

EXERTING SOFT POWER THROUGH LANGUAGE – EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM THE UNSC

MOTIVATION

- Qualitative research proposes the idea of small states exerting influence via diplomatic channels due to their lack of power in terms of quantitative variables
- We examine this hypothesis by attempting to find empirical evidence in the UN Security Council's speech data from 1995-2017 using computational text analysis

APPROACH

- Small states are assigned according to their population size (<15 million). Other criteria can be military expenditure and GDP
- Additionally, we consider the Scandinavian countries as a subgroup among small states
- We analyze the sentiment of the speeches via a dictionary approach using both the Loughran/McDonald and the Harvard GI dictionary

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

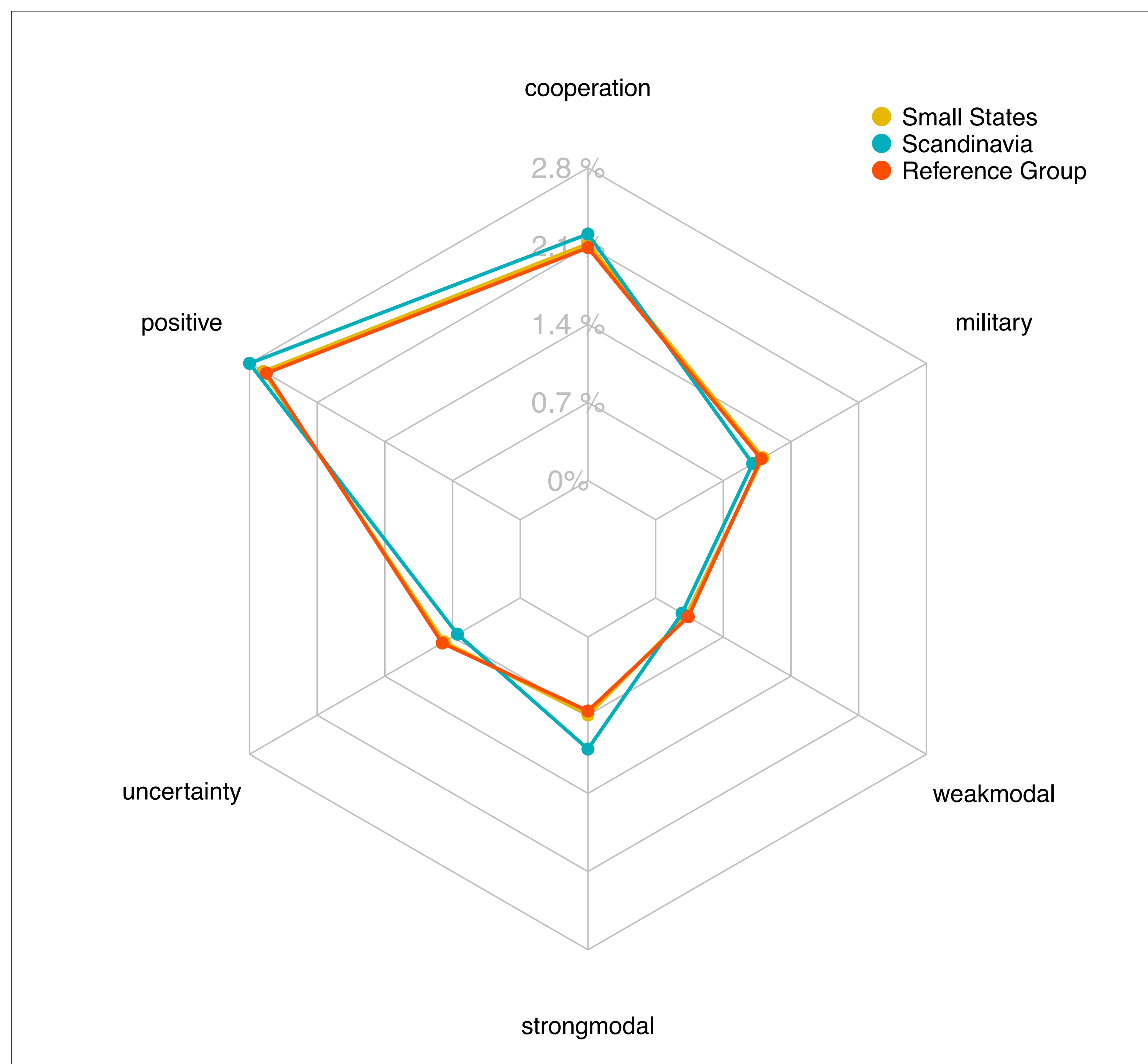
Speech proportion of small states

- Small states account for 9,1% of the population in our dataset, but hold 16,1% of the speeches on the UNSC
- Scandinavian countries have held 1158 speeches since 1995, which corresponds to 8,8% of the speeches of the small states

Speech characteristics

- The average speech of small states contains 32 sentences while the average speech on the council consists of 39

SENTIMENT ANALYSIS OF SPEECHES IN THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL



1. Dictionary approach

Harvard GI		Loughran & McDonald			
Military	Coop	Positive	Uncert	Strong	Weak
Weapon	Joint	Stabilize	Appears	Always	Almost
Fleet	Ally	Progress	Assume	Definitely	Maybe
Soldier	Negotiate	Enhance	Perhaps	Must	Possible
Submarine	Group	Achieve	Seems	Strongly	Suggest

