the delegations participating at Committee sessions and

⁶ We excluded from the analysis nominations of mixed properties owing to divergences between Advisory Bodies' recommendations or in the final decision regarding either the natural or cultural component of the nomination. Nominations of mixed properties account for about 4% of all the nominations submitted to the World Heritage Committee in the period 2003-2012.

⁷ Arguably, the evaluation categories do not follow a constant ordinal scale in their values. For instance, the difference between a recommendation for Not Inscription instead of a Deferral is allegedly larger than the difference between a Deferral and a Referral, because with Not inscription a country loses the chance to nominate the site on the next Committee sessions.

we control with a binary variable whether or not a country is serving on the World Heritage Committee. International economic and political power of countries proposing sites is measured by the logarithmic transformations of GDP per capita and population size as well as a dummy expressing temporary membership on the UN Security Council. To account for the relevance of the tourist sector of a country, we use international tourism receipts as a share of exports, which is commonly used as a proxy for tourism specialization (Arezki et al. 2009). As a measure of a country's political integration at the international level, we use the Political Globalization sub-index from the KOF Globalization Index (Dreher, Gaston and Martens 2008).⁸

In a second set of results, we investigate the probability that the content of verbal interventions by Committee members might be influenced by economic and political factors related with the nominating country. We selected this approach to overcome the related difficulties in analyzing effectively Committee members' behavior in a consensus-based decision making process. We use a unique dataset that combines information on individual verbal statements from Committee sessions over the period 2003-2012 with other relevant variables. In this case, we consider only verbal interventions whose content expresses a statement by a Committee member over a nomination according to the four evaluation categories used in the selection process. This leads to a total of 1790 observations.⁹

We initially frame our dependent variable as a binary outcome defining whether or not the Committee member's verbal intervention expressed support for inscription of a site proposed by another country. In an alternative setting, we also use as dependent variable a dummy defining whether or not the Committee member's verbal intervention expressed support to upgrade the initial advisory bodies' recommendation.

In addition to nomination and country-specific variables defined before, we include a set of variables in dyadic form describing cultural, economic and political connections between the intervening Committee members and the proposing country. To account for cultural affinities, we use both language proximity and colonial legacy between countries. Language proximity is measured using the lexical similarity index between two languages developed by Melitz and Toubal (2014)¹⁰. For colonial legacy we rely on the dataset developed by Head et al. (2010) and we use two different binary variables. The former (Colonizer Legacy) takes the value of one if the Committee member is current or former hegemony of the nominating country, while the latter (Colony Legacy) takes the value of one if the intervening Committee member has been a colony of the country proposing a site.

To control for political connections between countries at the international level, we use three different measures. The first one is a dummy variable defining whether the intervening Commit-

⁸ The political globalization dimension is computed through a composite index including i) the number of embassies and high commissions in a country, ii) the number of international organizations to which the country is a member, iii) the number of UN peace missions a country participated in and iv) the number of treaties signed between two or more states since 1945. The index range from 0 to 100 with higher values indicating more political integration of a country at the global level.

⁹ As described before, some nominations receive no formal discussion. For this reason the information in this dataset refers to a smaller sample of nominations. A deeper data examination shows that out of 47 nominations which have not prompted any verbal statements by Committee members, 35 have been already recommended for inscription by the Advisory Bodies. As we are concerned in detecting instrumental behavior by Committee members, we expect that these types of nominations are the ones leaving less room for politicized decisions.

¹⁰ Melitz and Toubal (2014) have constructed two separate measures of language proximity which they label LP1 and LP2. The former calculates linguistic proximities on the basis of the Ethnologue classification of language trees between trees, branches and sub-branches. The latter, more sophisticated according to the authors, is based on analyzing lexical similarities between lists of up to 200 words of two different languages. We have adopted this latter measure.

tee member and the nominating country belong to the same UNESCO Regional group.¹¹ The second variable captures voting coincidence between the two countries at UN General Assembly roll-call votes at year t through the distance between the two countries' ideal points as developed by Strezhnev and Voeten (2012). Although patterns of UNGA votes are considered to be correlated with alternative measures of political alignment such as alliances and similarity of interests (Alesina and Weder 2002), Voeten (2012) warns against using voting data at UNGA to construct indicators of similarities in states' preferences for world politics since it potentially ignores historical changes in the UN's agenda and dimensions of contestation. However, we argue that the time span of our analysis (10 years) makes these concerns potentially less problematic. As a third covariate, we account also for similarities in political regimes between two countries by using the difference (in absolute value) between the scores of two countries' regime given by the Polity IV Project (Marshall and Jaggers 2002) at year t . While analogous dyadic measures on regimes similarities have been often used as explanatory variables of interstate conflicts and disputes (Russett et al. 1998; Oneal and Russett 1999), the adoption of this variable here allows to test whether this dimension of political proximity is likely to affect World Heritage Committee members' behavior as it has been studied for other UN fora (Voeten 2000).

Finally, to measure economic relationships between a Committee member and a nominating country, we follow Oneal and Russett (1999) and Mansfield and Pevehouse (2000): we construct an index of the ratio of bilateral trade to GDP where the numerator is the sum of exports to and imports from the nominating nation and the denominator is the Committee member's GDP. We rely on bilateral trade data provided by the IMF Direction of Trade Statistics (DOTS). Table A1 and A2 in the Appendix summarize the variables we use and their summary statistics for both datasets.

The estimation procedure is determined by the type of our dependent variables which are coded as binary outcomes. For multivariate regressions with the binary variables we use probit regressions. We initially also estimated logit, but tests on the functional form indicated that the normal distribution yields a better fit. We expect that observations concerning decisions and Committee members' verbal interventions related to sites of the same nominating country may not be independent. Therefore, we explicitly take into account clusters at the proponent country level by introducing robust standard errors for within-group estimators (Arellano 1987).¹²

5 Results

5.1 Determinants of inscription and upgrade of the final decision

We first test whether political and economic factors affect the final decision of the World Heritage Committee for individual nominations. We proceed by testing nomination-specific attributes, then we add political and economic country-specific covariates and finally we present the full set

¹¹ UNESCO's Member States are organized in five regional groups - Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and North America and Latin America and the Caribbean - following definitions which are not only geographical and slightly differ from UNGA regional groups (see <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/worldwide/>).

¹² Another possibility is to use conditional logistic regressions to directly control for country fixed effects. However, the use of this statistical model causes some drawbacks for our analysis. First, it generates convergence problems with the small dataset of 290 individual nominations. Second, when dealing with the dataset on verbal interventions, taking into account country fixed effects causes the drop of observations in cases the observations from a nominating country display all positive or negative outcomes in the dependent variable. Because the number of verbal interventions received by countries nominating sites is highly unbalanced, the risk is to lose substantial information concerning explanatory variables from observations of specific countries. Further, this approach also rules out time and country invariant factors that can be relevant to keep in the analysis of the World Heritage decision making process.

of controls. Table 3 presents the estimates for such specifications of the probability of having a site inscribed (regressions 1-3) and of the probability that the final Committee decision will be an upgrade of the initial advisory body's recommendation (regression 6-8). Additional regressions show results from robustness checks.

Table 3 Determinants of Inscription or upgraded final decision, Probit estimation

Variables	Inscription = 1, 0 otherwise					Upgraded decision = 1, 0 otherwise				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
AB Referral	-1.029*** (0.374)	-0.960*** (0.363)	-1.204*** (0.371)	-2.294*** (0.566)	-2.562*** (0.608)					
AB Deferral	-2.071*** (0.332)	-2.088*** (0.324)	-2.373*** (0.344)	-2.490*** (0.426)	-2.728*** (0.458)	-0.272 (0.340)	-0.396 (0.342)	-0.324 (0.356)	0.580 (0.455)	0.747 (0.517)
AB Not inscribe	-3.460*** (0.565)	-3.551*** (0.649)	-4.257*** (0.666)	-3.757*** (0.506)	-4.064*** (0.519)	-0.228 (0.420)	-0.168 (0.433)	0.0481 (0.498)	-0.136 (0.714)	0.299 (0.734)
Revision	0.560** (0.282)	0.586** (0.295)	0.688* (0.373)	0.655* (0.391)	0.639 (0.412)	0.598* (0.361)	0.678* (0.401)	0.855** (0.435)	0.918* (0.488)	1.011* (0.571)
Cultural	-0.0608 (0.228)	0.0327 (0.226)	0.107 (0.218)	0.138 (0.219)	0.0479 (0.208)	0.571** (0.285)	0.774** (0.318)	0.922*** (0.335)	1.120*** (0.338)	0.919*** (0.327)
Committee		-0.138 (0.283)	-0.116 (0.307)	-0.124 (0.316)	-0.128 (0.322)		0.528* (0.295)	0.538* (0.290)	0.505 (0.350)	0.530 (0.384)
Delegates		0.0389*** (0.0103)	0.0506*** (0.0116)	0.0470* (0.0264)	0.0344 (0.0244)		0.0602* (0.0356)	0.0714* (0.0429)	0.296*** (0.103)	0.274** (0.116)
Log(Incomepc)			0.123 (0.136)	0.0426 (0.141)	0.0366 (0.144)			0.0502 (0.138)	-0.0102 (0.149)	0.00662 (0.150)
Log(Population)			0.131 (0.0912)	0.0826 (0.0967)	0.103 (0.0997)			0.0464 (0.107)	-0.0308 (0.116)	0.0235 (0.113)
UNSCTem			0.345 (0.368)	0.302 (0.397)	0.147 (0.341)			0.930** (0.432)	0.964* (0.501)	0.562 (0.472)
Tourism			0.0278*** (0.00936)	0.0253*** (0.00898)	0.0268*** (0.00906)			0.0232*** (0.00865)	0.0212** (0.0100)	0.0280*** (0.0109)
Political Integration			-0.0227** (0.00917)	-0.0214** (0.00908)	-0.0232** (0.00911)			-0.0117 (0.0103)	-0.0104 (0.0115)	-0.0157 (0.0119)
Referral*Delegates				0.287*** (0.105)	0.283*** (0.108)					
Deferral*Delegates				0.0117 (0.0307)	0.0131 (0.0280)				-0.233** (0.101)	-0.235** (0.114)
Not Inscr.*Delegates				-0.0382 (0.0284)	-0.0411 (0.0277)				0.145 (0.210)	0.143 (0.189)
Year of Decision					0.110** (0.0451)					0.213*** (0.0515)
Constant	1.819*** (0.292)	1.476*** (0.242)	2.460*** (0.594)	2.636*** (0.604)	2.636*** (0.605)	0.149 (0.434)	-0.462 (0.491)	-0.408 (0.769)	-1.303* (0.785)	-1.807** (0.859)
Observations	290	290	290	290	290	131	131	131	131	131
Log Pseudo-likelihood	-93.73	-88.48	-79.97	-76.62	-73.71	-77.17	-68.16	-62.72	-58.51	-52.24
Wald χ^2	54.78	81.07	87.36	122.9	118	7.562	18.70	35.99	50.40	66.29
Prob > Wald χ^2	1.45e-10	0	0	0	0	0.109	0.00470	0.000170	2.54e-06	9.00e-09
Pseudo R-square	0.442	0.473	0.524	0.543	0.561	0.0610	0.171	0.237	0.288	0.364
Area Under ROC Curve	0.902	0.919	0.932	0.939	0.944	0.659	0.795	0.814	0.831	0.880

Note: Standard errors in parentheses (adjusted for nominating country clusters): *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Considering the decisions for Inscription of World Heritage sites over the period 2003-2012, this outcome is largely predicted by the initial advisory bodies' recommendation. Using the recommendation for Inscription by the advisory bodies as the baseline, the coefficients of the dummies expressing lower evaluations are highly significant and negative. As reported in Regression 3, holding all variables to their mean, the marginal effect of having a site inscribed at the current session decreases of about 38%, 69% or 91% if the advisory bodies recommend the nomination respectively as Referral, Deferral or Not to Inscribe. This may be explained by observing that the World Heritage Committee tends to inscribe nominations recommended for inscription by the advisory bodies and this type of nominations accounts for about 50% of the full sample.

Conversely, only some political and economic determinants appear to have a significant but moderate impact. The coefficient of the size of national delegations is positive, but its effect is rather minimal, considering that an increase of one unit in the delegation is likely to increase the probability of enlisting a site by about 1%. In the case of tourism specialization, holding all variables at their mean, an increase of one standard deviation of the share of international tourist receipts over exports increases the probability of inscription by about 7%. Unexpectedly, the coefficient of *Political Integration* displays a significant but negative value, implying that countries that are less politically integrated internationally have a higher likelihood to inscribe their sites. Such counterintuitive result can be partly explained by considering the observed dynamics in nomination and selection patterns for the period of analysis (2003-12). For instance, a deeper investigation of data shows that the KOF index of Political Integration is highly correlated with the total number of World Heritage inscriptions obtained by countries since 1978, suggesting that this political factor may have played a role in the long run and may be then useful to explain differences across countries in the cumulative number of World Heritage sites. Conversely, for the period of analysis, other less politically integrated countries, such as for example China and Iran (ranking respectively 47th and 94th in the 2016 index), have been more active and successful in enlisting properties.¹³

It might be argued that these first results stem from the fact that initial advisory bodies' recommendations may also be potentially affected by political and economic considerations. It is indeed recognized that experts from advisory bodies may enjoy some form of discretionary power and asymmetrical information in the evaluation process (Bertacchini and Saccone 2012). To deal with this issue, we regressed the advisory bodies' recommendations on the political-economic variables introduced in our model using both ordered logit and generalized ordered logit estimation procedures. While these models show a very low explanatory power, the only significant predictor turns out to be the GDP per capita, with the nominations of richer countries being more likely to receive higher technical evaluations from the advisory bodies. In this context, the variable is however less likely to capture the power of a country, but rather its capacity to devote more resources to preserving heritage and preparing nominations which more fully comply with the requirements of the operational guidelines. Hence, we consider that advisory bodies' recommendations may be a valid proxy of the effective quality of nominations.

Given this initial evidence, we expect that the politicization of World Heritage Committee decision making emerges more clearly if we focus on nominations which received an advisory bodies' recommendation lower than Inscription (that is those initially proposed with a recommendation of Referral, Deferral or Not to Inscribe). In this case, we use as dependent variable a dummy indicating whether the nomination received an upgraded decision. Considering Regression 6-8, the initial advisory bodies' recommendations are no longer significant regressors under this specification. This may be interpreted as a potential evidence that in the selection process the pressure to upgrade less favorable evaluations is independent from the initial advisory bodies' evaluation. Further, we find that nominating a cultural site, as opposed to a natural one, has a significant and positive impact on the likelihood of having an upgraded final decision (with a marginal effect of about 30%). This result confirms that more political pressure is exerted on the selection process of cultural sites compared to the natural ones, because of the more subjective definition of the criteria to evaluate cultural heritage (Jokilehto 2006). Similarly, at 10% of significance, the variable Revision positively affects the probability of having an upgraded final decision by the Committee of about 20%. This may be explained considering that even if the advisory bodies still recommend those nominations for Referral or Deferral, political and economic considerations may lead to a less stringent final decision.