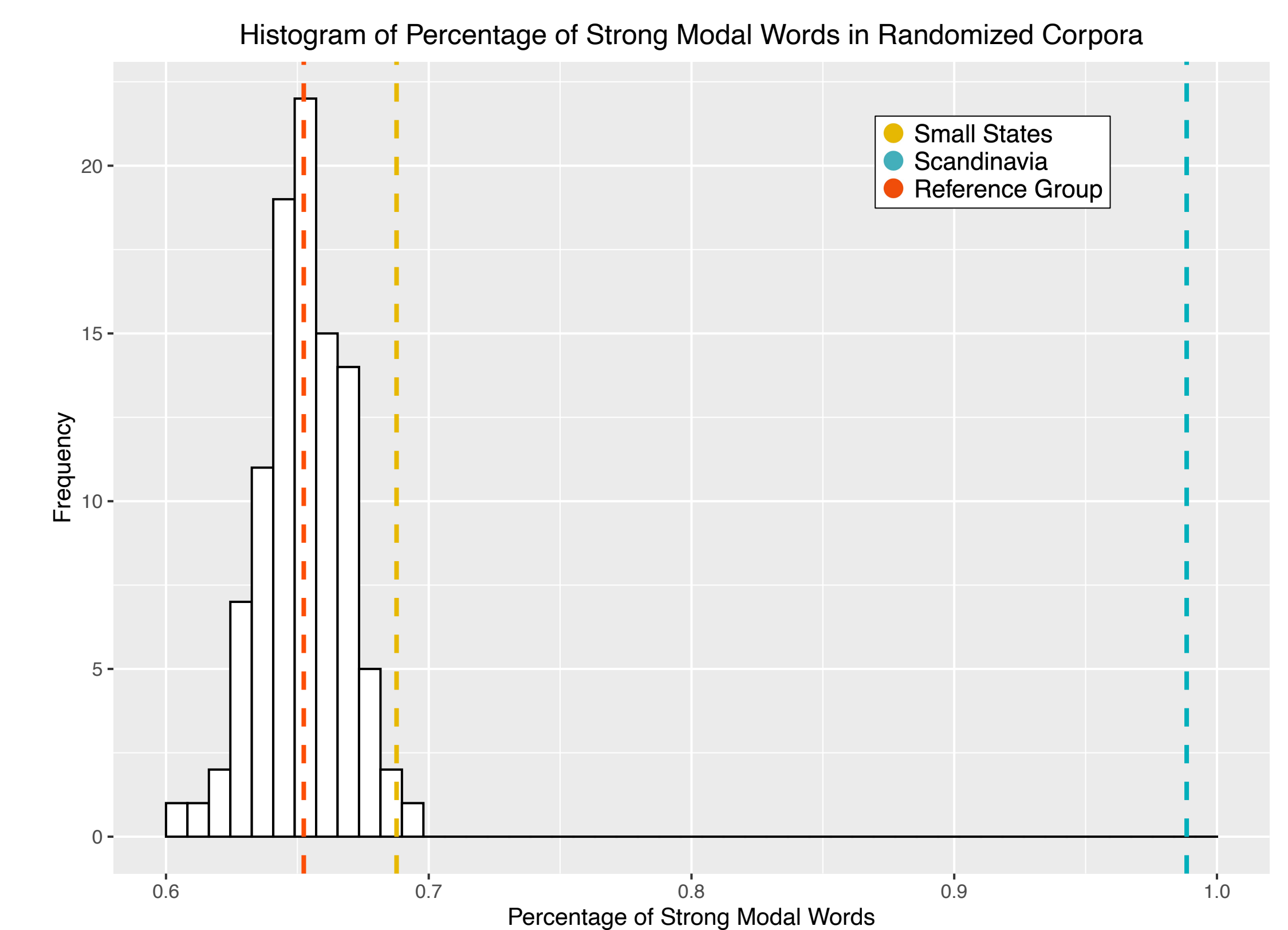
- Small countries use slightly more positive and strong modal words, but less uncertainty words than in randomized samples with comparable size
- Scandinavian countries use a considerably lower share of military terms and a higher share of cooperation hinting a more pacifistic attitude
- Small countries and in particular subgroups like Scandinavia differ in language from average speeches

2. Tf.idf term weighting

- Ensures that most common words do not appear as keywords and keeps document-specific frequent words highly weighted
- The effects remain robust, even if the proportion of strong modal words is reduced

BOOTSTRAPPING

Bootstrapping is a resampling method that allows to obtain valid standard errors by repeatedly drawing random samples (with replacement) from the observed data



- Small states and especially the Scandinavian subgroup use significantly more strong modal words (5%, resp. 0.1% level)
- Scandinavian countries use significantly more positive words (0.1% level), for small states, this can not be proven

SUMMARY

- The share of strong modal words is 4% higher for small states and 34% higher for Scandinavian states than in random speeches with the same metrics. Moreover, Scandinavian countries use 17% more positive words
- The differences between small states and Scandinavia could be explained by different capacities for the preparation of speeches
- Small states and especially certain subgroups use more persuasive strategies and hence exert more soft power to shape outcomes

REFERENCES

- [1] Thorhallsson, B. (2012). Small states in the UN security council: means of influence?. *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 7(2), 135-160.
- [2] Panke, D., & Gurol, J. (2020). Small states in the UN General Assembly: challenges and coping strategies. *Handbook on the politics of small states*, 83-99.