¹³ See also Meskell et al. (2015) for relevant examples of the entanglement between World Heritage Inscription and international recognition.

If we consider economic and political determinants, we find that a larger number of factors identified in the hypotheses do affect the final decision to upgrade initial recommendations, rather than only Inscription. At 10% of significance, the size of the delegation and serving on the World Heritage Committee positively influences the final decision, with the latter increasing the probability of improving the final decision by 15%. As with regressions addressing the determinants of Inscription, in Regression 8 tourism specialization remains significant with a positive effect. In general, the positive sign of the coefficient for this factor across all the regressions seems to contradict previous findings by Frey et al. (2013), where the same variable expressed a negative relation with the number of sites a country inscribes in the World Heritage List in a given year. However, given that our analysis covers a more recent period where the global competition for international tourists has increased, our findings support the interpretation that nations with greater tourism specialization are today more dependent on the World Heritage List as a brand to promote their sites as tourism destinations (Ryan and Silvano 2010; Ryan and Silvano 2014). Finally, we find that temporary membership in the UN Security Council by the nominating country increases the likelihood of an upgraded final decision, with a marginal effect of 16%. Unexpectedly, the magnitude of this effect is analogous to the one arising from membership on the World Heritage Committee, suggesting a quite strong impact of membership on international governing boards. However, the coefficient of this variable is not always significant across following model specifications used for robustness checks.

Since the size of delegations may be endogenously influenced by the type of recommendation received by the advisory bodies, we start by investigating more deeply the impact of this variable. For instance, countries know in advance the recommendation and may therefore strategically select the size of the delegation to ensure effective lobbying activity. In addition, a country may send a larger delegation in anticipation of a World Heritage designation. A deeper investigation of the dataset suggests that this can be the case, as the mean size of delegations is significantly higher with nominations recommended for Inscription compared to those with less positive recommendations. As a result, we test the interaction between advisory bodies' recommendation dummies and the size of national delegations (Regressions 4 and 9). While adding the interaction terms makes World Heritage Committee membership no longer a significant determinant of the likelihood of having an upgraded final decision (Regression 9), interpreting interaction effects in non linear models is less straightforward (Ai and Norton 2003). For this reason, Figure 1 and 2 display respectively the effect and significance of the size of delegations on the probability of having a site inscribed or a final decision upgraded according to the different initial advisory bodies' recommendations. As Figure 1 shows, holding the additional explanatory variables to their means, in case of a Deferral and Referral the negative effect on the likelihood to receive a final decision of Inscription decreases as the size of national delegation increases. In particular, an advisory body's recommendation for Referral has no statistically significant impact on the probability to inscribe the site relatively to a recommendation for Inscription, when the delegation has five or more members. This represents 46% of observations in our sample. Considering upgraded decisions and using Referral recommendations as a baseline, Figure 2 shows that an initial advisory body's recommendation to Not Inscribe has no statistically significant difference with that of a Referral recommendation, regardless the size of the delegation.

To have a clearer picture of the effect of delegation size, Figures 3 and 4 depict the predictive probability of Inscription and of an upgraded decision according to the different initial advisory bodies' recommendations. As shown in Figure 3, the probability of having a World Heritage designation is hardly affected by the number of delegates of a country when the advisory bodies recommend either to Inscribe or to Not Inscribe. By contrast, expanding the size of a national delegation increases the probability of final decision of Inscription when the initial technical advisory bodies' recommendation is either a Referral or a Deferral. Figure 4 presents a similar

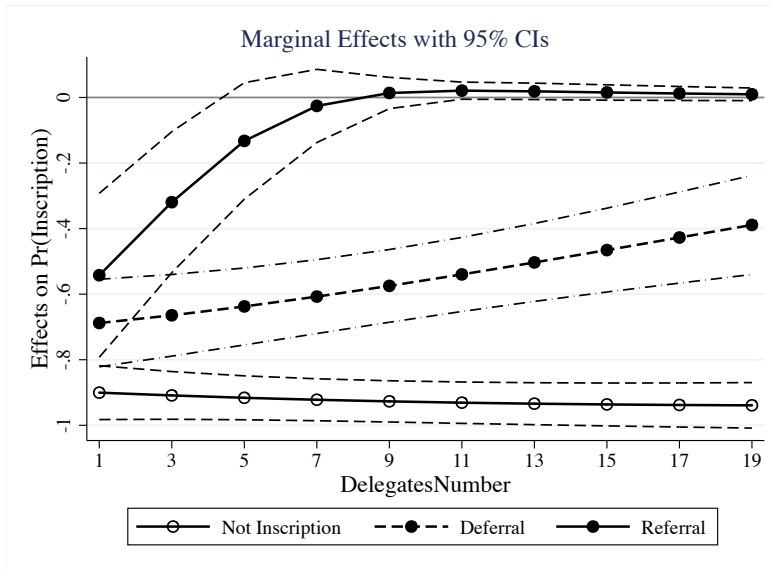


Fig. 1 Marginal effects of delegation size and Advisory Bodies' recommendation, Table 3 Column 4

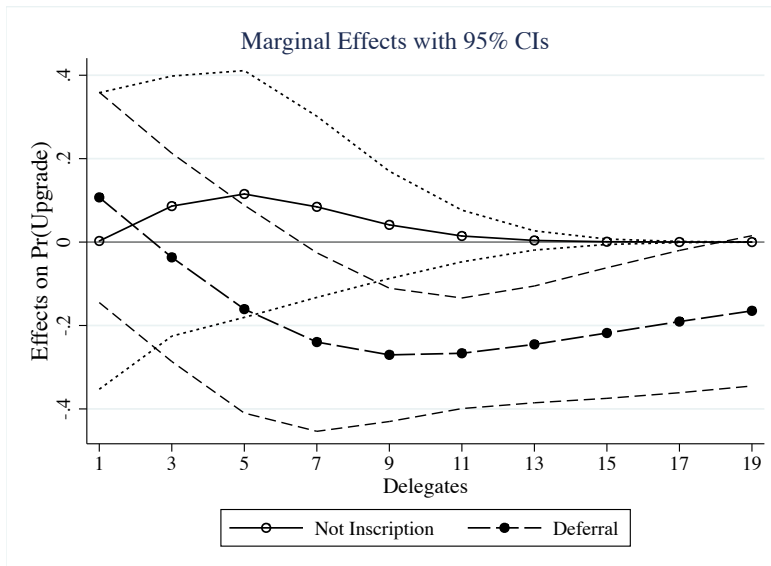


Fig. 2 Marginal effects of delegation size and Advisory Bodies' recommendation, Table 3 Column 8

pattern for the probability of having an upgraded decision for nominations that received a recommendation of Referral or Deferral. However, it also highlights that the number of delegates strongly and positively influences the probability of receiving an upgrade in the final decision when the initial recommendation is to Not Inscribe the site.

As a robustness check, we use a time trend variable (*Year of Decision*, Regression 5 and 10) to control the impact of change over time in final decisions, due to the allegedly mounting politicization of the World Heritage selection process, as reported by several observers. This variable is positive and highly significant in both the model specifications, albeit it only marginally improves

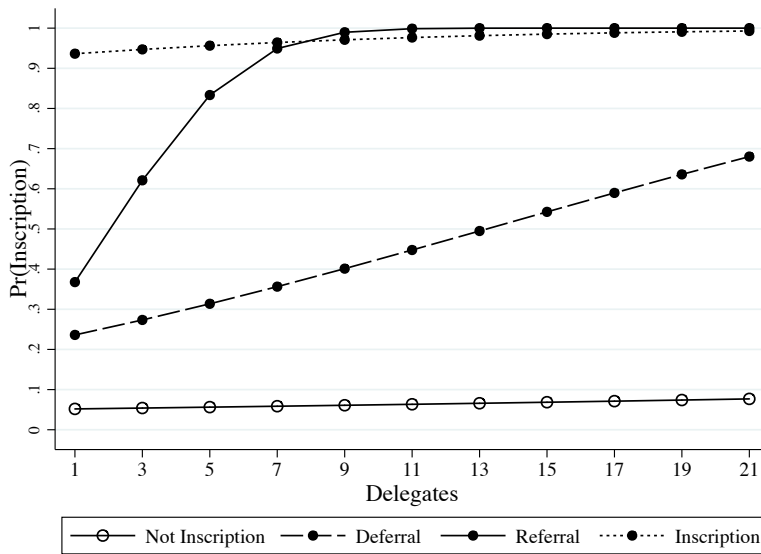


Fig. 3 Predictive probabilities of Inscription according to delegation size and Advisory Bodies' recommendation.

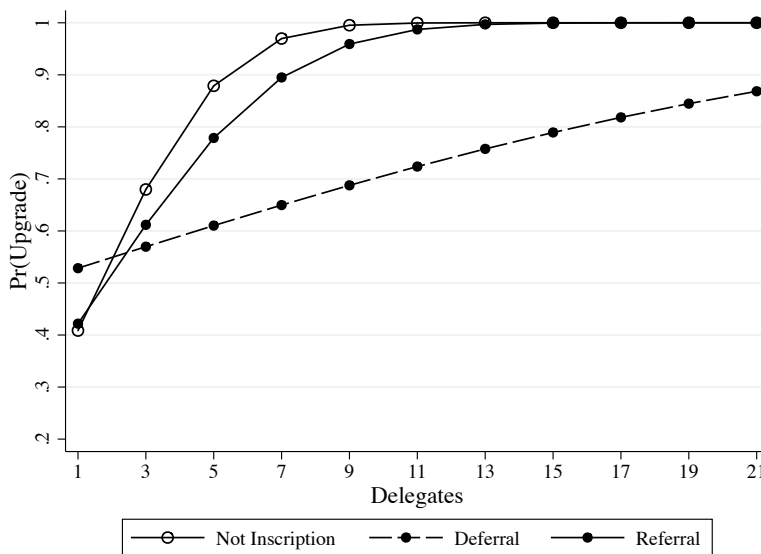


Fig. 4 Predictive probabilities of upgraded decision according to delegation size and Advisory Bodies' recommendation.

the predictive power of the regressions. While the time trend does not affect the results concerning the determinants of inscription as final decision outcome, this control has a larger impact when considering the restricted sample and using the upgraded decisions as dependent variable. In particular, adding the year of decision turns the coefficients of temporary membership to UN Security Council statistically not significant (Regression 10). Finally, we ran estimations with different additional controls expressing political power of a country within the World Heritage system, namely the lagged number of World Heritage sites, the length of membership in the World Heritage Convention and the cumulative number of years a country has served the World

Heritage Committee. These covariates are always not significant under all the specifications and do not alter the significance and value of coefficients of the other variables in any relevant way. As a result, we do not report the regressions here.

In summary, from this first set of results, we find that Committee's final decisions are more likely to diverge from the advisory bodies' recommendations and be influenced by economic and political drivers when nominations receive initial negative recommendation (Deferral, Referral or Not to Inscribe). Such politicization in the decision making process significantly occurs when nominations are revised or in cases of cultural heritage sites. The size of national delegation as a proxy of informal influence in the decision making process appears to significantly impact the probability of obtaining an upgraded decision, particularly to secure the World Heritage designation when the nomination is initially recommended for Referral or to receive a more positive final evaluation when the initial advisory bodies' recommendation is to Not Inscribe. Further, a rent-seeking factor such as the relevance of the tourism sector for a nominating nation emerges as a robust predictor of both inscription and receiving an upgraded final decision.

5.2 Verbal interventions by Committee members

We now analyze the content of verbal interventions by Committee members during plenary sessions to determine whether political and economic considerations affect the probability of having support for a favorable decision concerning a nomination proposed by another country. Adding this analytical dimension of deliberations at formal sessions may improve the interpretation of previous results focused only on final decision outcomes.

However, as previously discussed, a consensus-based decision making process can complicate our understanding of countries' behavior due to the infrequent use of voting procedures. Verbal interventions at plenary sessions may only indirectly add insights into whether Committee members' behavior is influenced by political and economic considerations related to nominating countries. For instance, it may also be the case that agreement by Committee members over a nomination is reached in informal negotiations, making in these cases verbal statements at plenary sessions less informative of their behavior. From an empirical viewpoint, this implies that the variables we previously identified as influencing final decisions may not be equally relevant or statistically significant to explain the content of verbal interventions made at plenary sessions.

We proceed by testing nomination and country-specific attributes, then we add dyadic variables expressing cultural, political and economic relationship between the nominating country and the intervening Committee member. The first set of regressions displayed in Table 4 (Eq. 11-14) presents the results for verbal interventions supporting the inclusion of the site on the World Heritage List for the full sample of nominations considered. In regressions 15-18 we restrict the sample to verbal interventions directed to nominations for which the advisory bodies recommended only for Referral, Deferral and Not to Inscribe. Such strategy is useful to take into account that members of the World Heritage Committee may express their support for enlisting a site even when the nomination has received an initial recommendation for Inscription. As a result, in this setting we omit observations that are mainly welcoming addresses and we focus on verbal statements that more directly support either the recommendation of the advisory bodies or advocate an upgrade toward inscription of the site on the World Heritage List. To take into account the problem of multiple verbal interventions from the same Committee members for a given nomination, we also restricted our analysis only to the last verbal statements of the intervening members. This is to remove redundant observations from more vocal countries if the content of the verbal intervention has been repeated during the same discussion, or to account for a changing position of Committee members during the formal discussion.

Table 4 Determinants of verbal interventions supporting Inscription, Probit estimation

Dep. Var: Verbal Int. Inscription	All AB recommendations				AB Referral, Deferral, Not Inscription			
	All interventions (11)	Members' last intervention (12)	All interventions (13)	Members' last intervention (14)	All interventions (15)	Members' last intervention (16)	All interventions (17)	Members' last intervention (18)
AB Referral	-0.544** (0.235)	-0.411 (0.266)	-0.450* (0.271)	-0.301 (0.318)				
AB Deferral	-1.477*** (0.185)	-1.492*** (0.198)	-1.653*** (0.216)	-1.696*** (0.220)	-0.836*** (0.223)	-0.836*** (0.223)	-1.074*** (0.236)	-1.284*** (0.272)
AB Not inscribe	-3.061*** (0.298)	-3.431*** (0.436)	-3.141*** (0.295)	-3.476*** (0.466)	-2.417*** (0.282)	-2.417*** (0.282)	-2.595*** (0.332)	-3.121*** (0.483)
Revision	0.888*** (0.224)	0.895*** (0.217)	0.715*** (0.201)	0.730*** (0.213)	0.956*** (0.298)	0.956*** (0.298)	0.816*** (0.308)	0.835** (0.332)
Cultural	-0.0833 (0.179)	-0.147 (0.203)	0.119 (0.204)	0.0135 (0.231)	0.0107 (0.237)	0.0107 (0.237)	0.336 (0.301)	0.175 (0.343)
Committee	0.0529 (0.225)	0.0663 (0.240)	0.103 (0.242)	0.110 (0.268)	-0.0204 (0.248)	-0.0204 (0.248)	0.0358 (0.274)	0.0690 (0.304)
Delegates	0.0158** (0.00695)	0.0197*** (0.00662)	0.0102 (0.00673)	0.0111 (0.00707)	0.0173** (0.00744)	0.0173** (0.00744)	0.0169** (0.00779)	0.0174* (0.00891)
Log(Incomepc)	0.0327 (0.0934)	0.0171 (0.106)	0.0399 (0.111)	0.0286 (0.124)	0.0714 (0.0960)	0.0714 (0.0960)	0.0571 (0.106)	0.0233 (0.124)
Log(Population)	-0.0182 (0.0666)	-0.0492 (0.0721)	-0.0395 (0.0952)	-0.0532 (0.066)	-0.0616 (0.0832)	-0.0616 (0.0832)	-0.119 (0.126)	-0.170 (0.134)
UNSCTem	0.00502 (0.176)	-0.0290 (0.177)	-0.0863 (0.207)	-0.178 (0.205)	0.0342 (0.222)	0.0342 (0.222)	-0.00905 (0.273)	-0.182 (0.295)
Tourism	0.00829 (0.00534)	0.00645 (0.00618)	0.00844 (0.00809)	0.00381 (0.00899)	0.00498 (0.00559)	0.00498 (0.00559)	0.0106 (0.00954)	0.00292 (0.0101)
Political Integration	-0.000482 (0.00585)	-0.000171 (0.00632)	0.0105 (0.00741)	0.0109 (0.00808)	-0.00400 (0.00704)	-0.00400 (0.00704)	0.00527 (0.00976)	0.00915 (0.0107)
UN Regional group			-0.245 (0.169)	-0.286 (0.183)			-0.192 (0.176)	-0.259 (0.191)
Language proximity			-0.257*** (0.0847)	-0.246*** (0.0830)			-0.374*** (0.104)	-0.304*** (0.108)
Colonizer legacy			0.902** (0.401)	0.967** (0.432)			0.916** (0.394)	0.994** (0.442)
Colony legacy			-0.231 (0.243)	-0.124 (0.291)			-0.0284 (0.424)	0.155 (0.592)
UNGAvoitingdistance			-0.235*** (0.0907)	-0.294*** (0.0973)			-0.277*** (0.105)	-0.369*** (0.113)
Bilateral Trade			0.0140 (0.0207)	0.0167 (0.0201)			0.0120 (0.0241)	0.0163 (0.0244)
PolityIVdistance			0.0137 (0.0106)	0.0143 (0.0108)			0.0294** (0.0137)	0.0335** (0.0141)
Constant	1.201*** (0.451)	1.314*** (0.489)	0.740 (0.585)	0.966 (0.641)	0.749 (0.499)	0.749 (0.499)	0.374 (0.652)	0.659 (0.795)
Observations	1,742	1,505	1,371	1,181	996	996	735	583
Log Pseudo-likelihood	-709.4	-567.9	-516.5	-408.6	-529.2	-529.2	-366	-275
Wald χ^2	177.4	130.8	246.3	182.3	126.8	126.8	161.7	128.9
Prob > Wald χ^2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pseudo R2	0.340	0.361	0.392	0.414	0.233	0.233	0.281	0.319
Area Under ROC Curve	0.863	0.868	0.892	0.901	0.808	0.808	0.834	0.851

Note: Standard errors in parentheses (adjusted for nominating country clusters): *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

In line with previous results on individual nominations, the coefficients of the dummy variables referring to advisory bodies' recommendations are significant in most of the regressions. This result indicates that the lower the initial technical advisory body recommendation, the smaller the probability of an official statement by a Committee member supporting the inscription. The *Revision* variable shows also a significant and positive sign confirming the previous interpretation of the results for this regressor. If the nomination is resubmitted, Committee members are more likely to support its inclusion on the World Heritage List, or a more favorable final decision, even when the advisory bodies still recommended a Referral, Deferral or Not to Inscribe. Holding all variables to their mean, the probability of a supportive verbal statement for revised nomination dossiers increases in a range of about 21%-40%.

Among the country-specific regressors, only the size of national delegation turns out to be always significant and with a positive coefficient, if one excludes the cases of advisory bodies'

recommendation for inscription (Eq 15-18). This partly strengthens the hypothesis that the content of verbal interventions by Committee members during plenary sessions may be influenced by multilateral negotiations and corridor diplomacy occurring outside of the formal sessions. However, adding interaction effects between the size of delegations of nominating countries and the dummies of advisory bodies' recommendations does not lead to significant marginal effects as obtained when analyzing the determinants of final decisions, nor improve the predictive power of the model. These results are thus not displayed.

Measures of cultural relationship provide deeper insights on how Committee members behave by looking at content of their verbal intervention during the 2003-2012 period. Language proximity between the Committee member and the nominating country has a significant but negative sign. This result suggests that the support given through verbal interventions by Committee members has extended beyond the borders defined by shared cultural values. Alternatively, this finding can be explained by the potential increased competition between countries with similar cultural and natural heritage endowments in obtaining World Heritage recognition for their sites. Because the decision regarding a nomination undergoes a comparative evaluation based on sites included by countries in Tentative Lists, a Committee member might be less likely to support the nomination of another country's site that share similar characteristics with its own.

The other two measures of cultural proximity refer to historical and colonial relationships. In this case, only the *Colonizer Legacy* variable turns out to be positively significant, indicating that supportive statements for inscribing a site are more likely to occur if the Committee member was a former colonizer of the country proposing a World Heritage nomination. This evidence can be explained considering that several former colonies often nominate sites of their colonial past that are also historically linked with their former colonizer.¹⁴

Further, the support given by Committee members' through their verbal interventions is positively related to the voting alignment with the nominating country occurring at the UN General Assembly. The coefficient of the *UNGA voting distance* variable is always significant and negative, indicating that the larger the distance between the voting behavior of the two countries at the UN General Assembly, the smaller the probability that a verbal statement by the Committee member will express support for inscription. Conversely, the level of bilateral trade relationships does not significantly affects the probability of receiving verbal interventions supporting inscription of heritage sites.

We finally find that the variable accounting for differences in political regimes between countries is moderately significant only in the restricted sample. The positive sign of the coefficient underscores a counterintuitive result, whereby support for inscription is less likely the more the Committee member and the nominating country have similar political regimes. The result holds when subject to analysis with other control variables under various specifications, but the marginal effect of this determinant is however very negligible. Holding all variables to their mean, an increase of one unit in the distance between the two political regimes (on a 20 unit scale) increases the probability of having a supportive verbal statement by 0.1%.

In Table 5 we present alternative specifications of our dependent variable. Similarly to the previous analysis on individual nominations, we do not only consider support for Inscription as a final decision, but also whether the content of a verbal statement more generally supports an upgrade of initial advisory bodies' recommendations. Thus, using the restricted sample of nominations which received advisory bodies' recommendation other than Inscription, we use a binary dependent variable coded 1 if a verbal intervention supports an upgrade of initial advisory bodies' recommendations for a nomination proposed by another country.

¹⁴ Typically, vocal support for nomination proposals during Committee sessions is part of a wider process of support that begins during the initial stages of the nomination process, with technical and/or financial assistance funneled to former colonies through Fund in Trust agreements with UNESCO.

As shown in Regressions 19 to 22, the significance of the coefficients of nomination and country-specific variables partly changes. The size of national delegations and discussing a revised nomination dossier are no longer significant predictors of supportive verbal statements in the full models. In turn, the relevance of the tourist sector now has a significant and positive impact. Being a cultural nomination has no significant effect on verbal interventions supporting an upgraded decision. Such result clearly diverges from that obtained when analyzing upgraded final decisions with the data on individual nominations (Table 3), suggesting that the type of property does not influence the discussion through verbal interventions at plenary sessions, but may equally impact the decision-making process through more informal negotiations including corridor diplomacy. Further, additional covariates expressing countries' cultural, political and economic relationships become significant predictors of receiving a verbal intervention supporting an upgrade of the initial recommendation. The level of bilateral trade relationships now affects the probability of receiving verbal interventions supporting an upgraded final decisions, but only when the Committee members' last interventions are taken into account: a 1% increase in the bilateral trade-to-GDP ratio rises the probability of having a supportive statement by the Committee member by about 3%. Similarly, the coefficient of the *UN Regional Group* is statistically significant, but with a negative sign. In this case, being part of the same regional group reduces the probability of receiving a supportive statement for an upgraded decision by the Committee member by about 9%. We mainly considered this variable as a measure of political proximity, but it may also explain, in the same vein of language proximity, cultural linkages between countries, which already displayed a negative relationship with supportive Committee members behavior (but see Meskell et al. (2015)).

For illustrative purpose, Regressions 23 to 26 display results when the dependent variable is whether the content of a verbal statement claims for a downgrade of the initial advisory bodies' recommendation. Thus, using the restricted sample of nominations which received an advisory bodies' recommendation other than Not Inscription, we use a binary dependent variable coded 1 if a verbal intervention by a Committee member claims a downgrade of the initial advisory bodies' recommendation. As such type of verbal interventions only accounts for 4% of the sample under consideration, only few covariates show a significant effect, but with the expected sign. In particular, the coefficients of the variables *UN Regional Group* and *UNGA voting distance* are significant, with an opposite sign relatively to the previous specification in regressions 21 and 22 with the dependent variable accounting for an upgrade of the initial advisory body's recommendation. More interestingly, the coefficient of *Political Integration* is statistically significant and negative, suggesting that opposing verbal statements to nominations are more likely to be directed toward countries that are less politically integrated internationally. Similarly, the *Colony Legacy* variable turns out to be positively significant, indicating that opposing statements to initial advisory bodies' recommendations are more likely to occur if the Committee member was a former colony of the country proposing a World Heritage nomination.

As robustness checks, in Table 6 we present alternative specifications of our regressions. First, in Regressions 27 and 28 we exclude the verbal interactions between Committee members and nominating countries belonging to the same European and North American UN regional group. This choice is made to rule out observations between countries that share relatively higher political, cultural and economic connections. Additionally, as some observers have noticed, the politicization process occurring in the World Heritage decision making has been accompanied by other significant patterns, such as an increasing nomination activity by non-Western nations and a shift in the balance of power in the UNESCO World Heritage Committee toward emerging powers (Meskell et al. 2015; Bertacchini et al. 2015). This check thus allows us to test more directly potential strategic behavior in the relationship between Western and non-Western countries and within non-Western countries' interactions. Under this specification, holding all the other vari-

ables at their mean, at 10% level of significance, if a cultural heritage site is under discussion at the plenary session, the nomination is more likely to be supported for an upgraded decision by Committee members by about 13%. In a similar vein, the degree at which a country is politically integrated at the international level helps in receiving supportive verbal interventions, albeit with rather minimal effects. Looking at dyadic relationships, while the coefficients of the *UN-GA* voting distance and *PolityIV* distance variables remain significant as in previous specifications, bilateral trade relationship between Committee members and nominating countries displays now a more persistently significant and positive effect. Further, being a Committee member former colony of a nominating country significantly reduces the probability of expressing a verbal statement supporting an upgraded decision.

Finally, because we are dealing with verbal interventions from Committee members, it may be argued that these observations are influenced not by unobserved characteristics of the nominating country, but rather by attributes of the countries serving on the World Heritage Committee. To take into account this possibility, we introduce in the probit estimation robust standard errors for within-group estimators clustering at the Committee member level. As shown in Regressions 29-32, our main results from Table 4 and 5 hold using either the support for Inscription and the support for upgrading decision as dependent variables.

In summarizing our analysis for this second set of results, our findings suggest that politicization does occur at Committee's plenary sessions since the content of World Heritage Committee's verbal statements is influenced by cultural, political and economic relationships with nominating nations. Vocal members of the Committee tend to support the selection or advocate an upgrade of the initial technical evaluation for nominations presented by countries with which they share stronger political and economic ties. At the same time, cultural affinities and belonging to the same regional group negatively affect the probability of expressing supportive statements at formal sessions. Finally, colonial legacy leads to a divergent behavior. If Committee members are former colonizer of a nominating country, they tend to support the inscription or an upgraded decision for the heritage site under discussion. Conversely, being a former colony reduces the likelihood of Committee members in supporting through verbal statements the nomination of the past colonizer, or even increases the probability of claiming for a downgrade of the initial advisory body's recommendation.

6 Conclusion

The UNESCO World Heritage Committee is the preeminent body that decides on the inscription of heritage sites on the World Heritage List. While the purpose of the List is to protect global cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value, designation of sites today confers significant international recognition as well as potential economic benefits to countries able to market their World Heritage sites for tourism. In this paper we have analyzed how decision making within the World Heritage Committee may be subject to political and economic interests that diverge from considerations of heritage significance and conservation. While previous studies have addressed through quantitative methods the determinants of the World Heritage List, we provide a more systematic investigation of the procedural and substantive aspects of the decision making process. In particular, using new data collected from the Summary Records and other World Heritage Committee official documents over the period 2003-2012, we underscore the difference between technical experts' recommendations, Committee members' verbal interventions and the final decisions taken to determine whether politicization of decisions has occurred.

Our findings suggest that in the period of analysis, both political and economic determinants have influenced the final decisions as well as the behavior of Committee members, as demon-

Table 5 Determinants of verbal interventions supporting Upgrade or Downgrade, Probit estimation

Dep. Var	Verbal int. Upgrade				Verbal int. Downgrade			
	AB Referral, Deferral, Not Inscription				AB Inscription, Referral, Deferral			
	All interventions (19)	Members' last intervention (20)	All interventions (21)	Members' last intervention (22)	All interventions (23)	Members' last intervention (24)	All interventions (25)	Members' last intervention (26)
AB Referral					-0.420 (0.348)	-0.454 (0.372)	-0.519 (0.400)	-0.486 (0.416)
AB Deferral	-0.388* (0.213)	-0.482* (0.254)	-0.689*** (0.244)	-0.809*** (0.282)	-0.935*** (0.286)	-0.950*** (0.310)	-0.891*** (0.315)	-0.770** (0.312)
AB Not inscribe	-0.238 (0.288)	-0.297 (0.321)	-0.460 (0.377)	-0.585 (0.412)				
Revision	0.710*** (0.273)	0.685** (0.276)	0.399 (0.322)	0.323 (0.294)	-0.533* (0.320)	-0.441 (0.316)	-0.476 (0.395)	-0.447 (0.372)
Cultural	0.134 (0.245)	0.196 (0.261)	0.276 (0.309)	0.355 (0.300)	0.120 (0.310)	0.0885 (0.315)	0.0763 (0.352)	0.0823 (0.354)
Committee	-0.0800 (0.175)	0.00518 (0.198)	-0.00363 (0.209)	0.0518 (0.231)	0.253 (0.315)	0.278 (0.322)	0.334 (0.329)	0.295 (0.322)
Delegates	0.0121*** (0.00467)	0.0169* (0.00932)	0.00726 (0.00603)	0.0116 (0.0104)	-0.00823 (0.0126)	-0.00780 (0.0132)	0.00391 (0.0138)	0.00416 (0.0140)
Log(Incomepc)	-0.0241 (0.0783)	-0.0305 (0.0869)	-0.0482 (0.0856)	-0.0745 (0.0907)	0.116 (0.129)	0.124 (0.140)	0.0150 (0.137)	0.0217 (0.137)
Log(Population)	0.0270 (0.0594)	-0.0361 (0.0682)	0.0208 (0.0751)	-0.0615 (0.0879)	-0.0839 (0.0736)	-0.0894 (0.0758)	-0.122 (0.104)	-0.140 (0.108)
UNSCTem	0.0275 (0.247)	0.264 (0.251)	-0.181 (0.259)	0.0769 (0.255)	0.210 (0.303)	0.136 (0.313)	0.367 (0.327)	0.369 (0.303)
Tourism	0.0168*** (0.00527)	0.0144** (0.00571)	0.0221** (0.00888)	0.0146 (0.00954)	-0.0128 (0.00876)	-0.0124 (0.00952)	-0.00285 (0.0102)	-0.00413 (0.0106)
Political Integration	0.000282 (0.00503)	0.00382 (0.00569)	0.00790 (0.00782)	0.0142 (0.00863)	-0.0114** (0.00567)	-0.0105* (0.00588)	-0.0201*** (0.00738)	-0.0178** (0.00739)
UN Regional group			-0.360** (0.156)	-0.349** (0.141)			0.489** (0.198)	0.446** (0.196)
Language proximity			-0.201** (0.0957)	-0.165** (0.0821)			0.192 (0.117)	0.183* (0.111)
Colonizer legacy			0.647* (0.342)	0.532 (0.326)			-	-
Colony legacy			-0.255 (0.250)	-0.431 (0.340)			0.549*** (0.204)	0.532*** (0.195)
UNGAvoitingdistance			-0.347*** (0.123)	-0.388*** (0.118)			0.237*** (0.0795)	0.249*** (0.0883)
Bilateral Trade			0.0190 (0.0211)	0.0371** (0.0183)			-0.0348 (0.0473)	-0.0232 (0.0399)
PolityIVdistance			0.0338** (0.0170)	0.0378** (0.0157)			-0.00638 (0.0134)	-0.00805 (0.0127)
Constant	0.479 (0.388)	0.318 (0.468)	0.527 (0.516)	0.260 (0.581)	-0.831* (0.466)	-0.919* (0.471)	-0.695 (0.652)	-0.852 (0.630)
Observations	996	807	735	583	1,571	1,385	1,222	1,008
Log Pseudo-likelihood	-526.9	-399.9	-379.1	-277.4	-226.1	-195.5	-174.2	-156.2
Wald χ^2	32.78	27.21	71.86	93.23	33.04	26.51	123	114
Prob > Wald χ^2	0.000572	0.00426	2.18e-08	0	0.000519	0.00545	0	0
Pseudo R2	0.0556	0.0717	0.104	0.131	0.165	0.155	0.223	0.205
Area Under ROC Curve	0.656	0.680	0.725	0.752	0.822	0.819	0.862	0.848

Note: Standard errors in parentheses (adjusted for nominating country clusters): *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Colonizer legacy omitted in regressions 23-26.

strated by their verbal interventions at plenary sessions. The final decision to include a site on the World Heritage List appears to be largely determined by the advisory bodies' technical evaluations. However, when nominations initially receive a negative recommendation, the final decision is more likely to be shaped by economic and political factors. Informal influence through larger national delegations has a significant impact on the likelihood of having an upgraded final decision, in particular when such technical evaluation is a Referral or a Not Inscription. In addition, being a cultural site and other unrelated rent seeking factors, such as a country's tourist specialization, also influence the selection process. These results hold even when examining in more detail the decision making process by analyzing the content of Committee members' verbal interventions at plenary sessions. In this case, we find that close international political and economic ties between countries have a positive impact on expressing supportive statements for

Table 6 Determinants of verbal intervention supporting Inscription or upgraded decision, alternative specifications

Dep. Var. Sample	Verbal Int. Upgrade without Europe & NA countries interactions		Verbal Int. Inscription		Verbal Int. Upgrade	
	All interventions (27a)	Members' last interventions (28a)	All interventions (29b)	Members' last interventions (30b)	All interventions (31b)	Members' last interventions (32b)
	AB Deferral	-0.812*** (0.278)	-0.967*** (0.286)	-1.074*** (0.172)	-1.284*** (0.174)	-0.689*** (0.190)
AB Not inscribe	-0.533 (0.358)	-0.624 (0.381)	-2.595*** (0.267)	-3.121*** (0.330)	-0.460** (0.206)	-0.585*** (0.215)
Revision	0.252 (0.396)	0.219 (0.364)	0.816*** (0.222)	0.835*** (0.207)	0.399** (0.202)	0.323* (0.185)
Cultural	0.513* (0.305)	0.554* (0.317)	0.336* (0.191)	0.175 (0.200)	0.276 (0.177)	0.355** (0.181)
Committee	0.00116 (0.227)	0.0822 (0.258)	0.0358 (0.140)	0.0690 (0.148)	-0.00363 (0.120)	0.0518 (0.132)
Delegates	0.0114 (0.0108)	0.00995 (0.0128)	0.0169** (0.00728)	0.0174** (0.00787)	0.00726 (0.00792)	0.0116 (0.00742)
Log(Incomepc)	-0.0559 (0.109)	-0.0407 (0.111)	0.0571 (0.0621)	0.0233 (0.0544)	-0.0482 (0.0826)	-0.0745 (0.0815)
Log(Population)	-0.0498 (0.0898)	-0.0914 (0.101)	-0.119** (0.0567)	-0.170*** (0.0581)	0.0208 (0.0680)	-0.0615 (0.0652)
UNSCTem	-0.0810 (0.285)	0.0926 (0.298)	-0.00905 (0.166)	-0.182 (0.164)	-0.181 (0.179)	0.0769 (0.183)
Tourism	0.0213* (0.0126)	0.0133 (0.0129)	0.0106* (0.00548)	0.00292 (0.00573)	0.0221*** (0.00552)	0.0146** (0.00673)
Political Integration	0.0172* (0.00957)	0.0203** (0.01000)	0.00527 (0.00794)	0.00915 (0.00798)	0.00790 (0.00651)	0.0142** (0.00592)
UN Regional group	0.189 (0.217)	0.145 (0.208)	-0.192 (0.189)	-0.259 (0.174)	-0.360* (0.197)	-0.349** (0.154)
Language proximity	-0.206* (0.110)	-0.125 (0.103)	-0.374*** (0.101)	-0.304*** (0.105)	-0.201** (0.0855)	-0.165* (0.0910)
Colonizer legacy	0.590* (0.323)	0.456 (0.324)	0.916*** (0.273)	0.994*** (0.255)	0.647** (0.312)	0.532 (0.336)
Colony legacy	-0.911** (0.443)	-1.069** (0.449)	-0.0284 (0.424)	0.155 (0.515)	-0.255 (0.369)	-0.431 (0.393)
UNGAvoitingdistance	-0.362*** (0.130)	-0.413*** (0.130)	-0.277*** (0.0950)	-0.369*** (0.0917)	-0.347*** (0.0879)	-0.388*** (0.0803)
Bilateral Trade	0.0831*** (0.0304)	0.0682** (0.0280)	0.0120 (0.0188)	0.0163 (0.0195)	0.0190 (0.0289)	0.0371 (0.0232)
PolityIVdistance	0.0316* (0.0184)	0.0331* (0.0173)	0.029*** (0.0098)	0.033*** (0.0112)	0.033*** (0.0114)	0.037*** (0.0111)
Constant	-0.207 (0.583)	-0.219 (0.627)	0.374 (0.575)	0.659 (0.604)	0.527 (0.445)	0.260 (0.421)
Observations	607	500	735	583	735	583
Log Pseudo-likelihood	-275.1	-211.9	-366	-275	-379.1	-277.4
Wald χ^2	60.09	52.41	266.2	192.6	148.6	123.2
Prob > Wald χ^2	1.98e-06	3.23e-05	0	0	0	0
Pseudo R2	0.148	0.171	0.281	0.319	0.104	0.131
Area Under ROC Curve	0.767	0.783	0.834	0.851	0.725	0.752

Note: The sample refers to nominations which received AB recommendation for Referral, Deferral and Not Inscription.

Standard errors in parentheses: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. *a*: Standard errors adjusted for nominating country clusters. *b*: Standard errors adjusted for Committee member clusters

an upgrade of the initial advisory bodies' recommendation, while cultural proximity with and being an ex-colony of a nominating country reduce the likelihood of supportive statements by Committee members

Given the empirical strategy adopted and the focus on the most recent period of activity of the World Heritage Convention, our results can be only partially compared with those of previous works on the subject. For instance, these studies focused on a longer period, but often used different dependent variables, such as count data of inscriptions, or less detailed information about the nominations as provided through summary records. For example, standard measures of a country's economic and political power, such as population and GDP per capita, have been proven by Frey et al. (2013) to be robust predictors of the imbalances across countries in the

distribution of World Heritage sites. However, in our analysis these factors are quite irrelevant to explain the probability of having sites enlisted or of receiving an upgraded final decision. Further, our findings suggest that formal influence through serving the World Heritage Committee does not significantly impact the likelihood of including new sites on the List, as shown instead by Bertacchini and Saccone (2012). This divergence may be explained by the fact that in our setting we take into account previously unobserved information related to informal influence, such as national delegation size. More generally, it may be argued that different political and economic factors have affected the nomination and selection process with different magnitude since the coming into force of the World Heritage Convention. If this is the case, while serving on the World Heritage Committee may have been an effective instrument to secure World Heritage designation of sites in the past, it is not in the most recent period.

This paper contributes to Public Choice literature on international organizations in several ways. Our study provides the first detailed quantitative analysis on the decision making process of a UN body that has been rarely investigated. We highlight how political and economic interests and relationships play a role even in international fora that are not obviously related to specific global economic and political issues. In this respect, our findings show that deliberations over the inscription of sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List has reached a level of politicization similar to that of other UN fora. Moreover, our approach suggests that the use of delegation-level data provides a promising strategy to capture the effect of political influence and lobbying activity by countries in international organizations. Finally, the paper provides insights into decision making processes based on consensus rather than on established voting procedures. As international organizations' governing boards do not always follow formal voting rules, the quantitative analysis of verbal statements in consensus-building decision making can be used as a proxy to capture political and economic determinants shaping individual members' behavior.

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Data Appendix

Table A1 Description and sources of explanatory variables

Variables	Description	Source
<i>Nomination-specific</i>		
Cultural	1 if the nomination is a cultural heritage site; 0 otherwise	(http://whc.unesco.org/en/committee/)
Revision	1 if the nomination has been previously evaluated; 0 otherwise	(http://whc.unesco.org/en/committee/)
<i>Country-specific</i>		
Committee	1 if member in the World Heritage Committee; 0 otherwise	(http://whc.unesco.org/en/committee/)
Delegates	Number of delegates of a country at Committee session	(http://whc.unesco.org/en/committee/)
Incomepc (1,000 USD)	GDP per capita, PPP (constant 2005 international \$)	(http://data.worldbank.org)
Population (10 million)	Population at mid year	(http://data.worldbank.org)
UNSCTem	1 if Temporary member on the UNSC; 0 otherwise	(http://www.un.org/en/members/)
Tourism	International tourism receipts over exports	(http://data.worldbank.org)
Political Integration	KOF Political Globalization sub-index	Dreher et al. (2008)
<i>Dyadic</i>		
Language Proximity	Lexical similarity between two countries' languages	Melitz & Toubal (2014)
Colonizer legacy	1 if Committee is former hegemony of nominating country; 0 otherwise	Head et al. (2010)
Colony legacy	1 if Committee member is former colony of nominating country; 0 otherwise	Head et al. (2010)
UN Regional Group	1 if two countries are in the same regional group; 0 otherwise	(http://www.unesco.org)
UNGA voting distance	Ideal point distance between countries' votes at UNGA	Strezhnev & Voeten (2013)
Regimes distance	Distance between the two countries' Polity IV political regimes	Marshall & Jaggers (2002)
Bilateral Trade	% value of import and exports with other country over committee member's GDP	IMF Direction of Trade Statistics (http://www.imf.org/en/Data)

Table A2 Summary statistics of variables

Variables	Nominations Dataset				Verbal Interventions Dataset			
	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Dep.var. Inscription	0.734	0.442	0	1				
Dep.var. Upgrade*	0.679	0.468	0	1				
Dep.var. Verbal Int. Inscription					0.679	0.466	0	1
Dep.var. Verbal Int. Upgrade*					0.753	0.430	0	1
Dep.var. Verbal Int. Downgrade*					0.040	0.196	0	1
AB Referral	0.106	0.309	0	1				
AB Deferral	0.275	0.447	0	1				
AB Not inscribe	0.068	0.253	0	1				
Cultural	0.794	0.405	0	1	0.845	0.362	0	1
Revision	0.192	0.395	0	1	0.159	0.365	0	1
Committee	0.306	0.462	0	1	0.338	0.473	0	1
Delegates	9.670	12.50	0	91	10.44	13.58	0	91
Incomepc (1,000 USD)	14.85	12.88	0.481	71.93	14.84	12.99	0.481	71.93
Population (10 million)	15.35	35.19	0.003	135.1	16.10	36.25	0.003	135.1
UNSCTem	0.089	0.286	0	1	0.118	0.323	0	1
Tourism	10.55	12.82	0	80	12.22	15.84	0	80
Political Integration	75.76	18.89	6.71	98.14	73.61	19.54	6.71	98.14
Year of Decision	2007 (p50)		2003	2012				
Language Proximity					0.654	0.749	0	5.515
Colonizer legacy					0.018	0.134	0	1
Colony legacy					0.030	0.171	0	1
UN Regional Group					0.292	0.455	0	1
UNGA voting distance					1.078	0.869	0.001	4.062
Regimes distance					6.782	6.545	0	20
Bilateral Trade					1.242	3.099	0	31.82

* The summary statistics for these dependent variables are computed on restricted samples. When using Upgraded decisions or Verbal intervention supporting Upgrade, only nominations recommended for Referral, Deferral and Not Inscription are taken into account. When using Verbal intervention supporting a Downgrade, the sample of observation is restricted to verbal interventions for nominations recommended for Inscription, Referral and Deferral.

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